

Menu planning guidelines for long day care



Early childhood services



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How to use this document

This document includes three key sections:

The **Menu planning guidelines for long day care** (pages 5–13) outline what to include, and what to leave off, a healthy menu for long day care.

The **Ingredient quantity guide** (pages 14–16) helps you work out how much food you'll need for the number of children you're cooking for.

The **Menu planning checklist for long day care** (pages 17–21) can be used to check your menu on the spot, and identify areas for improvement.

Resources and tip sheets

Throughout this document are suggested resources to support you with your menu planning.

These resources are free to view and download from the Healthy Eating Advisory Service website at <http://heas.health.vic.gov.au>.

About the guidelines

Plan your menu with the right balance of nutritious foods and drinks.

The *Menu planning guidelines for long day care* assist your long day care centre to plan a nutritious and balanced menu for 1–5 year old children.

The guidelines specify the minimum number of children’s serves* from each food group that should be provided to 1–5 year old children each day in long day care.

They also contain recommendations for feeding infants under 12 months of age.

The *Menu planning guidelines for long day care* are based on the Australian Government’s Australian Dietary Guidelines¹ and are consistent with the recommendations in the Australian Government’s Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood².

Following the guidelines will also help your long day care service towards achieving:

Quality Area 2 of the National Quality Standard³

Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations⁴

the Achievement Program’s Healthy Eating and Oral Health benchmark⁵

the Smiles 4 Miles award⁶.

For a simplified version of these guidelines, see the **Menu planning checklist for long day care** on pages 17–21.

*Children’s serves

A ‘children’s serve’ refers to the portion of food that is appropriate for children aged 1–5 years.

To be practical for a childcare setting, ‘children’s serves’ are an adaptation of the standard ‘serve sizes’ in the Australian Dietary Guidelines.

¹ *Australian Dietary Guidelines*, National Health and Medical Research Council, 2013, www.eatforhealth.gov.au

² *Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/phd-early-childhood-nutrition-resources

³ <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/Childrens-health-and-safety>

⁴ <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework/national-law-and-regulations>

⁵ <http://www.achievementprogram.health.vic.gov.au>

⁶ <https://www.dhsv.org.au/oral-health-programs/smiles4miles>



The five core food groups, taken from the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating⁸.

Summary

In general:

Morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea should provide 1–5 year old children with around half of their recommended daily intake from the five 'core' food groups (as recommended by the Australian Dietary Guidelines and Australia Guide to Healthy Eating):

fruit

vegetables and legumes

grain (cereal) foods

milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives

lean meat and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans

Sources of **added fat, sugar and salt** should be limited.

Water should be the main drink provided.

Menus that include **breakfast** and/or a **late afternoon snack** will need to offer additional foods and drinks based on the five core food groups.

The guidelines also provide recommendations for feeding children under 12 months of age, and guidance on catering for food variety, allergies, and more.

Find out more about the five core food groups at

<https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/food-essentials/five-food-groups>

Morning tea, lunch, and afternoon tea

In general, morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea should provide 1–5 year old children with around half of their recommended daily intake from the five ‘core’ food groups.

Wholegrain and wholemeal foods help keep children’s digestive system happy and healthy.



Grain (cereal) foods

Offer 2 children’s serves of grain (cereal) foods per child per day.

One children’s serve of grain (cereal) foods is equal to one serve in the *Australian Dietary Guidelines*. This is equivalent to:

40g bread (1 slice, ½ medium roll or flatbread, 1 crumpet or 0.5 an English muffin)

30g breakfast cereal flakes (⅔ cup), 2 Weetbix™ or similar, ⅓ cup oats

30g dry weight rice, pasta, noodles, couscous, barley, buckwheat, semolina, cornmeal, quinoa, polenta (½ cup cooked)

30g flour (¼ cup)

35g crispbread (3–4 cracker biscuits or crispbread, 3 thick rice cakes, 6 thin rice/corn cakes, 12 plain rice crackers)

75g (½ medium) potato (can be counted as grain food if menu meets minimum vegetable requirements).

Include high fibre (wholemeal and wholegrain) varieties at least 3 times per week, preferably every day.

Tip sheet: Grainy goodies for kids

<http://heas.health.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-services/Food-drink-ideas/grainy-goodies-for-kids>

Eating a rainbow of vegetables ensures children get a variety of essential nutrients.



