

All About Food



A resource for services caring for children



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Stronger Families and
Communities Strategy
A Queensland Government Initiative

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Introduction

It has been widely recognised that early childhood is an essential time to promote an active early learning environment, good nutrition and opportunities to play with other children in order for optimal physical, cognitive and psychosocial development. Children's eating habits are established early in life and are substantially affected by their experiences with food and by the influence of both child care staff and parents. Nutrition education experiences provided to young children should be fun and centred around the positive attributes of healthy food choices.

The child care setting, which provides a point of contact for a large number of families, early childhood professionals and ultimately the wider community, can play a role in establishing good eating patterns in young children. The childcare environment is conducive to a supportive and interactive relationship between parents and carers, and childcare centres present good opportunities for holistic approaches to health. Therefore it is becoming increasingly important that early childhood professionals advocate positive health messages and facilitate the development of health knowledge, attitudes and relationships around children, families and communities.

This resource has been developed to assist early childhood professionals implement activities around food and nutrition. It brings together information on a variety of topics as requested by Directors of child care centres. However this resource does not provide general nutrition information as this is readily available from other sources, some of which are listed in section six.

The kit is divided into eight sections:

Section 1 provides information on the Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia.

Section 2 contains information about how to develop and implement a food and nutrition policy. Sample policies are also included.

Section 3 provides information on regulations and standards for child care centres relating to food and nutrition.

Section 4 provides information to assist child care centres that provide all meals and snacks to assess their menu to ensure that it meets the current recommendations. A lunchbox checklist for parents has also been included.

Section 5 contains many ideas for activities for early childhood professionals with a focus on food and nutrition. Activities are grouped into games involving food, food models & displays, gardening, art & craft, story books, food tasting & sharing, songs, food preparation and stencils.

Section 6 provides a list of websites and publications that provide information on food and nutrition.

Section 7 contains a resource that can be used to increase children's awareness of the many different cultures in their community, including the foods and customs of each culture.

Section 8 provides information promoting the safe handling of food.

The Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia

Encourage and support breastfeeding

Children and adolescents need sufficient nutritious foods to grow and develop normally

- Growth should be checked regularly for young children
- Physical activity is important for all children and adolescents

Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods

Children and adolescents should be encouraged to:

- Eat plenty of vegetables, legumes and fruits
- 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. Reduced-fat milks are not suitable for young children under 2 years, because of their high energy needs, but reduced-fat varieties should be encouraged for older children and adolescents
- Choose water as a drink

and care should be taken to:

- Limit saturated fat and moderate total fat intake. Low-fat diets are not suitable for infants
- Choose foods low in salt
- Consume only moderate amounts of sugars and foods containing added sugars

Care for your child's food: prepare and store it safely

Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods



Food and activity for healthy growth

Prepare and store food safely



Encourage and support breastfeeding

Food for health



Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing
National Health and Medical Research Council

A guide to healthy eating

Why Have A Food And Nutrition Policy?

A child's early years are a critical time for physical and mental development. It is also the time when the eating habits of a lifetime are formed.

Child care services such as long day care centres and family day care schemes play a vital role in providing nutritious and safe foods in a pleasant learning environment. In fact, some children up to the age of five can spend as many hours in child care as they do attending 12 years of school.

A Food and Nutrition Policy is fundamental to providing for the nutritional needs of children in your care and it is required by the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (National Childcare Accreditation System) and the Child Care Regulation 2003. The major benefits of a policy are:

- It identifies the strategies needed to deliver quality nutritional care.
- It provides clear guidelines to staff.
- Centres are able to assess their performance and identify areas which need improvement.
- Parents have greater confidence in child care centres which demonstrate concern for the nutrition and safety of children within their care.
- A Food and Nutrition Policy is helpful in familiarising new staff and parents with nutrition strategies operating in your centre.

Because food and nutrition in child care centres is so important, the National Standards for Centre Based Long Day Care (1993) specifies that all child care centres must have a food policy. For licensing purposes, the Queensland Government also has legislation which has specific regulations dealing with food and nutrition issues. For more information see section 3.

Developing Your Nutrition Policy

You need to consider the following areas when developing your policy;

1) Policy structure

The rationale, goals or objectives and strategies

2) Healthy Food (and Drinks):

What, when and how much?

3) Safe Food:

How to store, prepare, cook and serve food safely.

4) Social Aspects of Food:

Social, cultural and family issues

5) Learning About Food:

Food preparation and awareness activities

6) Staff development.

How will you ensure staff are trained in nutrition related to childcare?

Steps in Developing a Policy

Steps for policy development	Strategies for policy development steps
<p>Step 1 Getting started</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Decide who is going to be responsible for developing the policy and estimate how long it will take. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Raise the idea at a staff meeting, discuss staff opinions and anyone interested in coordinating. ▪ Leave this guide for staff to read and contemplate for the next meeting.
<p>Step 2 Consultation and gathering information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Consider accreditation principles and Child Care Regulation 2003; find and gather resources with food and nutrition information from recognised authorities. * Inform staff and families that a food and nutrition policy is being developed; provide opportunities for everyone to contribute. Explain the importance of having a policy and how it will be used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collect information from other sources ▪ Discuss with parents ▪ Have a suggestion box in the administration area ▪ Provide information in newsletters with a tear-off section for comments and opinions. ▪ Place a notice on the front door and near the sign-out book asking for input. ▪ Document your consultation process.
<p>Step 3 Write the policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Use your findings to produce a draft policy, making sure you use information from recognised nutrition authorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Director and other staff members collate all the findings and incorporate these in developing a draft policy.
<p>Step 4 Consultation and modification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Distribute a copy of the draft policy to all staff and families asking for feedback and suggestions for improvement. * Encourage discussion and record comments. * Agree on a trial period and review date. * Review the comments and modify the policy if required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Present draft policy at next staff meeting. Provide staff with a photocopy to take home and consider for a few days. ▪ Use feedback to inform second draft. ▪ Invite interested people to view draft policy via the newsletter (if it is too big to put in the newsletter) ▪ Set a time limit to provide feedback (less than 3 weeks to maintain interest) ▪ Prepare final draft and make it available to all people – put copies all around service and also in sign-out book
<p>Step 5 Put the policy into practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Begin to implement the policy. * Check to see if staff and families are following the new policy. * Identify practices that are not consistent with the policy. * Identify barriers to change. * Work out ways to overcome barriers to putting your policy into practice. * Keep checking if your staff and families are following the policy. You may like to write a checklist based on your policy. This can be used every week for a month or so. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Determine starting date and put the policy into practice one section at a time. ▪ Provide regular reports to staff and parents. ▪ Use relevant resources for ideas to address barriers.
<p>Step 6 Review the policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Aim to review all current food and nutrition practices every 6-12 months. Put the review dates in your centre calendar or diary so you don't forget. * Ensure the policy is up-to-date and that your practices are consistent with the policy. * The policy may need to be changed from time to time to include new information or improvements. * Keep everyone involved and informed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review the policy at staff meetings

Adapted from PANOSH (Physical Activity and Nutrition Outside School Hours): physical activity & nutrition policies, Queensland Health, 2004.

