



What did YOU tell US?



Info Sheet Three – Mar 2005

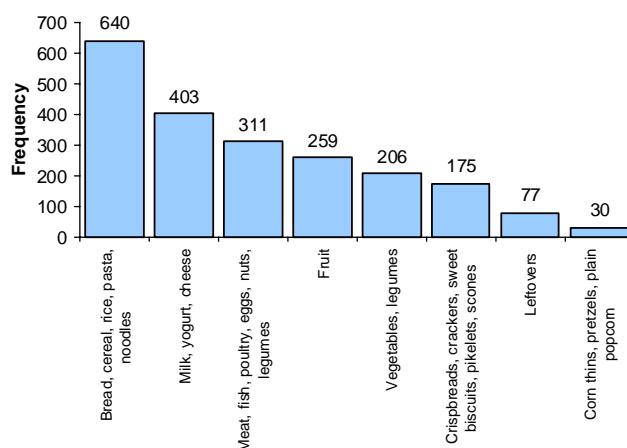
Inside this issue:

We share findings from the questionnaire on:

-  Who provides meals and snacks to children in care.
-  The content of recommended and non-recommended food lists sent in by services.

Food group items as appeared on services' recommended food lists can be seen here:

Figure 1: Most frequent food items on recommended food lists (n = 120)



As shown, the top three most included food group items from the recommended food lists were:

- Bread, cereal, rice, pasta and noodles;
- Milk, yogurt and cheese;
- Meat, fish, poultry, eggs, nuts, legumes.

This is consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia* (as mentioned in Info Sheet 2) which recommend that children should be encouraged to:

- **Eat plenty of cereals (including breads, rice, pasta and noodles), preferably wholegrain;**
- **Include lean meat, fish, poultry and/or alternatives;**
- **Include milks, yoghurts, cheeses and/or alternatives.**

However the lower frequencies that fruit; and vegetables and legumes; appeared on recommended food lists are not consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia* which recommend that children:

- **Eat plenty of vegetables, legumes and fruits.**

It would be great if services could promote *more* fresh fruit and vegetables and legumes on their recommended food lists to families.

Nutrition Support in Early Childhood project

This is the last of the three part series of information sheets sharing the results of the *Nutrition Support in Early Childhood* project, conducted by Queensland Health, Central Public Health Unit Network public health nutrition team in 2003-2004.

Table 1: Who provides meals and snacks for children in care?

Meal / Snack in care	Proportion provided by parents	Proportion provided by service
Breakfast	39%	3%
Morning tea	78%	17%
Lunch	78%	14%
Afternoon tea	50%	17%
Late afternoon tea	37%	15%

Recommended food lists

Around half of all services (44%) reported having a recommended food list, with community kindergartens (49%) and long day care centres (48%) the most likely to have one. A recommended food list provides families with nutritious food ideas to send, in order to adhere to nutrition policies. It also guides and supports staff to promote healthy eating practices within the service and effectively the whole childcare community.

How did the recommended food lists compare to nutrition guidelines?

It was very positive news that half of all recommended food lists provided were found to contain *no* inappropriate food items. The most accurate recommended food lists were those from community kindergartens where 72% of food lists sent in contained *no* inappropriate food items.

Other food items that appeared on services' recommended food lists do not provide essential nutrients and are not consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia*. Perhaps this indicates that some nutrition messages are unclear. Food items such as sweet and savoury biscuits, cakes, margarine, butter and other oils, sausages, and cheerios are inconsistent with the dietary guidelines to:

- **Limit saturated fat and moderate total fat intake. Low-fat diets are not suitable for infants;**
- **Choose foods low in salt.**

Food items such as sweet biscuits, muesli bars, cakes, jam, chocolate nut paste or honey sandwiches, fruit sticks and snacks and cordial are inconsistent with the dietary guideline to:

- **Consume only moderate amounts of sugars and foods containing added sugars.**

Such foods are likely to contribute to excess energy and lead to overweight and obesity, and behavioural problems in care when some children have foods seen as "treats" in their lunchboxes.

Table 2: Most frequent inappropriate food items on recommended food lists (n = 120)

Fruit juice *	35
Sweet biscuits	26
Muesli bars & cereal bars	23
Savoury biscuits	16
Cakes (eg. plain cakes, patty cakes)	14
Jam, chocolate nut paste or honey sandwiches	9
Margarine, butter, alternative oils	8
Sausages	8
Fruit sticks, fruit snacks, rollups	5
Fruit drinks	5
Cheerios	5
Cordial	4

* Water is the best drink. Fruit juice is not recommended everyday as it can take away from a well-balanced diet and lead to dental erosion and caries.

Non-recommended food lists

Just over a third of all services (36%) reported that they have a list of food items that should *not* be brought to care. Long day care centres (42%), and community kindergartens (35%) were again most likely to have a non-recommended food list. A non-recommended food list provides guidance to staff and families when it is difficult to know if a food item meets the service's nutrition policy or not. If food items designated as inappropriate appear at care, this can be discussed with families and strategies put into place to deal with this problem.

What was on non-recommended food lists?

One quarter of non-recommended food lists provided contained more than ten non-recommended food items. The most informative non-recommended food lists were those from limited hours and occasional care services (40%) and long day care centres (36%), as these lists contained more than ten items. With an ever-growing array of snack foods on supermarket shelves, non-recommended food lists need to be more detailed than not allowing the obvious chips, lollies, chocolates and softdrinks at care.

Table 3: Food items appearing most frequently on non-recommended food lists (n = 118)

Confectionery	122
Chips	109
Sweet biscuits	84
Chocolate	69
Cakes	68
Muesli bars	56
Rollups	50
Soft drinks	50
Cordial	49
Fruit bars, fruit straps, fruit snacks, coated sultanas	33
Flavoured dairy desserts	28
Fruit juice drinks	23
Sweet dip & biscuit snack packs	18
Savoury biscuits	18
Chocolate nut pastes	15
Flavoured rice bubble bars & other sticky bars	11

So what now?

From here the CPHUN public health nutrition team will be consulting with the early childhood sector and addressing some of the priority findings from this project. Through this process it is hoped that we can offer you as childcare professionals, support in influencing families' food choice decisions, and in improving the quality and implementation of nutrition policies.

For more information on this project, contact:

Amanda Doyle
Public Health Nutritionist
 Central Public Health Unit
 Network – Sunshine Coast

Ph: 5409 6619
 Fax: 5443 5488
amanda_doyle@health.qld.gov.au



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 Queensland Health