Vegetables and legumes/beans

Offer 1–1½ children’s serves of vegetables** and legumes/beans per child per day.

One children’s serve of vegetables and legumes/beans is equal to one serve in the *Australian Dietary Guidelines*. This is equivalent to:

75g fresh, frozen, canned (drained) or cooked vegetables (½ cup cooked)

1 cup of leafy greens

75g (½ medium) potato

30g dry weight beans or legumes or 75g (½ cup) cooked or canned beans or legumes.

** Some hard vegetables may need to be cooked, mashed, grated or very finely sliced to prevent choking.

Offer a variety of vegetables and/or legumes; at least 2–3 different types per day, and 5 different types per week.

Tip sheet: Making veggies fun for kids

<http://heas.health.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-services/Food-drink-ideas/Making-veggies-fun-for-kids>

Fruit provides many important vitamins such as vitamin C and folic acid.



Fruit

Offer 1 children's serve of fruit* per child per day.**

One children's serve of fruit is equal to half a serve in the *Australian Dietary Guidelines*.

This is equivalent to:

75g fresh fruit (1 small piece, ½ medium piece or equivalent amount of 2-3 types)

75g (½ cup) diced, cooked or canned in natural juice (drained), frozen fruit
15g dried fruit

Fruit juice is a concentrated source of sugar and should not be offered as a drink.

*** Some hard fruit may need to be cooked, mashed, grated or very finely sliced to prevent choking.

Offer a variety of fruit: at least 2–3 different types per day, and 5 different types per week.

Limit dried fruit to once per week.

Dried fruit and fruit juice are a concentrated source of sugar which leaves a sticky residue on teeth and can contribute to tooth decay. Fruit juice should not be offered as a drink.

Tip sheet: Fruity fun snacks for kids

<http://heas.health.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-services/Food-drink-ideas/Fruity-fun-snacks-for-kids>

Dairy foods provide calcium, protein and eight other essential vitamins and minerals.



Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives

Offer 2 children's serves of milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or calcium fortified alternatives per child per day.

One children's serve of milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives is equal to just under half a serve in the *Australian Dietary Guidelines*.

This is equivalent to:

100mL milk****

50mL evaporated milk

15g milk powder

100mL custard

80g yoghurt

15g hard cheese (1 slice)

50g ricotta cheese.

Cream, sour cream and butter are not substitutes for milk, yoghurt and cheese.

****Cow's milk alternatives such as soy/rice/oat products must be fortified with at least 100mg of added calcium per 100mL.

It is recommended that milk is offered as a drink at morning tea and/or afternoon tea every day.

Full fat varieties of milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives should be used for children less than 2 years of age. Reduced fat milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives are suitable for children over 2 years of age. Skim varieties and sugar sweetened flavoured milk must not be provided.

Tip sheet: Menu ideas and tips for milk and alternatives

<http://heas.health.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-services/food-drink-ideas/milk-alternatives>

Lean meat and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans

Offer 1 children's serve of lean meat, poultry, fish or vegetarian alternatives per child per day.

One children's serve of lean meat, poultry, fish or vegetarian alternatives is equal to half a serve in the *Australian Dietary Guidelines*.

This is equivalent to:

50g raw lean red meat (e.g. beef, lamb, kangaroo), lean pork or poultry (e.g. chicken) without the bone

30g lean cooked red meat

40g cooked poultry (skin off)

60g raw fish or 50g canned or cooked fish

35g dry weight beans or legumes or 85g (½ cup) cooked or canned (drained) beans or legumes

1 egg

85g tofu

60g hummus

15g nuts or nut butter (if centre policy allows).

Lean red meat should be served 4 times per fortnight, lean pork or poultry 2 times per fortnight and fish 1–2 times per fortnight (preferably 2).

Tip sheet: Tasty ways to include meat and alternatives

<http://heas.health.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-services/food-drink-ideas/meat-alternatives>

Lean ham or lean short cut bacon may be included on the menu once or twice per week.

Either once as a major ingredient in a meal and once as a minor ingredient in a meal, or twice as a minor ingredient in a meal. An example of a major ingredient is ham sandwiches. An example of a minor ingredient is diced ham in a zucchini slice.

Refer to **Discretionary food and drinks** for the types of processed meats that don't meet the *Menu planning guidelines for long day care*.

Include a variety of meat and non-meat sources of protein on the menu.



Legumes are a versatile source of protein, fibre, and iron.