Hints for developing your policy

- The sample policy statements provided are a guide only. Every centre should prepare its own with input from families, staff and advice from an appropriately qualified nutrition expert/authority.
- Consulting with staff and families when developing policy strategies is important to ensure that those involved understand their role and are prepared to implement them.
- If you plan to make major changes to the sample Food and Nutrition Policies, it is recommended that you contact a qualified dietitian-nutritionist to check these alterations. Asking only families or staff to develop their own policy runs the risks of having it based on opinions rather than recommendations backed by scientific evidence. The Dietitians Association of Australia or Nutrition Australia are useful organisations to contact.
- If families express concern regarding the foods recommended in the policy, it may be helpful to arrange an information session for families about the policy with a nutrition expert present to answer their questions.

Nutrition for 0-1 year olds

- Due to their special needs, additional policy guidelines will be needed by centres caring for this age group. Comprehensive information on infant nutrition is available in *Caring For Infants* (refer to section 6).

Hints on Making Your Policy Work

- Consulting with staff and families when developing your policy will make it easier to put it into practice. **All those involved should feel comfortable that they understand the policy guidelines and feel capable of carrying them out.**
- **Ensure families are made aware of the nutrition policy strategies when enrolling their child and ensure that you clarify any issues they may have.**
- Having an individual responsible for implementing each policy strategy helps to ensure it is put into practice. Document when and how these strategies were achieved to show the accreditation team!
- Remember that reviewing your policy and practices is important in providing ongoing quality nutritional care. It also demonstrates to families that you are a professional service that is interested in their children's well-being.

Sample Nutrition Policy

Nutrition Policy for Long Day Care Centres Preparing Food

Rationale

Healthy eating habits are vital to good health and start to develop from an early age. Good nutrition in childhood is essential to grow and develop. It is also important for establishing healthy lifelong habits and attitudes to food. Feeding children poor quality food deprives them of vital nutrients at a time when their growing bodies and growing intellect require them most. Children who get the food they need are the children who grow and develop best.

Goal

To provide children in long day care with meals and snacks that are appetising, consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents and provide 50% of the Recommended Dietary Intake (RDI) for all nutrients.

Strategies

- All families will be supplied with a copy of the latest Food and Nutrition Policy.
- Menus will be planned to meet the recommended minimum food requirements.
- Milk will be served with both morning and afternoon tea.*
- Children under two years of age will be offered full cream milk. Reduced fat dairy products (not skim) will be offered to children over two years of age as long as they are growing normally.
- Only calcium fortified soy beverages will be used as a substitute for milk.*
- Children will have access to breads/cereals or fruit/vegetable snacks if they are hungry between meals.*
- Water will be the primary drink and will be available at all times.*
- Fruit juice will be served at most once a day and only in small quantities. If served, fruit juice will be diluted with water by at least half.
- Children are allowed to have second helpings of fruit or milk based desserts.*
- If children have not eaten their main meal they may still receive dessert.*
- Families will be advised when their child is not eating well.*
- Families of children on special diets will be asked to provide details of any special food needs compiled by a doctor, dietitian-nutritionist or other recognised health professional. This document should contain not only foods to be avoided but also appropriate foods for use.
- Menus will be reviewed each season to include seasonally appropriate food and ensure variety i.e. at least twice per year.

Goal

To provide infants with food and fluids that are appropriate and that will meet their nutritional needs.

Strategies

- The centre will encourage and support breastfeeding.
- Infants will be kept on breast milk or infant formula as the main drink at least until 12 months of age or as long as mutually desired.*
- Preparation instructions for infant formulas will be displayed in the preparation area.
- Solid foods will be introduced at around 6 months of age in consultation with the child's parent/s.*
- Foods first introduced will be rice or rice cereal, pureed fruit or vegetables.*
- Infants will be allowed small amounts of cow's milk and dairy products from 6 months of age.* (Cow's milk will not become the main drink until at least 12 months of age.)
- A variety of iron containing foods will be introduced from 6 months of age.*
- As children develop, the texture of the food provided will change.*

Goal

To encourage and support breastfeeding

Strategies

- Mothers shall be provided a quiet place to breastfeed or express their milk.
- Staff will be supportive of mothers who breastfeed.
- Breastfeeding promotion information will be available and displayed including the Australian Breastfeeding Association helpline.
- The Centre will choose educational resources that promote breastfeeding eg, appropriate storybooks

- Mothers will be encouraged to return to the Centre during work hours to breastfeed instead of expressing, if practical.

Goal

To provide food to children which has been stored, prepared and served in a safe and hygienic manner and to promote hygienic food practices.

Strategies

- Ready to eat food will not be touched with bare hands. Gloves or tongs will be used.
- A separate cutting board will be used for raw meat and chicken, and utensils and hands will be washed before touching other foods.
- Food will be cooked thoroughly until steaming or simmering.
- Food will be stored at safe temperatures i.e. below 4°C or above 60°C. The refrigerator will be kept at 4°C or below.
- Children and staff will wash and dry their hands (using soap, warm running water and disposable towels) before handling food or eating meals and snacks.*
- Staff will discourage children from handling other children's food and utensils.
- Staff will wash hands thoroughly after changing nappies and before preparing any food or fluids.
- All infant bottles will be washed and sterilised.
- Expressed breast milk and infant formula will be warmed in warm water, not a microwave.*
- All infant drink bottles stored at the centre will be labelled with the contents, name of the child and date of preparation/expressing.*
- Unused infant formula or breast milk will be discarded at the end of each day.
- Infant bottles will be stored in a refrigerator set at or below 4°C.
- Food heated in microwave ovens will be left covered to stand for 2 minutes before serving to reduce the chance of hot spots.
- Staff will be made aware of foods that may cause choking and will prevent infants and children from having access to these foods.*

Goal

To provide an eating environment that promotes family and multicultural values.

Strategies

- Staff members will sit with the children and share the same food as often as possible.*
- Food will not be used as a form of punishment either by its provision or denial.*
- Special occasions will be celebrated with culturally appropriate foods e.g. birthdays, cultural and religious days.*
- Recipes and food awareness activities will be chosen from a variety of cultures.*
- Families will be invited to at least one food occasion each year.*
- Recipes for food served in the centre will be available to families.*
- The weekly menu will be on display to families and staff.*
- Menus will be planned in consultation with families and will reflect the multicultural nature of the community.

Goal

To teach children and their families about food and nutrition.

Strategies

- Food awareness activities will be included in the centre program.*
- Children will be encouraged to get practical experience in food preparation.*
- The foods being served to children will be discussed with them.*
- Families will receive information about food and nutrition as part of the orientation package and through newsletters, handouts and noticeboards and feedback will be encouraged.

Goal

To provide staff with up to date training in nutrition and skills required to promote the centre's nutrition policy.

Strategies

- Staff are encouraged to attend professional development on food and nutrition related issues including breastfeeding and food handling. Staff will be orientated to the centre's nutrition policy.
- Staff will be familiarised with current nutrition resources. Where possible, outside health professionals eg oral health staff, nutritionists will be accessed to provide up-to-date information and to gain a better understanding of the resources available to centres.

* Strategies indicated used with permission from *Caring for Children* (NSW Health).

