Early childhood services menu planning guidelines and self-assessment tool

Full menu provision services - morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea in Long Day Care

These menu planning guidelines and self-assessment tool are based on the *Australian Dietary Guidelines1* and the *Australian Guide to Healthy Eating2* and are consistent with the recommendations in the Australian Government’s *Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood3.* Following these guidelines will help your service strengthen its practice in Quality Area Two of the National Quality Standard4. Following these guidelines will also help your service meet criteria 1, 2 and 3 of the Tasmanian *Move Well Eat Well* - Early Childhood Award Program5.

A menu that offers morning tea, lunch, and afternoon tea should provide children aged 1–5 years with half of their daily nutrition requirements during eight hours of care. Services that provide breakfast and/or a late afternoon snack will need to offer extra food.

These guidelinesoutline the minimum number of serves for each of the five food groups that should be provided to 1–5 year old children in eight hours of care each day. A ‘serve’ refers to the amount of food appropriate for children aged 1–5 years. These serve sizes come from the *Australian Dietary Guidelines*.

These guidelinesalso include recommendations for providing foods and drinks for infants under the age of one year.

**Process**

* Use a separate copy of the self-assessment tool **for each two week block** (fortnight) of your menu.
* For each cooked/prepared menu item, please provide a recipe (including ingredients, quantities and serve sizes).

If you have any questions, please contact the dietitians at Public Health Services, Department of Health, Tasmania [community.nutrition@health.tas.gov.au](mailto:community.nutrition@health.tas.gov.au) or for queries about the *Move Well Eat Well* - Early Childhood Award Program requirements contact [movewelleatwellEC@health.tas.gov.au](mailto:movewelleatwellEC@health.tas.gov.au)