Vegetarian meals

Include vegetarian meals on the menu at least once per fortnight (preferably 2 times).

Vegetarian meals should include:

a food containing protein, such as eggs, legumes (e.g. chickpeas), milk, yoghurt, cheese, soy products (e.g. tofu) or nuts (if centre policy allows)

AND

a food containing iron (if not already included), such as spinach, legumes (e.g. chickpeas), baked beans, peas, tofu, eggs, or broccoli

AND

vegetables high in vitamin C (to enhance iron absorption by the body), such as capsicum, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, sweet potato, raw tomato, zucchini, or green beans.

Tip sheet: Four steps to a healthy vegetarian meal

<http://heas.health.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-services/food-and-drink-ideas/four-steps-healthy-vegetarian-meal>

Morning and afternoon tea

Morning tea and afternoon tea should be planned and documented on the menu.

Foods and drinks served at morning and afternoon tea must be nutritious and based on choices from the five core food groups.

These may include yoghurt, cheese, milk-based custard, eggs, legumes (e.g. baked beans), healthy dips (e.g. hummus), fruit, vegetables, wholegrain bread items, crispbread which are lower in fat and salt, and baked items.

Baked items for morning tea and afternoon tea should not be provided every day.

These include savoury and sweet cakes, scones, muffins, loaves and slices.

Baked items must be low in added sugars and oils, and preferably include some fruit and/or vegetables and wholemeal flour.

Baked items should contain 5g or less of added sugar per serve.

Added sugars include brown sugar, caster sugar, icing sugar, raw sugar, white sugar, coconut sugar, golden syrup, honey or rice malt syrup.

Tip sheet: Snack ideas: Morning and afternoon tea

<http://heas.health.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-services/food-and-drink-ideas/snack-ideas-morning-and-afternoon-tea>

Breakfast and late snack

Long day care menus that include breakfast and/or a late afternoon snack should offer nutritious foods and drinks from the five core food groups.

The number of serves per food group is not counted for breakfast and late snack.



Breakfast

If breakfast is provided it should include the following food groups:

grain (cereal) foods, and
milk, yoghurt, cheese and alternatives.

Wholemeal and/or wholegrain choices should be provided every day at breakfast.

Breakfast cereals should be low in added sugars.

This means 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.

Fruits and vegetables are also good choices to include at breakfast.

Tip sheet: Breakfast ideas for outside school hours care
[http://heas.health.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-services/
food-drink-ideas/breakfast-ideas](http://heas.health.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-services/food-drink-ideas/breakfast-ideas)

Late snack

An extra snack should be provided for children attending 8 or more hours in care. Late snack should be documented on the menu.

Foods and drinks offered for late snack should be nutritious and based on choices from the five food groups:

fruit
vegetables and legumes
grain (cereal) foods
milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives
lean meat and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans

Keep discretionary food and drinks off the menu.

Overall menu

Discretionary food and drinks

Some foods and drinks cannot be included in the daily menu.

These are called 'discretionary' foods and drinks. Discretionary foods and drinks provide little health benefits as they can be high in saturated/trans fat, added sugar, added salt, and/or they are heavily processed.

Examples of discretionary foods and drinks:

chocolate, confectionary, jelly

high fat/high salt commercially made savoury biscuits, chips, crackers

high sugar/high fat sweet and savoury baked items such as muffins, cakes, loaves and non-baked slices

cream, ice cream, sour cream, commercially made frozen yoghurts

pastry based foods such as pies, pinwheels, pasties and sausage rolls

fatty meats such as sausages, frankfurts/hot dogs, salami, Strasburg, Devon, some commercial chicken nuggets and fish fingers

soft drinks, fruit juice and fruit drinks, cordial, sports drinks, sports waters, flavoured waters, flavoured mineral waters, iced teas and energy drinks

shallow or deep-fried foods such as chips, fish, tempura vegetables, falafels

fast food and takeaway foods

Tip sheet: What to keep off the menu

<http://heas.health.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-services/menu-planning/what-to-leave-off>

Water and plain milk are the best drinks for children.

Drinks

Water should be offered at all meals and is available freely throughout the day.

Plain milk is another healthy drink option for children.

Full fat milk should be given to children under the age of 2 years.

Reduced-fat milk is suitable for children over 2 years of age. Skim milk must not be provided.

Refer to **Discretionary food and drinks** (below) for a list of drinks that don't meet the *Menu planning guidelines for long day care*.