Sample Nutrition Policy

Nutrition Policy for Centres where Food is Brought from Home

Rationale

Healthy eating habits are vital to good health and start to develop from an early age. Good nutrition in childhood is essential to grow and develop. It is also important for establishing healthy lifelong habits and attitudes to food. Feeding children poor quality food deprives them of vital nutrients at a time when their growing bodies and growing intellect require them most. Children who get the food they need are the children who grow and develop best.

Goal

To supervise and assist children to receive nutritious food.

Strategies

- All families will be supplied with a copy of the latest Food and Nutrition Policy.
- A list of recommended and discouraged foods will be given to all families and displayed on the noticeboard.
- If discouraged foods are brought to the centre, a note suggesting an appropriate alternative will be provided to families.
- Healthy food will be discussed with children as part of the curriculum and will be encouraged at all times.
- Large quantities or frequent consumption of fruit juice will be discouraged.
- Water will be the primary drink and will be available at all times.*
- If milk is provided by the centre, children under two years of age will be offered full cream milk. Reduced fat dairy products (not skim) will be offered to children over two years of age as long as they are growing normally.
- Infants will be allowed small amounts of cow's milk and dairy products from 6 months of age. (Cow's milk will not become the main drink until at least 12 months of age)
- Emergency food will always be available.*
- Children will have access to breads/cereals or fruit/vegetable snacks if they are hungry between meals.*
- Families will be advised when their child is not eating well.*
- Families of children on special diets will be asked to provide details of food needs.*
- The centre will encourage and support breastfeeding.
- Infants will have breast milk or infant formula as the main drink until at least 12 months of age or as long as mutually desired.*
- Preparation instructions for infant formulas will be displayed in the preparation area.

Goal

To encourage and support breastfeeding

Strategies

- Mothers shall be provided a quiet place to breastfeed or express their milk.
- Staff will be supportive of mothers who breastfeed.
- Breastfeeding promotion information will be available and displayed including the Australian Breastfeeding Association helpline.
- The Centre will choose educational resources that promote breastfeeding eg, appropriate storybooks
- Mothers will be encouraged to return to the Centre during work hours to breastfeed instead of expressing, if practical.

Goal

To assist children to receive safe food and to promote hygienic food practices.

Strategies

- All food handling policies should document practice that is consistent with the appropriate healthy authorities.
- Children and staff will wash and dry their hands (using soap, warm running water and disposable towel) before handling food or eating meals and snacks.*
- Food will be stored in a refrigerator set at 4°C or below as soon as possible after a child arrives.
- Parents will be encouraged to keep food cool while transporting it to the centre.*
- Children will be discouraged from handling other children's food and utensils.

- Gloves will be worn or food tongs used by any staff directly handling ready to eat foods.*
- All infant bottles will be washed and sterilised.*
- Unused breast milk or infant formula will be discarded at the end of each feed.*
- Expressed breast milk and infant formula will be warmed in warm water, not a microwave.*
- All infant drink bottles stored at the centre will be labelled with the contents, name of the child and date of preparation/expressing.*
- Infant bottles will be stored in a refrigerator set at or below 4°C.
- Food heated in microwave ovens will be left covered to stand for 2 minutes before serving to reduce the chance of hot spots.
- Staff will be made aware of foods that may cause choking and will prevent infants and children from having access to these foods.*

Goal

To provide an eating environment that promotes family and multicultural values.

Strategies

- Staff members should sit with children at mealtime and encourage social interactions.
- Food will not be used as a form of punishment either by its provision or denial.*
- Cultural differences will be recognised, nurtured and celebrated.*
- Input from families in relation to meals will be encouraged at all times.
- Food awareness activities will be chosen from a variety of cultures.*
- Special occasions will be celebrated with culturally appropriate foods e.g. birthdays, cultural and religious days.*
- Families will be invited to at least one food occasion each year.*

Goal

To teach children and their families about food and nutrition.

Strategies

- Food awareness activities will be included in the centre program.*
- Children will be encouraged to get practical experience in food preparation.*
- The foods being eaten by the children will be discussed with them.*
- Families will receive information about food and nutrition as part of the orientation package and in newsletters and feedback will be encouraged.

Goal

To provide staff with up to date training in nutrition and skills required to promote the centre's nutrition policy.

Strategies

- Staff are encouraged to attend professional development on food and nutrition related issues including breast feeding and food handling. Staff will be orientated to the centre's nutrition policy.
- Staff will receive appropriate guidance on methods for communicating with parents about appropriate/inappropriate foods sent.
- Staff will be familiarised with current nutrition resources. Where possible, outside health professionals eg oral health staff, nutritionists will be accessed to provide up-to-date information and to gain a better understanding of the resources available to centres.

*Strategies indicated used with permission from *Caring For Children* (NSW Health).

Acknowledgements

1. *Caring For Children, Food Nutrition and Fun Activities (Fourth Edition)*. C. Bunney and L. Williams, NSW Health Department
2. *Caring For Infants* M. Norberg and R. Young, Sydney South West Area Health Service Division of Population Health, Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services.

Regulations And Standards For Child Care Centres Relating To Food And Nutrition

Queensland Child Care Act 2002

In Queensland, all child care centres are licensed under the ***Child Care Act 2002 (the Act)***. This legislation represents the minimum quality standards for licensed child care centres in Queensland.

Section 9 of the Act outlines that “licensed services are to be conducted under the following principles-

- (a) the best interests of a child are the paramount concern
- (b) child care should be provided to a child in a way that-
 - (i) protects the child from harm
 - (ii) respects the child’s dignity and privacy
 - (iii) promotes the child’s wellbeing
- (e) child care should be planned and provided in a way that-
 - (i) involves parents and other members of the community; and
 - (ii) reflects the multicultural and multilingual nature of the community.”

The section relevant to food and nutrition in the Act is Section 76 which states:

- (1) The licensee of a child care service must prepare, and keep up to date, written policies about the conduct of the child care service.
- (2) The matters addressed in the policies must include the following—
 - a) the participation of parents, students, volunteers and others in the conduct of the service;
 - (b) health issues, including—
 - (i) hygiene practices; and
 - (ii) dealing with injuries, illness and infectious diseases;
 - (c) safety, emergency and evacuation procedures;
 - (d) processes for dealing with any concerns of parents, guardians, staff members or carers;
 - (e) another matter prescribed under a regulation.
- (3) The licensee must give a copy of a policy, on request, to a parent or guardian of a child in care.
- (4) The licensee must ensure the carers in the service and staff members of the service are aware of the policies in force for the time being.

Child Care Regulation 2003

These also outline minimum standards required for licensing child care services in Queensland and cover a range of issues including food and nutrition, health and safety program requirements and staffing.

Section 56 of the Child Care Regulation 2003(the Regulation) states that;

“Each staff member must observe good health and hygiene practices while providing care in the course of the service.”

Section 63 of the Regulation states that;

(1) Food and drink must be offered to each child in care frequently, at appropriate intervals.

(2) If the food offered to children is supplied as part of a child care service—

- (a) the food must be adequate and nutritious; and
- (b) there must be a variety of food; and
- (c) the types of food must be chosen having regard to the child’s age, health, dietary needs, culture and religion; and
- (d) a menu of the food must be displayed where it can be seen by parents and guardians.

Quality Improvement and Accrediation System (QIAS)

The QIAS is a Commonwealth Government initiative linked to the provision of Child Care Benefit to centre based long day care. It is administered by the National Childcare Accreditation Council Inc. (NCAC)

Principles directly relating to food and nutrition are;

Quality Area 6: Health, Nutrition and Wellbeing

Principle 6.1: Staff promote healthy eating habits.

