



# Children and Young People

## Children and Young People and Fruit and Vegetables

### DID YOU KNOW?

- More than 87% of primary school aged children in NSW do not consume the recommended amount of vegetables.
- Research has shown that children who watch a lot of television are more likely to snack frequently on foods that are high in fat, salt and sugar and tend to eat less fruit and vegetables.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Fruit and vegetables are a good source of vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre. Including more fruit and vegetables as part of a balanced diet will help your children grow and develop and help prevent a range of chronic diseases such as Type 2 Diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and some forms of cancer.

It is recommended that adults eat at least 2 serves of fruit and 5 serves of vegetables each day. These amounts vary for children, depending on their age, appetite and activity levels. Children are encouraged to eat a variety of fruit and vegetables every day. Including raw and cooked fruit and vegetables in a range of different colours can help achieve this.

The recommended minimum daily intake of fruit and vegetables for children and adolescents is as follows:

AGE OF CHILD (years)	FRUIT (serves)	VEGETABLES (serves)
4-7	1-2	2-4
8-11	1-2	3-5
12-18	3-4	4-9

Source: Australian Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents

### HOW DO I ENCOURAGE MY CHILDREN TO EAT FRUIT AND VEGETABLES?

Encouraging children to eat fruit and vegetables can sometimes be a struggle. However, research has shown that the more fruit and vegetables are available and easily accessible for children i.e. chopped up and ready to eat, the more likely they are to eat them.

Providing a variety of different fruits and vegetables is one way to encourage your children towards healthy eating habits. However, you need to be patient. There is evidence that children need to try new fruits and vegetables repeatedly, possibly up to eight or nine times, before they are liked or accepted.

As a parent or carer you can help this process by being creative in the way you serve up fruit and vegetables. For example, prepare vegetables in different ways to vary the texture such as raw, microwaved, mashed, baked, grated into a casserole or frittata, blended up as a pasta sauce or as a soup.

### EASY FRUIT AND VEGETABLE IDEAS

Try and make fruit and vegetables a part of every meal or snack, for example:

- Top breakfast cereal with fruit
- Add chopped or pureed fruit to yoghurt as a snack
- Make a smoothie with fresh, frozen or canned fruit
- Add as a topping on toast such as bananas, mushrooms or tomatoes
- Chop up fruit or vegetable sticks for your child's lunchbox
- In summer, freeze fruit on a skewer as a snack
- Add vegies to a stir-fry, chop up in meat loaf or a casserole or on a home-made pizza

Select fruit and vegetables that are in season – they will taste better and are usually cheaper than those that are out of season.





Children and Young People continued

## Choosing drinks for children

### DID YOU KNOW?

- Children who regularly drink soft drink and other sweetened drinks are more likely to be overweight.
- In NSW, 55% of year 6 boys and just under 40% of year 6 girls drink more than one cup of soft drink each day. By year 8, these figures rise to almost 60% of boys and more than 40% of girls.

### WATER

Drinking water is the best way to quench thirst without getting the sugar and kilojoules found in fruit drinks and juices, soft drinks, sports drinks and flavoured mineral waters. Drinking water instead of sweetened drinks helps prevent dental problems and the Fluoride found in tap water also helps children develop strong teeth and bones.

### MILK

Milk is a good source of Calcium and is important for the growth of strong bones and teeth.

- Reduced fat or lite milks should be encouraged for children over the age of two years. Reduced fat milks contain much the same nutrients as full-cream milks except they are lower in saturated fats and therefore in energy content.
- Children under two years of age should not drink reduced fat milks as they have higher energy requirements than older children.

### FRUIT JUICE

Fruit juice is often regarded as a healthy choice as it contains Vitamin C. However one small glass (125 ml) of most juices provides a child's daily requirement for Vitamin C. More than this provides excess sugar and kilojoules that can contribute to weight gain. A piece of fruit is a better choice than juice as it provides fibre.

### SOFT DRINKS, CORDIALS AND SPORTS DRINKS

Regular soft drinks, cordials, sports drinks and flavoured mineral waters can contain large amounts of sugar and kilojoules. These drinks are not a necessary part of a healthy diet and should only be consumed occasionally – not everyday.

Source: Q4 Live Outside the Box 2005 Teacher Resource

### IDEAS TO ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO DRINK MORE WATER

- Pack a water bottle whenever you go out.
- In summer, put a frozen water bottle in your child's lunch box.
- Have cold water available at all times at home instead of sugar sweetened drinks.
- When participating in sports, encourage children to drink water rather than sports/energy drinks.
- Gradually water down juices, sports/energy drinks and cordials until your child is happy to replace these with plain water.
- Use smaller glasses when serving sugary drinks for children and limit the number and serve size of sugary drinks they have.

### REMEMBER

If you always offer sweetened drinks, children will be less likely to choose plain water. If you are going to offer your children sweetened drinks on occasions, healthier options are those drinks and waters with just a hint of sweetness. These can be consumed in larger volumes (up to 500 ml) to satisfy thirst without giving children excess sugar or a preference for strongly sweetened drinks.

## Further information

For more information on healthy eating and physical activity for you and your family, go to:

- [www.gofor2and5.com.au](http://www.gofor2and5.com.au)
- [www.livelifewell.nsw.gov.au](http://www.livelifewell.nsw.gov.au)
- [www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au](http://www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au)

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