Fats and oils

Use monounsaturated and/or polyunsaturated oils and spreads in cooking and baking.

Suitable options include olive, canola, peanut, sesame, soybean, safflower, and sunflower oils.

Avoid palm, cottonseed and coconut oils or oil blends that contain these, as well as cream, sour cream, butter, copha, ghee and lard.

Limit fats and oils to 10g/mL (2 teaspoons) or less of monounsaturated or polyunsaturated oils/spreads per child per day.

Enhance flavour with citrus, herbs and spices.



Salt

Salt should not be added to cooking or be available at the table.

Swap salt for healthier options such as herbs, spices, seeds, citrus, peppers and pungent foods such as mustards, wasabi and horseradish. Using a variety of cooking techniques also enhances the flavour of food. Examples include grilling, roasting, steaming, stir frying and sautéing.

Select 'low salt', 'reduced salt' or 'no added salt' packaged products.

Salt is often added to foods that are processed (e.g. some breakfast cereals and bread), preserved (e.g. tuna in brine, smoked goods, ham) or cooked in salty solutions (e.g. some sauces or stocks) or foods that have flavours added (e.g. some savoury biscuits and pasta sauces).

Limit sauces very high in salt to less than 5g/mL per serve per child.

Sauces such as soy or fish sauce, curry paste, regular tomato sauce and even some pasta sauces are very high in salt and can be harmful in large amounts, especially for young children. Choose reduced salt options and use in small amounts.

Consider making sauces yourself without adding salt, and using herbs and spices instead.

Tip sheet: Reducing salt in your service

<http://heas.health.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-services/food-drink-ideas/reducing-salt>

Replace spreads with tasty options from the five food groups.

Spreads

Salty and sweet spreads should be used sparingly and not offered every day.

Salty and sweet spreads can include jams and marmalades, honey, nut butters and Vegemite™ or Marmite™. These foods are high in added sugar, salt and/or fat, and reduce the opportunity to offer healthier options from the five foods groups.

Replace these spreads with nutritious alternatives such as cheese (ricotta, cottage, cream cheese, tasty or feta), natural yoghurt, fresh fruit and/or vegetables and vegetable or dairy based dips.

Tip sheet: Spreads and toppings

<http://heas.health.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-services/food-drink-ideas/spreads-and-toppings>

Food allergies and intolerances

Children with food allergies and intolerances must be provided with suitable alternatives to foods and drinks that are not tolerated.

A statement about offering allergy friendly alternatives must be documented on the menu.

For example, “Children with food allergies and intolerances are provided with suitable nutritious alternatives”.

For further information on common food allergies and intolerances visit <http://heas.health.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-services/allergy-and-intolerance>

Prioritise each child’s health, religious and cultural needs.

Food variety

The menu should be varied and should meet the social and cultural needs of children.

This means that:

the menu includes a variety of meals from different cultures

the menu includes a variety of tastes, colours, textures (e.g. crunchy, soft) and flavours

main meals are not repeated in a two-week menu cycle

the main ingredient in a meal is not repeated on the same day each week (e.g. fish is not provided every Friday only).

Offer iron rich foods to babies when eating solids.

Feeding children under 12 months of age

Breast milk, infant formula and cooled boiled tap water should be the only drinks provided to children until 12 months of age.

A variety of age-appropriate solid foods should be offered from around 6 months old. Solid foods should be an appropriate texture and consistency for infants’ developmental stages.

For ease, modify the regular menu so that it is appropriate for infants.

Include nutritious foods that contain iron each day.

Examples include iron fortified cereals, pureed meat, poultry and fish, cooked mashed tofu, legumes (e.g. chickpeas or lentils) or eggs.

Fruit, vegetables, grains and milk, yoghurt, cheese and alternatives should also be available every day for infants that are eating solids.

Tip sheet: Menu planning for babies in childcare
<http://heas.health.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-services/menu-planning/babies>

Ingredient quantity guide

The tables below will help you order and prepare foods and drinks in quantities that meet the *Menu planning guidelines for long day care* to support children's nutrition needs and reduce food wastage at the same time.

We have provided quantities below that you can multiply or divide to match the number of children you are cooking for. For example, if you are cooking for 60 children, you can double the quantities provided for 30 children.

Lean meat and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans

Offer 1 children's serve of lean meat, poultry, fish or alternatives per child per day.

E.g. for 10 children you need 600g of fish to provide enough for each child.