Principle 6.2: Staff implement effective and current food safety and hygiene practices.

Principle 6.3: Staff encourage children to follow simple rules of hygiene.

There are also fact sheets which are relevant to food safety and the development of policies on the NCAC website (www.ncac.gov.au)

Menu Planning

Planning menus ahead will help ensure the best food choices are made, meals are varied and food preparation is as hassle free and economical as possible. Menu planning should be a team effort including staff, parents and children.

Planning at least two week's meals and snacks ahead of time is recommended. A cyclic menu of six weeks would help ensure food service is efficient and the diet is balanced and varied. Rotate the menu days to provide variation for the child who only comes one or two set days each week.

Plan menus according to the season (ie at least summer and winter).

When creating a menu remember that Australia is a multicultural society and include food from other countries, especially cultures represented in the local community.

Menu planning considerations include:

- Nutrition
- Food variety and colour
- Cultural and religious beliefs of children and staff
- Like and dislikes of the children
- Budget
- Facilities
- Skills of staff
- Number of children being catered for
- Time for preparation
- Food safety issues

Nutrition requirements of children in long day care centres

Recommended Dietary Intakes (RDIs) are the amounts of nutrients which will meet the daily requirements of most children. It is recommended that at least 50% of the RDIs for all nutrients be met for children in long day care (8 hours or more). The following table shows the minimum number of serves from each food group needed to achieve this level.

The National Health and Medical Research Council have not developed nationally endorsed food group servings for 1-3 year olds as it has for children 4 years and older. At this age there is marked variability in how much individual children eat. How much food is eaten varies from child to child and from day to day and is influenced by growth and activity levels. The following food serves are a guide only. NSW, SA and WA Health Department recommendations for children in long day care are consistent with Queensland Health.

Food group	Minimum number of serves during child care hours	Serve sizes
Bread and cereals	2	1 "child size" serve = 1 slice bread or ½ cup breakfast cereal or ½ cup cooked rice or ½ cup cooked pasta
Dairy foods & alternatives	3	1 "child size" serve = 100ml milk or 15g cheese or 100g yoghurt or 100ml calcium fortified soy milk
Meat & meat alternatives	1	1 "child size" serve = 45g cooked red or white meat or 50g cooked fish or ¼ cup cooked legumes (baked beans, lentils, chickpeas) or 1 egg
Fruit	1	1 "child size" serve = ½ cup of fruit or 1 small piece of fruit or ½ medium piece of fruit
Vegetables	2	1 "child size" serve = ¼ cup of vegetables

If a child is in care for more than eight hours extra meals and/or snacks should be provided.
 A "child size" serve is approximately equal to half a serve in the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating.

Reviewing a 2-week menu using the nutrition checklist*

The nutrition checklist can be used to review your menu by following the steps below. (Note this example does not check for serving size adequacy)

STEP 1: What you will need

- A copy of the nutrition checklist, a pen and your menu over 2 weeks. For the checklist to be a valid tool, the menus must be reviewed over a 2-week period.

STEP 2: Compare your 2-week menu with the checklist

- On the checklist under 'Main Meals – Red meat: beef, lamb' – Lean red meat is included on the menu at least four times per fortnight.
- Look at your 2-week menu and count how many times red meat is offered in a fortnight.

If it satisfied the criteria put a tick in the box on the checklist.

If it does not satisfy the criteria, put a cross in the box on the checklist.

STEP 3: Review the rest of the menu

- Repeat step 2 for all other criteria on the checklist.

STEP 4: Make the necessary changes to the menu

- Where the menu does not satisfy the checklist criteria, make the necessary changes.

When reviewing your menu, use this document to help make any changes, or contact your local nutritionist or dietitian for assistance. Your local community health centre may be a useful starting point.

* Based on SA Child Care Nutrition Partnership "Planning Nutritious Child Care Centre Menu: Nutrition Checklist and Support Materials". 2nd Edition, 2005.

Nutrition Checklist for Planning Child Care Centre Menus*

Use this checklist to plan a menu over a 2 week cycle. The number of serves recommended is the minimum required to meet the nutritional need of children in care when one main meal and two snacks are provided.

MAIN MEALS

Red meat: beef/lamb

- Lean red meat is included on the menu at least 4 times per fortnight.

White meat: chicken/pork/fish/veal

- Lean white meat is included on the menu at least 3 times per fortnight.

Vegetarian meals

- A vegetarian meal is included on the menu at least 2 times per fortnight.
- Vegetarian meals are based on eggs, cheese, tofu or legumes

Increasing Iron

- On each day that white meat or a vegetarian meal is served, at least 1 other iron containing food is included on the menu. (Other iron containing foods include wholemeal bread, dried fruit, Milo, baked beans and lentils)
- A fruit or vegetable high in Vitamin C is served with white meat or a vegetarian meal. (Fruits and vegetables high in Vitamin C include citrus fruit, strawberries, rockmelon, kiwi fruit, tomato, cauliflower, broccoli, cabbage, capsicum and peas)

MEETING ENERGY NEEDS

Energy needs and appetites of children vary. The above quantities represent minimum requirements only. Some children will need much more than the amounts specified, especially children in the 4-5 year old age group.

- Extra food is readily available at meal times and snack times to meet the hunger needs of children if required. This could be extra quantities of foods on the menu or additional foods (such as those listed under 'snacks' category).
- An extra snack is provided for children attending 8 or more hours.

WATER

- Water is freely available during the day.

VEGETABLES and FRUIT

- The menu includes at least 2 'child size' serves of vegetables daily
- The menu includes at least 1 'child size' serve of fruit daily.
- Fruit juice, if served, is diluted and limited to once per day.
- A variety of vegetables and fruit is offered each fortnight.

SNACKS

- Snacks are planned on the menu as part of the total day's intake.
- At each snack time a bread/cereal based food appears on the menu.
- Vegetable or fruit is included if necessary to meet the recommended daily number of serves.
- Snacks are nutritious and include dairy foods, fresh fruit, unsweetened tinned fruit, vegetables, pikelets, scones, muffins, fruit cake, fruit bread, any breads, and low fat crackers.

DAIRY FOODS

- The menu includes at least 3 'child size' serves of dairy food per day (1 serve=100ml milk, ½ cup custard, ⅓ cup yoghurt, 1 slice processed cheese)
- It is recommended that milk is offered at both morning and afternoon tea.
- Cream, sour cream and butter are not substitutes for milk, yoghurt and cheese.

BREADS, CEREALS, RICE, PASTA, NOODLES

- The menu includes at least 2 'child size' serves of breads, cereals, rice, pasta or noodles per day.
- High fibre varieties (eg multigrain, wholemeal, white high fibre) are included at least 4 times per fortnight.
- Breads include: pita, lavash, Turkish, Lebanese, fruit bread, scones, finger buns etc

* Based on SA Child Care Nutrition Partnership "Planning Nutritious Child Care Centre Menu: Nutrition Checklist and Support Materials". 2nd Edition, 2005.

Nutrition Checklist for Planning Sandwich Menus♦

Use this checklist to plan each two-week menu cycle that provides sandwiches as the main meal on all or most days of the week.