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| Main meals | Tick if meets guideline |
| Red meat (beef, lamb, kangaroo)  Lean red meat is included on the menu **at least four times each fortnight**. |  |
| Pork or poultry  Lean pork or poultry is included on the menu **at least two times each fortnight**. |  |
| Fish  Fish is included on the menu **one to two times each fortnight**. |  |
| Vegetarian  Vegetarian meals are included on the menu **at least once each fortnight** for variety. |  |
| Lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans | Tick if meets guideline |
| The menu offers **½ serve** of meat/meat alternatives for each child each day.  ½ serve= 50g raw red meat, pork, poultry; 60g raw or 50g tinned fish; 35g dry or 85g cooked or tinned legumes; one egg; 85g tofu; 60g hommus | Mon Tues Wed Thu Fri  Week 1  Week 2 |
| Lean ham or bacon (shortcut) may be included on the menu once or twice each week (either once as a major ingredient or twice as a minor ingredient).  Lean sausages may be included on the menu no more than once each month.  Lean ham, bacon and sausages are not offered on the menu on the same day.  No other processed meats are included on the menu. For example: full-fat sausages or sausage mince, frankfurts, hot dogs, cabana, salami, Strasburg, Devon, middle bacon and some commercial chicken nuggets and fish fingers. |  |
| Vegetarian meals | Tick if meets guideline |
| Vegetarian meals include:  a food containing protein such as eggs, legumes (such as chickpeas), milk, yoghurt, cheese, soy products (such as tofu) or nuts (if centre policy allows)  **AND**  a food containing iron (if not already included) such as spinach, legumes (such as chickpeas), baked beans, peas, tofu, eggs and broccoli  **AND**  a fruit or vegetable high in Vitamin C (such as capsicum, broccoli, kiwifruit, Brussels sprouts, paw paw, cauliflower, orange, mandarin, berries, cabbage, cantaloupe, frozen mixed vegetables, broad beans, spinach, sweet potato, potato, pineapple, cherries, raw tomato, zucchini, peas, green beans). | Tick if this applies to **all** vegetarian meals offered  Protein food  Vitamin C food  Iron food |
| Vegetables and legumes/beans | Tick if meets guideline |
| The menu offers **at least one to two serves** of vegetables and legumes for each child each day.  One serve= 75g fresh/frozen/tinned/cooked; one cup salad; 30g dry or 75g tinned legumes  \* Some hard vegetables (such as carrots and celery) may need to be cooked, mashed, grated or finely sliced to prevent choking in children under three. | Mon Tues Wed Thu Fri  Week 1  Week 2 |
| The menu includes a variety of vegetables and legumes:  At least two to three different types each day.  At least five different types each week. | Two to three types of vegetables each day  Mon Tues Wed Thu Fri  Week 1  Week 2  Five types of vegetables each week  Week 1   Week 2 |
| Fruit | Tick if meets guideline |
| The menu offers **at least ½ serve** of fruit for each child each day.  ½ serve= 75g fresh/tinned/cooked fruit  \* Fruit juice is a concentrated source of sugar and should not be offered as a drink.  \* Some hard fruit (such as apples) will need to be cooked, mashed, grated, or very finely sliced to prevent choking in children under three.  \* Fruit bread is not counted towards a serve of fruit. | Mon Tues Wed Thu Fri  Week 1  Week 2 |
| The menu includes a variety of fruit:  At least two to three different types each day.  At least five different types each week. | Two to three types of fruit each day  Mon Tues Wed Thu Fri  Week 1  Week 2  Five types of fruit each week  Week 1   Week 2 |
| Dried fruit is not offered more than once each week.  \* Dried fruit is a concentrated source of sugar which leaves a sticky residue on teeth and can contribute to tooth decay. If included on the menu is should be offered no more than once each week. |  |
| Promotion of vegetables and fruit | Tick if meets guideline |
| For each occasion that food is served, vegetables and/or fruit are offered.  This promotes to children and staff that vegetables and fruit are a normal part of everyday eating.  Examples include:   * Serving vegetables alongside other morning or afternoon tea snacks: chopped vegetable sticks\*, roasted vegetable pieces, cherry tomatoes\*, snow peas\*, vegetable purees as dips, ‘vegetable hair’ made using a mandolin or spiralizer. * Yoghurt and fruit or fruit smoothies.   \* Some foods will need to be cooked, mashed, grated, or finely sliced to avoid choking in children under three. | Mon Tues Wed Thu Fri  Week 1  Week 2 |
| Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives | Tick if meets guideline |
| The menu offers **at least one serve** of milk, yoghurt, cheese or calcium fortified alternatives (for example soy milk) for each child each day.  One serve = 250ml milk/soy drink; 200g yoghurt; 250ml custard; 40g hard cheese; 120g ricotta cheese.  This can spread across the day. For example, 125ml milk at morning tea and 20g hard cheese at afternoon tea.  \* Full fat varieties of milk, yoghurt, cheese and alternatives should be used for children less than two years. Reduced-fat milk, yoghurt, cheese and alternatives are suitable for children over two years of age.  \* Cream, sour cream and butter are not substitutes for milk, yoghurt and cheese or alternatives. These are ‘sometimes’ foods and should not be included on the menu or used in recipes.  \* Flavoured milk is not an appropriate drink for young children and should not be offered.  \* Ensure alternative products such as soy drinks and soy yoghurt are calcium fortified with at least 100mg calcium per 100ml. | Mon Tues Wed Thu Fri  Week 1  Week 2 |
| Grain (cereal) foods | Tick if meets guideline |
| The menu offers **at least two serves** of grain (cereal) foods for each child, each day.  One serve = one slice bread; ½ roll; 30g dry rice/pasta/noodles/couscous; 30g flour; 35g crispbread  Tick the box only if there are two serves or more offered to each child on that day. | Mon Tues Wed Thu Fri  Week 1  Week 2 |
| High fibre varieties (for example wholegrain and wholemeal) are offered at least three times each week, preferably every day. | Mon Tues Wed Thu Fri  Week 1  Week 2 |

