

# Answer Sheet : Activity 1 - Food Variety

Nutrition in long day care

This resource is part of the Mini Professional Development package on the topic of Nutrition in early childhood. These have been developed by the Healthy Eating Advisory Service to support health promotion professionals in delivering engaging and practical sessions for Cooks Network meetings.

## Activity 1 - Food Variety

In this activity, we are going to explore how offering a variety of foods can support children’s growth and development in early childhood.

### Objectives

- Identify foods and categorize them according to the five food groups.
- Reflect on and evaluate their centres’ current menu to identify any gaps or areas of improvement.
- Consider strategies to increase the variety of foods offered across meals and snacks.

### Required resources



- A copy of your centre menu for 1 day

## Step 1: Review

Complete the table below while reviewing your sample menu and categorise each menu item according to the different food groups

Meal/Snack	Fruit	Vegetables	Grains	Meat and Meat Alternatives	Dairy and Dairy Alternatives
Example: Monday - Lunch		Zucchini, carrot, green beans	Brown rice	Chicken	
<p>Sample answers – everyone’s answers will vary depending on the different recipes that you chose to break down. Below is a list of some of the different food options and which category they would fit under. Please note that this is not an extensive list.</p>					
	Apple, pear, banana	Carrots, zucchini, sweet potato, pumpkin, tomato, cucumber	Wholegrain options of bread, pasta, cereal, cous cous, rice	Lean meat and chicken, fish, egg, tofu, legumes, hummus	

## Step 2: Reflect

Now let's have a discussion on how providing a variety of foods can ensure that children are getting all the different building blocks and nutrients that they need.

Questions to think about:

1. What variety of grain foods are you offering across the weekly menu (whole grains, brown rice, pasta, bread)?
  - Each cook will respond to this question differently. You could encourage discussion around looking at the different options that people could consider.
    - Wholegrain bread, wholegrain noodles, cooked oats, wheat cereal like Weetbix, crackers, buckwheat, semolina, polenta, cous cous
  - For more ideas view our resource: [Grainy goodies for kids](#)
2. Are there different meat and meat alternatives that you could be including in your menu (meat, legumes, dairy)?
  - Each cook will respond to this question differently. You could encourage discussion around looking at the different options that people could consider.
    - Lean meat (beef, lamb, kangaroo), lean poultry (chicken without the bone or skin on), fish (fresh or canned), eggs, tofu, chickpeas, baked beans, hummus, milk, yoghurt, cheese
  - For more ideas view our resource: [Tasty ways to include meat and alternatives](#)
3. How many different colours of fruit and vegetables are being offered throughout the day/week?
  - Each cook will respond to this question differently. You could encourage discussion around looking at the different options that people could consider.
    - Red: Capsicum, tomato, red apples, strawberries, raspberries
    - Orange: Capsicum, carrots, pumpkin, sweet potato, papaya, oranges
    - Yellow: Capsicum, corn, pear, pineapple, banana
    - Green: cucumbers, zucchini, green apples, pears, avocados, peas, spinach
    - Blue/Purple: Cabbage, blueberries, plum, eggplant
    - White: Potato, mushroom, cauliflower parsnip
  - For more ideas view our resources: [Fun fruity snacks for kids](#) or [Fun ways to add vegetables to the menu](#)

## Step 3: Group Discussion

Each long day care will have their own unique needs and challenges when it comes to menu planning. Let's take some time to share your knowledge and learnings with other members of the group.

Some questions to think about:

- Are there any ingredients that other cooks have mentioned or that was discussed today that you don't typically use in your menu?
- What are some strengths of your menus nutrition variety?
- Are there gaps to include a wider range of options?

You may like to use the following prompts/questions to help guide cooks through this activity.

1. If there are allergies in your centre, are there any ingredients that you regularly use to swap out others?
  - For more information view our [Allergies and intolerances resources](#)
2. If your centre is trying to limit purchasing certain ingredients (e.g. eggs, meat), what are you replacing or filling up your meals with?
  - For more information view our resource [Cooking to a budget](#)

3. Vegetables can be prepared in lots of different ways to change things up. Are there any vegetables that you would like to use more but are unsure how to prepare them to be used in long day care?

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