The number of serves recommended is the minimum required to meet the nutritional needs of children in care when one main meal and two snacks are provided.

MAIN MEALS

Type of sandwich fillings

- Each day, at least 1 sandwich filling is a lean red meat (eg beef or lamb)
- All other sandwich fillings are a good source of iron or protein (eg chicken, fish, legumes, eggs or cheese)
- No more than 3 filling choices are offered each day

Limiting the number of fillings encourages children to try different fillings and will help to ensure they get enough protein and iron.

Type of Bread

- At least 4 different varieties of bread are used per fortnight. (eg pita, lavash, Turkish, Lebanese, bread rolls, foccacia, etc)
- If 3 filling choices are offered, all breads used are wholemeal
- If 2 fillings are offered, at least 1 slice wholemeal bread per sandwich is used.

Source of Vitamin C

- A fruit or vegetable high in Vitamin C is served with sandwiches at main meal. (Fruits and vegetables high in Vitamin C include citrus fruit, strawberries, rockmelon, kiwi fruit, tomato, cauliflower, broccoli, cabbage, capsicum and peas).

These can be included in sandwich fillings or served separately.

VEGETABLES

- The menu includes at least 2 'child size' serves of vegetables daily
- A variety of vegetables is offered each fortnight

FRUIT

- The menu includes at least 1 'child size' serve of fruit daily.
- Fruit juice, if served, is diluted and limited to once per day.
- A variety of fruit is offered each fortnight

DAIRY FOODS

- The menu includes at least 3 'child size' serves of dairy foods per day.
- It is recommended that milk is offered at both morning and afternoon tea.
- Cream, sour cream and butter are not substitutes for milk, yoghurt and cheese.

SNACKS

- Snacks are planned on the menu as part of the total day's intake.
- At each snack time a bread/cereal based food appears on the menu
- Vegetable or fruit is included if necessary to meet the recommended daily number of serves
- Snacks are nutritious and include dairy foods, fresh fruit, unsweetened tinned fruit, vegetables, pikelets, scones, muffins, fruit cake, fruit bread, any breads, and low fat crackers.

♦ Based on Caring for Children, NSW Health, 2005

Lunchbox Checklist For Food Brought From Home♦ A Guide for Parents

This information is designed for children one to five years old, in child care for about eight hours each day. This usually includes morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea. Depending on your child care centre, some food and drink may be provided by the centre and some by parents, or all food and drink may be provided by parents. The servings suggested are minimum amounts. Your child may need more.

Is your child provided with at least:

- 3 'child size' serves of dairy or high calcium foods?
- 1 good OR 2 moderate sources of iron?
- 2 'child size' serves of cereal-based foods?
- 1 'child size' serve of fruit?
- 2 'child size' serves of vegetables?

NOTE: If your child is in care for more than eight hours you may need to provide extra food. If your child is in care for less than eight hours you may need to provide less food.

Good calcium sources include:

Dairy products, tofu, and calcium-added soy milk
1 'child size' serve = ½ cup milk (plain or flavoured),
1 tablespoon grated cheese,
1 slice processed cheddar,
⅓ cup yoghurt, ½ cup custard.

Other high calcium foods are milk-based desserts such as fruche, creamed rice and milk puddings.

Good iron sources include:

Beef, lamb, veal, beef sausage.

Moderate iron sources include:

Pork, ham, fish, egg, chicken (breast, leg or chicken loaf), wholemeal bread, dried fruit, legumes, Milo™, spinach, fortified breakfast cereals.

1 'child size' serve = 1 slice meat, 1 egg, 1 slice wholemeal bread, ¼ cup legumes, 1½ tablespoons dried fruit or 4 apricot halves, 2 teaspoons Milo™, ½ cup iron fortified cereal.

Cereal-based foods include:

Bread (all varieties including fruit bread), rice, pasta, noodles, cracker biscuits (plain, unsalted crackers, rice cakes, rice crackers), fruit buns, scones, pikelets muffins and crumpets.

1 'child size' serve = 1 slice of bread, ½ cup cereal, ½ cup cooked rice, ½ cup cooked pasta or 2 medium cracker biscuits.

Fruit includes:

Fresh, canned or dried fruit NOT juice

1 'child size' serve = ½ medium size piece of fruit (apple, orange, banana) or 1 small piece (apricot, plums)

Vegetables include:

Raw or cooked vegetables (fresh, frozen or canned)

1 'child size' = ¼ cup vegetables or salad, ¼ cup vegetable based sauce or ½ small potato

Note: A child size' serve is approximately equal to half a serve in the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating.

Remember:

If there is no meat, fish, or chicken with lunch, include an alternative protein source such as eggs, baked beans or cheese. A high vitamin C food such as fruit (oranges, strawberries, melon), salad (tomato and capsicum) or vitamin C containing juice (eg orange or tomato juice) will increase the amount of iron absorbed from non-meat meals.

Please don't send these foods to child care:

- Sticky snacks like some health food bars, lollies and fruit straps as these may cause tooth decay.
- Foods high in fat and sugar like cream-filled and chocolate-coated biscuits, chocolate and chocolate or yoghurt coated health food bars.
- Foods high in fat and salt like chips and savoury snack biscuits.

Care for your child's food:

- High risk foods such as meat, chicken, fish, milk, cooked rice or pasta, should be kept cold.
- Send high risk foods to child care in insulated lunch containers along with an icebrick or frozen drink.

The best drinks for children are milk or water. Fruit juice is not essential if your child eats fruit. Limit fruit juice to no more than one drink per day.

Food and Nutrition Activities

Food and nutrition activities are a fun and creative way to teach children about food and healthy eating. To encourage child care centres to use food and nutrition activities, Community Child Health conducted a food and nutrition competition with childcare centres in the Logan-Beaudesert District. The competition involved centres submitting food and nutrition activities that they have used successfully with children in their care. This is a compilation of the activities submitted by childcare centres.

Acknowledgements

Kim Cojean – Queensland University of Technology student

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All About Kids Early Learning Centre, Eagleby
Leapfrog Child Care, Ormeau
Kingston Early Learning Centre, Kingston
Little Aussie Kids @ Kingston, Kingston
Livingstone College Early Childhood Centre, Ormeau

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Games Involving Food/ Food Recognition

The Veggie Feely Bag

What you need:

- A bag or pillow slip
- A variety of vegetables

Children try to guess what vegetables are inside the bag by feeling. This is a good activity to increase children's recognition and awareness of different vegetables.

A variation of this game is to blindfold children and let them feel a vegetable with their hands to try and guess the name of the vegetable. This can be an exciting game with all the other children having to keep quiet while the blindfolded child tries to guess what the vegetable is.

Odd One Out

Say a series of four words (ie 3 vegetables and one odd word) e.g. carrot, potato, cat, onion or asparagus, lamp, leek, celery. The children then identify which word is the odd one out.

Food Cupboard

Make a food cupboard out of a large piece of cardboard by folding both the side edges of the cardboard in to meet each other at the centre. These will form the doors of the cupboard. Inside make shelves which will hold food pictures. Just stick in pieces of clear plastic sleeves to form pockets. Food pictures can be glued on to a cardboard backing for durability. The children can then stack the shelves with food pictures and take food out the cupboard to make imaginary meals.

