

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 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
- OR
- [Sample menus](#) from HEAS website

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	

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:

- What variety of grain foods are you offering across the weekly menu (whole grains, brown rice, pasta, bread)?
- Are there different meat and meat alternatives that you could be including in your menu (meat, legumes, dairy)?
- How many different colours of fruit and vegetables are being offered throughout the day/week?

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?

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