

Planning your healthy menu ahead of time helps with shopping for ingredients, time management and budgeting.

Use the *Menu planning checklist for long day care* to make sure you are providing the right balance of foods and drinks.

When preparing meals for children it is important to plan ahead so that the meals provided offer the right variety of food to help children meet their nutrition and developmental needs.

Developing a menu makes planning and preparing meals easier and also helps with shopping for ingredients, time management and budgeting.

The following steps will help you to plan a menu that meets *Menu planning guidelines for long day care*¹.

How to develop a menu

Follow these steps and refer to the sample menu template on the next page to develop a menu for your centre.

- 1 Plan for a two-week menu cycle. Use two different two-week menu cycles to develop a seasonal menu that covers four weeks (i.e. a four week summer menu and a four week winter menu).
- 2 Work out how many children the menu needs to cater for.
- 3 Identify any special dietary needs such as cultural preferences, allergies[^] or vegetarian diets.
- 4 Print four copies of the sample menu template on the next page (or create your own) and label each according to season, date and week number.
- 5 Review your recipe collection and think about new meal ideas if necessary. Visit www.heas.health.vic.gov.au for recipes.
- 6 Fill in all main meals using the criteria outlined in the *Menu planning guidelines for long day care*. Include details about ingredients used in recipes.
- 7 Add morning tea and afternoon tea and drinks.
- 8 Use the *Menu planning checklist for long day care*² to ensure that morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea provide the right balance of foods.
- 9 If your centre provides breakfast or a late snack, add these to the menu template.

For an example of a menu that meets the *Menu planning guidelines*, see the *Sample two-week menu for long day care*³

[^] For information about allergies and anaphylaxis action plans visit Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy, www.allergy.org.au

¹⁻³ Healthy Eating Advisory Service, Department of Health and Human Services, State Government of Victoria, 2012, www.heas.health.vic.gov.au

Sample menu template

(Name of centre) <insert season> menu

WEEK 1		MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
BREAKFAST	Food					
	Drink					
MORNING TEA	Food					
	Drink					
LUNCH	Food (include ingredient details)					
	Drink					
AFTERNOON TEA	Food					
	Drink					
LATE SNACK						
Water						
Infants (eating solids)						
Allergies						