Excursions

Excursions could be to places such as a farm, a food market, a food mall, an orchard, a supermarket, a bakery or a butcher. When planning excursions it is a good idea to have an objective in mind, something that you would like the children to get out of the excursion.

Follow up the excursion with related activities such as discussions about the excursion and sampling of food sold in various outlets. The age of children must be considered when planning excursions. Ideally children should be able to actively participate rather than just observe.

Healthy Living Activities

This activity helps to teach children about healthy living. The staff member calls out the name of a food or activity (e.g. apple, candy, riding a bike, children, watch TV for a long time ...) and the children answer with an enthusiastic 'Healthy' or a sad 'Not Healthy'. They can also take turns in calling out the food or activity with the other children to respond with a 'Healthy' or 'Unhealthy'.

Choosing Healthy Foods (aimed at children aged 3-5 years)

- Group discussion supported with large pictures of people for the children to talk about can be a good way to stimulate thought and discussion. E.g. Hold up a picture (e.g. boy with an apple), ask children 'What do you see', listen to children's responses which can lead into a talk about apples being good for us and who likes apples etc.
- Fruit Snap Game. Make cards with pictures of fruit and vegetables. The cards can then be used for a game of snap. The cards can also be used by the staff member by putting down one card at a time and getting the children to call out the name of the fruit or vegetable represented on the card. Children will also enjoy grouping the different cards together (e.g. fruit and vegetable groups) and counting how many are in each group.
- Card Game – Match the Foods. This game consists of five different foods in black and white print, laminated on coloured cardboard. Identical shapes are then provided for the children to match by placing on top of the food on the card. A variation of this game is to also print the same pictures of the foods in colour and getting the children to match the pictures in colour and in black and white. This can also involve a discussion about what the food is.
- Board Game – Healthy Snakes & Ladders. Use a snakes and ladders board game with the concept being that if they make a healthy choice they get fit and healthy and go up the ladder, in turn if they make unhealthy choices they go down the snake and can be unwell.

Food Music

Fill jars or bottles with beans or rice and secure the lid. These can be used as castanets to make different sounds. Jars can also be filled with different amounts of liquid and when hit with a spoon or stick, they will make different sounds.

Food Smells

Put a variety of herbs and spices in separate jars so your child can smell each one. Examples are:

- Herbs: sage, rosemary, thyme, parsley, basil, dill
- Spices: cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, cloves, turmeric

Food labelling activity

Labelling and discussing fruit and vegetables helps children to recognise different varieties and become familiar with them.

- Make a felt board with pictures of fruit and vegetables. The children can label fruit and vegetables as they place them on the felt board.
- Sing songs about fruit and vegetables on the felt board. You can make up songs with children or sing some of the popular songs you know.

Activities With Food Models & Displays

Identification Game

Have children identify food models to increase their awareness of the variety of foods

Food Display with a theme

- A food display is a great activity for children to be involved in. The display can incorporate children's art work and provide a stimulus for group discussions. Food displays are also useful to show parents what their children have been doing while in care.
- A food display can be based on a number of healthy themes. Some examples are:
 - The five food groups (i.e. dairy, meat/meat alternatives, vegetables, fruits and breads/cereals)
 - the Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents
 - vegetables
 - fruits
 - ethnic foods
 - healthy lunches and snacks
 - tooth-friendly foods

Classification Game: Vegetable, Fruit or both

- Label 3 medium boxes on the side: 'Vegetables', 'Fruit' and 'Both'. Use the classroom fruit and vegetable models or pictures cut from magazines. Classify the food items according to the boxes, this can be done as a group or each child can have a go.
- Variation: On the opposite side of the box label: 'Vine', 'Tree' or 'Underground'. Now play the same game and classify the fruit and vegetables according to whether they grow on a vine, tree or in the ground.

Food Alphabet

Create a visual food alphabet wall frieze. Children can draw their own impression of the food, or find some suitable pictures they can colour or cut out and paste onto coloured paper.

Gardening Activities

The Veggie Patch

Information about gardening can be found on the Education Queensland website.

<http://education.qld.gov.au/schools/healthy/active-te/factsheets/factsheets.html>

- Where do veggies come from? It can be surprising the number of children that do not know how vegetables grow. A vegetable patch provides a great opportunity to teach children about where vegetables come from.
- Tomatoes, radishes, carrots and herbs are easy to grow.
- Children could plant seeds in individual pots labelled with their own name. When the plants are large enough, transplant into the garden and when ready, eat at snack time. Sweet corn, cucumbers, tomatoes, radishes are suitable for this activity.
- Having a veggie patch also allows for many activities that incorporate different skills:
 - Environmental experiment – working with soil to prepare for planting
 - Gross motor development – digging and working in the soil, weeding
 - Language skills – talking about planting the seedlings
 - Fine motor skills – planting the seedlings using fingers/hands to dig and cover over the soil
 - Colour recognition – of vegetables on seed packets and also when they are grown
 - Social development – taking turns watering, as a group checking the veggies each week, caring for their garden week to week, and anticipation and excitement of finally picking the veggies when they are ready

Making a scarecrow

As part of a centre garden, you can also make a scarecrow as an activity. The children can participate in pushing and shaping the straw into the scarecrow's clothing.

Children can learn the scarecrow song as part of this activity.

Grow some seeds to eat

What you need:

1 large clean glass jar

A stocking or fine cloth to cover the jar opening

Elastic band to secure the cover over the jar

Dried beans, peas or lentils

Water

Method

Put one tablespoon of seeds in the jar. Cover with water and leave overnight. Next day secure cloth over the jar opening with the elastic band and pour off water, replace cloth and allow to drain, shaking as much water out of the jar as possible. Put the jar on the window sill. Repeat daily until the seeds have sprouted.

They are ready to eat when the shoots are three times as long as the seed. Eat the sprouts raw or cook them in a small amount of boiling water until tender. Easy seeds to grow are mustard, cress, beans, alfalfa and lentils. Children are thrilled to see foods grow and these sprouts grow quickly enough to keep children interested.

Compost Bin

Have a compost bin at your centre to show the children how food scraps can be recycled. The compost can even be used in the vegetable garden.

Setting up a Worm Farm

A worm farm will help reduce the waste that goes into landfill and you can use the worm castings on the garden.

- Obtain a worm farm kit from your local council
 - Set it up with the children's help
 - You could also invite someone to talk about worms and worm farms
 - Maintain the worm farm by feeding them fruit and vegetable scraps and watering the worms on a regular basis
 - Encourage children to collect scraps for the worms
-
- Grow tops of carrots, radishes, parsnips and turnips on plates of damp cotton wool. Plant pineapple tops and slices of potato that includes the eye in soil. This activity makes good use of scraps.
 - Make a caterpillar by filling a stocking with a mixture of soil and birdseed. Tie off the end. Place on a garbage tin lid or something similar and water daily. The children can take turns watering. The seed will sprout, creating a hairy caterpillar. Add a face using buttons or paper.
 - Make a sock man. First draw a face on a sock, then add some wheat seed into the toe. Add enough soil to fill the face and tie off the end. Invert a bottle of water to keep the sock and soil damp. The wheat will sprout to form hair in about two weeks.

