

FOOD AND FITNESS FOR CHILDREN

Active, growing children require good nutrition to build healthy bodies and to help them be the best they can be. Many attitudes towards food are shaped during early school years, forming the basis for future eating habits. As parents, we can help our children build healthy foundations by encouraging a love of good food and good nutrition throughout these crucial years.

GROWING BODIES

Primary school years are busy ones and children need good nutrition to help them concentrate at school and to fuel their day-to-day activities (play and sport). Children of this age are also constantly growing. As well as providing enough fuel for day-to-day activities, a child needs nutritious foods to grow and develop normally.

A HEALTHY EATING PATTERN

An eating pattern that includes a variety of foods from across the five food groups will provide children with the range of nutrients and fuel they need. Including:

- plenty of vegetables and legumes/beans
- fruit
- grain (cereal) foods (mostly wholegrain), including bread, rice, pasta, and noodles
- lean meat, fish, poultry, eggs, nuts and seeds and/or alternatives
- milk, yogurt and cheese (reduced-fat varieties are not suitable for children under 2 years).

Junk foods such as lollies, chips and takeaway foods should be chosen only occasionally and in small amounts. If eaten too often they may result in an increased risk of tooth decay and becoming overweight and may replace more nutritious foods from the five food groups.

To be their best, children also need to be well hydrated. Children should be encouraged to drink water or milk. Try to limit sweetened drinks such as soft drinks, cordials and fruit drinks. If consumed in large amounts, they can contribute to issues such as excess weight gain and tooth decay.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DAIRY FOODS

As one of the five food groups, dairy foods have an important role to play in a healthy diet. Dairy foods such as milk, cheese and yogurt contain at least 10 essential nutrients, including protein, carbohydrate, vitamins (A, B12 and riboflavin) and minerals (calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium and zinc).

Bone health

Dairy foods are probably best known for calcium and the role it plays in building strong bones. Along with the rest of their body, children's bones grow rapidly. A calcium-rich diet during childhood helps maximise peak bone mass and helps reduce the risk of osteoporosis and fractures in later life.

Dental health

Despite being largely preventable, tooth decay is still a very common health problem in Australian children with almost half of 5-6 year olds having had dental caries.

In addition to good oral hygiene (regular brushing), good nutrition and our eating habits play an important role in preventing dental disease. Dairy foods have a specific role to play in dental health as they contain a unique combination of special anti-decay nutrients such as calcium, phosphorus and the milk protein, casein.

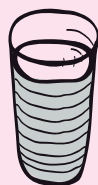
As children grow, their dairy requirements grow too. The table below indicates how many serves of dairy foods school-aged children need each day.

MINIMUM RECOMMENDED NUMBER OF SERVES FROM THE DAIRY FOOD GROUP

	Age (years)	No. of serves per day
Boys	4-8	2
	9-11	2 ½
	12-13	3 ½
Girls	4-8	1 ½
	9-11	3
	12-13	3 ½

Adapted from: 2013 Australian Dietary Guidelines. The dairy food group includes milk, cheese, yoghurt and/or alternatives.*

ONE SERVE OF DAIRY IS EQUIVALENT TO:



milk
1 cup
(250 ml)

OR



cheese
2 slices
(40 g)

OR



yogurt
¾ cup
(200 g)

OR



ricotta
½ cup
(120 g)

It's recommended that more than 50% of intake from dairy foods is reduced-fat varieties (reduced-fat varieties are not suitable for children under 2 years).

* 1 cup (250 ml) soy beverage or beverages made from rice or other cereals which contain at least 100 mg calcium per 100 ml.



GET MOVING!

Being physically active is important for growing bodies too. In Australia, one in four children are overweight or obese. Encouraging an active lifestyle along with a balanced diet is the best way to ensure a healthy weight. Australia's Physical Activity Guidelines for 5 to 12 year olds recommend:

- At least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day. This could be running, swimming, dancing or a type of organised sport such as football or netball or just active play.
- Not more than two hours of screen time (television, computer or electronic games) a day.

Be active with your children and include physical activity in family outings and as part of your daily life.

ENCOURAGING HEALTHY HABITS

Primary school is a time when children are exposed to many influences outside of the family. Their social life increases and peers can play a large part in forming attitudes towards foods. They become more aware of food advertising and trends in the media and while shopping. At school, the canteen offers the opportunity for children to make their own food selections and food and nutrition will also be discussed by teachers as part of the school curriculum.

The best way to encourage children to be active and healthy is to be a good role model. Help them sift through all the information on food they are receiving and lead by example. Also remember that food is much more than simply fuel and nutrients. Food should taste good, food should be fun, food should be social – it should be enjoyed!

- Sitting down as a family to eat is a great way to lead by example – it makes food social and fun too!
- Primary school years are a time of exploration and learning. Offer children the opportunity to experience a wide range of foods with different tastes and textures.
- Children love being involved. Ask them to help with the shopping and food preparation.
- Helping children grow food is also great. It teaches them about how food gets to our table and is a good way to encourage eating vegetables!

SERVES OF DAIRY FOODS

In Australia, we have a wide range of dairy foods to choose from. There is a product to suit every taste and occasion. Yet despite this, almost 60% of 2-16 year old children are missing out on their recommendations from the dairy food group every day.

Here are some ideas to help include milk, cheese and yogurt in your child's daily diet.

Breakfast

- A steaming milky porridge is a great winter warmer or in the summer months pour some ice cold milk over cereal.
- Grilled cheese and baked beans on toast is always a favourite.
- Pour yogurt over seasonal fruit.

Lunch

- Sandwiches / wraps with cheese and choice of salad.
- Try mini quiches with cheese for kids who don't like sandwiches.
- Freeze a yogurt tub or a flavoured milk UHT the night before. Helps keep the rest of the lunch box cool too.

Snacks

- An ice cold milkshake or smoothie. Let your imagination run wild with flavour combinations.
- A yogurt-based dip, like tzatziki, with crackers and vegetable sticks.
- A cheese toastie with other favourite fillings.

Evening meal

- Serve curries with a generous dollop of yogurt.
- Substitute ¼ of the stock for milk when making risotto for a creamier result.
- Add a generous splash of milk to creamy vegetable soups after puréeing for richness.
- Use light cream cheese mixed with milk as a creamy based sauce for pasta.

An extensive collection of family recipes can be found on Dairy Australia's website www.legendairy.com.au.

The information provided in this document is intended to be used as a guide only. Dairy Australia recommends that all persons seek independent medical advice and, where appropriate, advice from a qualified dietitian, before making changes to their dietary intake. Whilst all reasonable steps have been taken to ensure the accuracy of the information contained above, to the fullest extent permitted by Australian law Dairy Australia disclaims all liability for any inadvertent errors and for any losses or damages stemming from reliance upon the content. For further information on any of our resources, visit <http://www.legendairy.com.au>, or call our consumer line on 1800 817 736. © Dairy Australia Limited (ACN 105 227 987) of Level 5, IBM Centre, 60 City Rd, Southbank, Victoria, 3006, Australia. This brochure may be photocopied for non-profit or non-commercial applications. All other rights reserved. March 2014 [DA0451]