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| ‘Sometimes’ food and drinks | Tick if meets guideline |
| ‘Sometimes’ food and drinks are not offered on the menu.  Foods and drinks which are high in saturated fat, added sugar and/or added salt, and low in fibre and have little nutritional value. Examples include:   * chocolate and confectionary * high fat/salt savoury biscuits, chips * high sugar/high fat cakes, slices and biscuits * ice cream, cream, dessert yoghurts and high sugar custards * fried foods (for example hot chips) and pastry based foods (for example pies, sausage rolls and pasties) * takeaway foods high in salt, sugar and saturated fats * some processed meats (see page 2 for examples) * soft drinks, fruit drinks, cordial, sports drinks, sports waters, flavoured waters, flavoured mineral waters, iced teas, energy drinks, fruit juices and flavoured milks. |  |
| Fats and oils | Tick if meets guideline |
| Polyunsaturated (for example sunflower, safflower) and/or monounsaturated (for example canola, olive, peanut, sunflower, soybean, sesame) oils and spreads are used in cooking and baking. |  |
| Palm oil, butter, cream, sour cream, coconut cream, coconut oil, copha, ghee and lard are not used in cooking. |  |
| Salt | Tick if meets guideline |
| Salt is not added to cooking or available at the table.  \* Salt is often added to foods that are processed (for example some breakfast cereals and bread), preserved (for example tuna in brine, smoked goods, ham) or cooked in salty solutions (for example some sauces or stocks) or foods that have flavours added (for example some savoury biscuits and pasta sauces).  When selecting packaged foods, choose ‘low salt’, ‘reduced salt’ or ‘no added salt’ products whenever possible. For example tinned foods, gravy and stock powders. |  |
| Breakfast | Tick if meets guideline |
| If breakfast is provided, it is based on grains (breads and cereals), fruits and vegetables, as well as milk, yoghurt, cheese and alternatives. | Grains (breads and cereals)  Milk, yoghurt, cheese and alternatives  Fruit and/or vegetables |
| At least one wholemeal or wholegrain choice is offered every day. |  |
| Breakfast cereals are low in added sugars.  (less than 15g of sugar per 100g if dried fruit is not an ingredient, or less than 25g per 100g if dried fruit is an ingredient) |  |
| Morning and afternoon tea | Tick if meets guideline |
| Morning and afternoon tea are planned and documented on the menu. |  |
| Morning tea and afternoon tea are based on foods and drinks from the five food groups.  These may include milk-based custard, yoghurt, cheese, eggs, legumes (for example baked beans), dips (for example hommus), fruit, vegetables, wholegrain crispbreads or crackers, pikelets, scones or English muffins. |  |
| Baked items are not offered every day.  If provided, baked items should:   * not contain large amounts of fat and sugar. For example sugar should be limited to ¼ cup sugar for each cup of flour. * Include some fruit or vegetables * Be baked with wholemeal flour, or half wholemeal and half white flour. |  |
| Spreads and toppings | Tick if meets guideline |
| Sandwiches, crackers and toast are filled or topped with foods from the five food groups. For example, cheese, vegetables (tomato or avocado), lean meats, eggs and hommus.  Note: Cream cheese has less calcium and protein than other cheeses so shouldn’t be used regularly in place of other cheeses.  Spreads such as jam, syrups, honey, vegemite, jars of cheese spread are not offered more than once per week. |  |
| Late snack | Tick if meets guideline |
| An extra snack is provided for children attending eight or more hours of care and is documented on the menu. |  |
| Late snack is based on foods and drinks from the five food groups. |  |
| Drinks | Tick if meets guideline |
| Water is offered at all meals and is available freely throughout the day. |  |
| Plain milk is another good option for children:  Children under the age of two years are given full-fat milk only.  Reduced fat milk is ok for children two years and over. |  |
| Soft drinks, fruit drinks, cordial, sports drinks, sports waters, flavoured waters, flavoured mineral waters, iced teas and energy drinks are not offered on the menu.  Flavoured milk and fruit juice are also not appropriate drinks for young children and are not offered on the menu. |  |
| Feeding infants under 12 months | Tick if meets guideline |
| Breast milk, infant formula and cooled boiled tap water are the only drinks offered to infants less than 12 months of age. |  |
| From around six months, age-appropriate solid foods are offered.  \*Age-appropriate generally refers to texture, but food safety is also important. For example, honey is not suitable for children under 12 months. |  |
| Solid foods are an appropriate texture for infants’ developmental stages.  \* For ease, modify the regular menu so that it is appropriate for infants. |  |
| Iron rich nutritious foods are offered every day.  For example iron fortified cereals, pureed red meat, poultry and fish, cooked mashed tofu, legumes (chickpeas or lentils) or eggs. |  |
| Fruit, vegetables, grain (cereal) foods and yoghurt or cheese are offered to infants every day in the regular menu. |  |
| Children with allergies | Tick if meets guideline |
| Children with allergies are provided with suitable alternatives to foods and drinks that are not tolerated. |  |
| Foods and drinks for children with allergies are documented on the menu. For more information about cooking for children with allergies and intolerances refer to <https://heas.health.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-services/allergy-and-intolerance> |  |
| Food variety | Tick if meets guideline |
| The menu includes a variety of meals from different cultures. |  |
| The menu offers a variety of colours, textures and flavours e.g. vegetables and fruits in a rainbow of colours. |  |
| Main meals are not repeated in a two-week menu block. |  |
| The main ingredient in a meal is not repeated on the same day each week e.g. fish is not provided every Friday only. |  |

References

1 *Australian Dietary Guidelines*, National Health and Medical Research Council, 2013, <http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au>

2 Australian Guide to Healthy Eating, National Health and Medical Research Council, 2013, <http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au>

3 *Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/phd-early-childhood-nutrition-resources>

4 National Quality Standard, Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority, <http://www.acecqa.gov.au>

5 *Move Well Eat Well* Early Childhood Award Program, Department of Health Tasmania, <http://www.movewelleatwell.tas.gov.au/>

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| *please do not reproduce this tool without the following acknowledgement:*  *Move Well Eat Well* Award Program, Public Health Services, Department of Health, TAS. 2018 |

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