Art & Craft Activities

Painting Activities

- For this activity a staff member draws and cuts out large pictures of healthy foods such as oranges, broccoli, carrots etc. Have a brief discussion with the children about what foods are represented by the pictures, the children can then paint or colour in the pictures. Staff can also show children the real objects – looking in lunchboxes and naming the foods which the children will eat during the day.
- Older aged children can do the cutting themselves of the above activity and using flash cards they could write the names on them.
- A great sorting activity for preschoolers is picture cards of healthy and nutritious foods and pictures of treat foods. The children can sort the foods into healthy foods and treat foods which are only eaten occasionally. A discussion about the difference between nutritious foods and treat foods can accompany this activity.
- Posters of food collages are great for discussion groups – the older children can cut out the food pictures themselves from advertising leaflets to use in the collages.
- Try some fruit and vegetable block painting. Cut shapes into potato halves (make them raised) and use to block paint or stamp. Also try carrot tops and celery leaves to be creative. This is a great way to turn plain butcher's paper into colourful wrapping paper the children can take home.

Cutting & Pasting Activities:

What you need:

Magazines for cutting

Scissors

Glue

Large paper plates or cardboard/butchers paper

- The children cut out pictures of nutritious foods and paste them onto their dinner plate or cardboard. These are hung around the room for easy reference. The teacher can also laminate them and they can be used by the children in dramatic play
- Children could sort pictures of different foods into the different groups of the food pyramid. This can be done either using a felt board to pin up the pictures or as a laminated game where the pictures are laminated and sorted.
- A staff member draws two separate pictures of a body on a poster board; one body is labelled 'good for me everyday' the other 'not good for me everyday'. Staff can then assist the children in deciding which foods belong in which category and sticking the different foods onto the bodies. This can involve a discussion about why some foods should be eaten everyday and other foods eaten occasionally.
- A variation of this activity is to find foods which are 'tooth-friendly' and 'not tooth friendly foods'. The 'tooth-friendly foods' can be stuck to a big picture of a toothy smiling face and the 'non-tooth friendly foods' can be stuck to a drawing of a child with a sad face.

Fruit & Vegetable Collage

Materials:

Food pyramid poster
Large Easel and paper or white board
Pens or markers
Magazines or old cookbooks
Scissors
Glue stick
White paper plates

What to do:

- Discuss the food pyramid with the children and show them a picture of it
- Ask the children what fruit and vegetables they like to eat. Write their responses on a piece of easel paper or a white board. Draw pictures of the fruit and vegetables if desired.
- When finished, read the list back to the children. Then explain to them to cut out their favourite fruit and vegetables from the magazines/cookbooks
- Give each child a paper plate. Encourage the children to stick their pictures on the plate to make a collage
- Allow time for each child to share their pictures with the rest of the children

Making Fruit Puppets

Materials:

Oak tag
Scissors
Paper lunch bags
Crayons
Stapler

What to do:

- Make fruit puppets with the children. Beforehand, cut out a number of pear, orange, apple and banana shapes from oak tag.
- Ask each child to pick either a pear, orange or apple shape for a head and four banana shapes for the arms and legs
- Give each child a paper bag. This will serve as the body of the hand puppet
- Encourage the children to decorate the bag and colour the shapes with crayons
- Staple the head onto the closed end of the bag, and attach two bananas for arms and two for the legs
- The children's hands will fit into the opening of the bag and they can use them as puppets.

The Food Pyramid Game

- Draw a large food pyramid on butcher's paper and label the sections. Have the children cut pictures of food out of the weekly grocery catalogues and then decide together with the children where to glue the food item on the pyramid.
- The food pyramid can be used later in another game. Place the food pyramid in the middle of a circle of children sitting on the floor. Distribute food models from the play area to each of the children. The children can then have a go at putting their food item into the right section of the pyramid (if they get stuck as to where it should go everyone can help decide).

Fruit & vegie fishing

Cut out pictures of fruit and vegies and laminate them. Attach a paper clip. Put these into an empty child's pool, water tray or low cardboard box. Make fishing rods from cardboard lunch wrap rolls with a magnet attached to the end. Children can decorate these. Have fun catching items and naming them. You can also put these pictures into fruit and vegetable piles.

Stuffed stuff

Draw a very large shape or design (such as pumpkin, apple etc) on a sheet of butcher paper. Cut out the shape from the butcher paper. To make two shapes at once, staple two sheets of butcher paper together and cut them at the same time. Decorate both sides of the shape using markers, crayons or paint. Glue additional materials to the design, if desired. Secure the two shapes together by stapling the outside edges. Leave an opening on one side of the shape. Stuff the shape with bunched-up newspaper or other paper scraps, filling out the shape. Staple the opening. If desired, add string and hang it up.

Fruit & veg mystery face

Cut black paper into strange or realistic shapes that suggest a mouth, eyes, nose or other facial features. Make the shapes very large or very small. Place the black scrap facial features into a box. Cut fruit & vegetable shapes out of coloured paper. Reach into the box and pull out a black feature. Place it on the coloured shapes and begin building a face. Design silly, realistic, or scary faces. Make several different faces. Change the features around to create different expressions and personalities. If desired, tape or glue the features in place and hang the completed face in a window, on a wall, or as a doorway decoration.

A World of Food

Make posters for each of the favourite foods eaten by different cultures represented within the group. Prepare the foods as a cooking activity, or invite special guests to come in and prepare a recipe that originates from another country.

Story Book Activities

The Green Eggs and Ham Storybook Activity

Green Eggs and Ham is a favourite story with most children. A discussion at the end of the book about the moral of the story - you won't know if you like something until you try it, this can extend to encouraging children to try new foods.

A brainstorming activity could also be done with the children about their favourite foods and if they should eat lots of them or just a little. The teacher can write the children's suggestions on the board – later on a chart can be made and the children can add a picture of the food they had suggested.

Other stories relating to fruit, vegetables and foods include:

- The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch (by: Rhonda and David Armitage)
- Goldilocks & the Three Bears (retold by: Prue Theobalds)
- The Very Hungry Caterpillar (by: Eric Carle)
- The Great Big Enormous Turnip (by: Alexei Tolstoy)
- Pasta (by: Kate Haycock)
- Scallywag (by: Jeanette Rowe)
- Tucker (by: Ian Abdulla)
- Let's Eat! (by: Ana Anorand)
- Mealtime (by: Maureen Roffey)
- Fruit (by: Jillian Powell)
- How do I eat it? (by: Shigeo Wantanabe)
- The Little Red Hen (by: Louise Pifanner)
- Wombat Stew (by: Marcia Vaughan)
- Growing Vegetable Soup (by: Lois Ehlert)
- Giant Hiccups (by Jacqui Farley)
- Possum Magic (Mem Fox)
- I will not ever never eat a tomato (Lauren Child)

Food Tasting & Sharing Activities

Food Sensory Activity

- Buy a variety of fruits and/or vegetables and have a group discussion about them. Ask the children if they know the name of the fruit/vegetable, and talk about the colour, taste and the different ways it can be eaten.
- The fruits/vegetables can also be used to do some taste testing. The children can be blindfolded one child at a time and asked to taste and name some of the fruits/vegetables. This proves to be a fun activity as well as a productive one as children can learn more about fruits/vegetables and how they taste.

