



munch into veg and fruit everyday

Factsheet No: 10

Healthy eating habits start early in life

Early childhood is an important time to establish healthy eating patterns. A wide variety of vegetables and fruit every day will provide your child with the nutrients they need to ensure growth and development. Introducing vegetables and fruit from a young age will help to lay the foundation for healthy eating for life.

How can I encourage my child to eat vegetables and fruit every day?

Make mealtimes positive

- Children's eating habits are learnt through observation. If children see their friends, family and carers enjoying vegetables and fruit every day they are more likely to eat them as well.
- Use praise to reward children for eating their vegetables and fruit instead of offering foods such as ice cream or confectionery. Rewarding with unhealthy foods may enhance a child's preference for that food.
- Forcing or pressuring children to eat vegetables or fruit may cause them to feel negative about those foods. Simply take the child's plate away and re-introduce particular vegetables or fruit at another time.
- Present children with a variety of vegetable and fruit choices. From those options let them choose what they would like to eat and how much.



Exposure to a variety of vegetables and fruit

- Presenting children with a wide variety of vegetables and fruit in the early years will broaden their taste for a range of flavours.
- Children may need to be exposed to vegetables and fruit a number of times before they establish their likes and dislikes. They may need to try a food up to 10 times before they accept it.



Activities to increase acceptance

- Allow children to help when purchasing, preparing and cooking vegetables and fruit.
- Take a trip to the market and allow children to touch, smell and help choose vegetables and fruit that they would like to try.
- Discuss with children where the different vegetables and fruit come from.
- Grow vegetables and herbs at home.

Initiative of



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An ACT Government initiative developed in partnership with Heart Foundation ACT

How much vegetables and fruit each day?

Infants aged 7-12 months

Solid foods should be commenced gradually, introducing different tastes and textures as the baby grows. It may take a while to reach the following recommendations:

	Serve size	Serves a day	Serves a week
vegetables	20g	1 ½ - 2	10-14
fruit	20g	½	3-4

Toddlers to 8 years old (see below for serve sizes)

	Toddlers aged around 1-2 years	2-3 years	4-8 years
vegetables	2-3 serves	2 ½ serves	4 ½ serves
fruit	½ serve	1 serve	1 ½ serves

Serve sizes

A standard serve size of vegetables is about 75g or:

- ½ cup cooked green or orange vegetables (broccoli, spinach, carrots or pumpkin)
- ½ cup cooked dried or canned beans, peas or lentils
- 1 cup green leafy or raw salad vegetables
- ½ cup sweet corn
- ½ medium potato or other starchy vegetables (sweet potato, taro or cassava)
- 1 medium tomato

A standard serve size of fruit is about 150g or

- 1 medium apple, banana, orange or pear
 - 2 small apricots, kiwi fruits or plums
 - 1 cup diced or canned fruit (with no added sugar)
- Or only occasionally:
- 125ml (½ cup) fruit juice (with no added sugar)
 - 30g dried fruit (eg 4 dried apricot halves, 1½ tablespoons of sultanas)

* National Health and Medical Research Council (2013) Educator Guide. Canberra: National Health and Medical Research Council

Creative ideas...

Vegetables

- Add grated vegetables (such as carrots and zucchini) to mince dishes such as meatloaf, rissoles and spaghetti bolognese.
- Add extra vegetables to your favourite stews, stir fries, pasta sauce, quiche, pizza and pancakes – most recipes can accommodate more vegetables.
- Add chopped vegetables and grated cheese to English muffins or bread to make tasty mini pizzas or try other great toppings such as creamed corn, mushrooms or tomatoes.
- Some great vegetable snacks can include corn on the cob, jacket potato, plain air popped corn, or sliced vegetables with cream cheese, salsa or hommus dips.

Fruits

- Instead of adding sugar, add chopped fruits to breakfast cereals.
- Add fruit (fresh, dried, canned or frozen) to muffins, pikelets, cakes, fruit crumble and fruit kebabs.
- Blend fruit with milk and yoghurt to make fruit smoothies.
- Blend fruits such as banana, watermelon and oranges. Freeze the mixture in moulds to make your own icy poles.
- Freeze whole fruits such as bananas and strawberries for a great summer snack.



Choking precautions

Lightly cooked or raw vegetables are ideal finger foods for young children. Hard fruits and vegetables such as apple, carrot and celery should be lightly cooked or grated to ensure they are safe for young children to consume. Grapes should be cut in quarters. Popcorn should be restricted to children aged three years and over. Children should always be seated and supervised while eating and drinking.

If you have any concerns regarding the growth and development of your child please consult with your Maternal and Child Health Nurse or your General Practitioner.

For more activity ideas please visit www.kidsatplay.act.gov.au

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