	1 children's serve	Number of children						
		10	30	50	80	100	150	250
Lean red meat, pork, poultry (raw)	50g boneless	500g	1.5kg	2.5kg	4kg	5kg	7.5kg	12.5kg
Lean red meat (cooked)	30g	300g	900g	1.5kg	2.4kg	3kg	4.5kg	7.5kg
Poultry (cooked, skin off)	40g	400g	1.2kg	2kg	3.2kg	4kg	6kg	10kg
Fish (raw)	60g	600g	1.8kg	3kg	4.8kg	6kg	9kg	15kg
Fish (canned/cooked)	50g	500g	1.5kg	2.5kg	4kg	5kg	7.5kg	12.5kg
Egg	1 egg	10 eggs	30 eggs	50 eggs	80 eggs	100 eggs	150 eggs	250 eggs
Legumes (dry)	35g	350g	1.05kg	1.75kg	2.8kg	3.5kg	5.25kg	8.75kg
Legumes (cooked/tinned, drained weight)	85g (½ cup)	850g (5 cups)	2.55kg (15 cups)	4.25kg (25 cups)	6.8kg (40 cups)	8.5kg (50 cups)	12.75kg (75 cups)	21.25kg (125 cups)
Tofu	85g	850g	2.55kg	4.25kg	6.8kg	8.5kg	12.75kg	21.25kg
Hummus	60g (¼ cup)	600g (2½ cups)	1.8kg (7 cups)	3kg (12 cups)	4.8kg (20 cups)	6kg (25 cups)	9kg (37½ cups)	15kg (62½ cups)

Fruit

Offer 1 children's serve of fruit per child per day.

E.g. for 10 children you need 750g of fresh/tinned/frozen fruit to provide enough for each child.

	1 children's serve	Number of children						
		10	30	50	80	100	150	250
Fruit (fresh/frozen)	75g (½ medium piece)	750g (5 pieces)	2.25kg (15 pieces)	3.75kg (25 pieces)	6kg (40 pieces)	7.5kg (50 pieces)	11.25kg (75 pieces)	18.75kg (125 pieces)
Fruit (cooked/tinned, drained)	½ cup	5 cups	15 cups	25 cups	40 cups	50 cups	75 cups	125 cups
Dried fruit*	15g	150g	450g	750g	1.2kg	1.5kg	2.25kg	3.75kg

Vegetables and legumes/beans

Offer 1–1½ children's serves of vegetables and legumes per child per day.

E.g. for 10 children you need 750g-1kg of fresh vegetables to provide enough for each child.

	1 children's serve	Number of children						
		10	30	50	80	100	150	250
Vegetables (fresh/frozen)	75g	750g–1kg	2.25–3kg	3.75–5kg	6-8kg	7.5-10kg	11.25-15kg	18.75-25kg
Vegetables (cooked/tinned, drained)	½ cup	5–7 ½ cups	15–22 ½ cups	25–37 ½ cups	40-60 cups	50-75 cups	75-112 ½ cups	125-187 ½ cups
Vegetables (salad)	1 cup	10–15 cups	30–45 cups	50–75 cups	80-120 cups	100-150 cups	150-225 cups	250-375 cups
Legumes (dry)	30g	300–450g	900g–1.3kg	1.5–2.25kg	2.4-3.6kg	3-4.5kg	4.5-6.75kg	7.5-11.25kg
Legumes (cooked/tinned, drained weight)	75g (½ cup)	750g–1kg	2.25–3kg	3.75–5kg	6-8kg	7.5-10kg	11.25-15kg	18.75-25kg

Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives

Offer 2 children's serves of milk, yoghurt, cheese or calcium fortified alternatives per child per day.

E.g. for 10 children you could provide 1 litre of milk AND 800g of yoghurt to provide enough for each child.

	1 children's serve	Number of children						
		10	30	50	80	100	150	250
Milk	100mL	1L	3L	5L	8L	10L	15L	25L
Hard cheese	15g (1 slice)	150g	450g	750g	1.2kg	1.5kg	2.25kg	3.75kg
Yoghurt	80g	800g	2.4kg	4kg	6.4kg	8kg	12kg	20kg
Custard	100mL	1L	3L	5L	8L	10L	15L	25L
Evaporated milk	50mL	500mL	1.5L	2.5L	4L	5L	7.5L	12.5L
Milk powder	15g	150g	450g	750g	1.2kg	1.5kg	2.25kg	3.75kg
Ricotta cheese	50g	500g	1.5kg	2.5kg	4kg	5kg	7.5kg	12.5kg

Grain (cereal) foods

Offer 2 children's serves of grain (cereal) foods per child per day.