Sharing Morning Tea

This activity adds some variety to the morning or afternoon tea time. Each child is encouraged to bring a piece of fruit from home. The fruit is cut up and placed on plates to share and each child is encouraged to try different types of fruit.

Sharing a Luncheon

This is similar to the activity above but involves the lunchtime main meal. Staff can plan a luncheon where children are asked to bring in an item of food to share from the healthy food pyramid to create a meal. Children may also be involved in some aspects of preparing this meal.

Taste Test

- A good way to teach children about different cultures is through food. Staff can plan a special cultural morning tea or lunch which features food from a specific culture.
- Some examples are:
 - Arabic Culture – have hummus and vegetable sticks for afternoon tea, try falafels and hummus served with flat bread and salad vegetables for lunch.
 - Chinese Culture – try a stir-fry with rice for lunch
 - Greek Culture – serve tzatziki with pita bread and vegetable sticks for morning or afternoon tea, add feta cheese to salads with an olive oil and either vinegar or lemon juice dressing
 - Italian Culture – try a risotto for lunch, serve pasta with meat dishes as an alternative to potato
- What about dressing up for the occasion or decorating the classroom?

Snack Foods with a Colour Theme

Prepare the morning tea or afternoon tea snack foods which are different shades of the one colour, e.g. green grapes, green apples, green beans, celery and green capsicums.

Make a Fruit and Veggie Man

- To promote fruit and vegetable consumption you may like to make a fruit and vegetable man, encouraging children to taste the fruits and vegetables as he comes together.
- Firstly, discuss with the children how fruits and vegetables help us to be healthy, giving us the energy to run and play.
- Start with a pineapple for the body for your fruit and veggie man. Top and tail the pineapple and pass it around for the children to see, feel and smell
- An apple makes a head for the man, stuck on with toothpicks. Cut up another apple and pass it around for the children to taste.
- The eyes can be constructed using cherry tomatoes, the smiling mouth using a snow pea and the ears from two mushrooms, the arms from celery, the legs using carrots and the hair from broccoli.
- Discuss the taste and texture of the various fruits and vegetables that make up the fruit and veggie man. Ask the children their opinion on the taste. Did they like it? If not, why not?

Songs Involving Food & Nutrition

Milk, meat, bread and fruit

(Tune - Row, Row, Row your boat)

Milk, meat, bread and fruit,
These will help me grow,
To be strong and tall and well
Healthy from head to toe.

Oranges, apples, bananas, pears

(Tune – Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star)

Oranges, apples, bananas, pears,
These are fruits we love to share.

When we have our morning tea,
We eat our fruit it's really yummy.

Oranges, apples, bananas, pears,
These are fruit we love to share.

Variation (also to the tune of 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star')

Strawberries, bananas, watermelon too;
Good for me and good for you!

They are tasty; they are sweet.
All are such a yummy treat.

Strawberries, bananas, watermelon too
Food for me and good for you!

Four Red Cherries.....

(Tune - This Old Man)

Four red cherries on the tree,
Two for you and two for me
So-o shake that tree and watch them fall.
One, two, three, four – that is all

On a Picnic we will go

(Tune – Farmer in the Dell)

On a picnic we will go
On a picnic we will go
Let's fill our basket up (put a basket in the middle of a room)
On a picnic we will go
(child's name) brings an (food item e.g. apple) (child skips to the basket and puts the food inside)
(Child's name) bring a

Let's fill our basket up
On a picnic we will go

Continue the verses until all of the children have had a turn. The items used can be empty boxes of food the children have brought in or plastic play foods. When the song is over, take the items out of the basket. Have a discussion about these foods with the children and sort into healthy and unhealthy foods.

The Fruit Shop

(Tune – 5 current bun's in a bakers shop)

5 carrots in the fruit shop
Really long and orange
Along came _____ with some money one day,
Picked a carrot and took it away.

Can use a variety of fruit and vegetables in this song

- Eg. 5 pieces of cheese in the cheese shop
Really yellow and big
- Eg. 5 oranges in the fruit shop
Really round and orange.....

Bunny, bunny where's your carrot

(Tune - Doggie, Doggie Where's your bone)

Bunny, bunny where's your carrot,
Someone stole it from your home
Who stole the carrot?

Mouse, mouse where's your cheese.....

Cow, cow Where's your milk.....

The song “Here we go around the mulberry bush” can be adapted to healthy eating:

Here we go round the mulberry bush, the mulberry bush, the mulberry bush
Here we go round the mulberry bush so early in the morning

This is the way we drink our milk, drink our milk, drink our milk,
This is the way we drink our milk, so early in the morning

This is how we butter our toast, butter our toast, butter our toast
This is how we butter our toast, when we make our breakfast

We have a salad sandwich for lunch, sandwich for lunch, sandwich for lunch,
We have a salad sandwich for lunch, when we go to preschool

And so forth

Variation:

Here we go round the blueberry bush, the blueberry bush, the blueberry bush.
Here we go round the blueberry bush, so early in the morning

Pick the blueberries small and round, small and round, small and round
Pick the blueberries small and round, so early in the morning

Taste the blueberries ripe and sweet, ripe and sweet, ripe and sweet
Taste the blueberries ripe and sweet, so early in the morning

Fruit Bingo Game Variation

Use the board from the 'Fruit Bingo Game' if you have this available (or you could make your own with pictures of fruits and vegetables). Give the children a square each to cover up the vegetable or fruit while singing this song....

(Tune - If you're happy and you know it)

If you see an orange pumpkin, cover it now.
If you see an orange pumpkin, cover it now.
If you see an orange pumpkin,
If you see an orange pumpkin,
If you see an orange pumpkin, cover it now.

If you see a red tomato, cover it now.
If you see a red tomato, cover it now.
If you see a red tomato,
If you see a red tomato,
If you see a red tomato, cover it now.

Etc....

I'm a Big Red Tomato

I'm a big, red tomato
Growing on a vine
A big red tomato
Looking oh, so fine
Now you can make good things with me –
Soup, juice, pizza, to just name three

I'm a big, red tomato
Growing on a vine
Grow, grow, grow

Why do we drink milk?

Why do we drink milk? Because.....
Them bones, them bones them dry bones (3 times)
We drink milk to keep them strong

The foot bone is connected to the ankle bone
The ankle bone is connected to the leg bone
The leg bone is connected to the hip bone
The hip bone is connected to the back bone
The back bone is connected to the neck bone
The neck bone is connected to the head bone
We drink milk to keep them strong

Them bones, them bones them dry bones (3 times)
We drink milk to keep them strong

(Don't forget to do the actions by touching the parts of the body mentioned and the teacher can substitute any bone they want to e.g. hand bone)

The Fruit & Veggie Song

(Tune – twinkle, twinkle little star)

Fruit and veggies are such FUN
I want them in my tum, tum, TUM
There's mangoes, bananas
Potatoes are there for YOU
They're crunchy, juicy, tasty FOOD
That's why I'm in the eating MOOD
Open up that fruit shop CHUM
Fruit and veggies here I COME!

OR

Fruit and vegies are really yum
We eat them up in our tummy tum
Apples, oranges, tomato
Carrots, broccoli, potato
We eat them up any way
And try to keep healthy every day

(Children can have picture cards of each fruit and vegetable in the song and hold up the card when that item is being sung to make actions)