E.g. for 10 children you could provide 10 slices of bread AND 300g of pasta to provide enough for each child.

	1 children's serve	Number of children						
		10	30	50	80	100	150	250
Bread (all types)	1 slice (40g)	10 slices (½ loaf)	30 slices (1½ loaves)	50 slices (2½ loaves)	80 slices (4 loaves)	100 slices (5 loaves)	150 slices (7½ loaves)	250 slices (12½ loaves)
Pita bread	½ large pocket (40g)	5 pockets (400g)	15 pockets (1.2kg)	25 pockets (2kg)	40 pockets (3.2kg)	50 pockets (4kg)	75 pockets (6kg)	125 pockets (10kg)
Breakfast cereal flakes	30g	300g	900g	1.5kg	2.4kg	3kg	4.5kg	7.5kg
Breakfast cereal (wheat biscuits)	2 Weetbix™	20 Weetbix™	60 Weetbix™	100 Weetbix™	160 Weetbix™	200 Weetbix™	300 Weetbix™	500 Weetbix™
Bread roll	½ medium	5 rolls	15 rolls	25 rolls	40 rolls	50 rolls	75 rolls	125 rolls
Pasta/noodles/rice/cous cous	30g dry	300g	900g	1.5kg	2.4kg	3kg	4.5kg	7.5kg
Flour	¼ cup (35g)	2½ cups (350g)	7½ cups (1.05kg)	12½ cups (1.75kg)	20 cups (2.8kg)	25 cups (3.5kg)	37½ cups (5.25kg)	62½ cups (8.75kg)
Cracker biscuit/ crisp bread	35g	350g	1.05kg	1.75kg	2.8kg	3.5kg	5.25kg	8.75kg
Crumpet/ English muffin	1 crumpet/ small muffin	10	30	50	80	100	150	250

Menu planning checklist for long day care

Use this checklist to plan or review two weeks of your menu cycle.

The number of serves recommended is the minimum required to meet the nutrition and developmental needs of 1–5 year old children in care.

Main meals		Tick if menu meets guideline				
<p>Red meat: beef, lamb, kangaroo</p> <p>Lean red meat is included on the menu at least 4 times per fortnight.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>					
<p>Pork or poultry</p> <p>Lean pork or poultry is included on the menu at least 2 times per fortnight.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>					
<p>Fish</p> <p>Fish is included on the menu 1–2 times per fortnight.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>					
<p>Vegetarian</p> <p>Vegetarian meals are included on the menu at least once per fortnight.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>					
Lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans		Tick if menu meets guideline				
<p>The menu includes 1 children's serve of meat/meat alternatives per child per day.</p>		Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
	Week 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Week 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Lean ham or short cut bacon are limited to being offered once or twice per week (either once as a major ingredient and once as a minor ingredient, or twice as a minor ingredient).</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Vegetarian meals	Tick if menu meets guideline		
Vegetarian meals include: a food containing protein such as eggs, legumes (e.g. chickpeas), milk, yoghurt, cheese, soy products (e.g. tofu) or nuts (if centre policy allows). AND a food containing iron (if not already included) such as legumes (e.g. chickpeas), baked beans, tofu, eggs, peas, some leafy greens and broccoli. AND a fruit or vegetable high in vitamin C (e.g. 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).	Protein food	Iron food	Vitamin C food
Vegetarian meal #1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vegetarian meal #2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Fruit	Tick if menu meets guideline				
The menu includes at least 1 children's serve of fruit per child per day. <i>Fruit juice is a concentrated source of sugar and should not be offered as a drink.</i>	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
Week 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The menu includes a variety of fruit: At least 2–3 different types each day. At least 5 different types each week.	2–3 types of fruit per day				
	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
Week 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	5 types of fruit per week				
Week 1	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 2	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Dried fruit is not offered more than once per week.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Vegetables and legumes/beans	Tick if menu meets guideline				
The menu includes at least 1–1½ children's serves of vegetables and legumes per child per day.	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
Week 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The menu includes a variety of vegetables and legumes: At least 2–3 different types each day. At least 5 different types each week.	2–3 types of vegetables per day				
	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
Week 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	5 types of vegetables per week				
Week 1		<input type="checkbox"/>			
Week 2		<input type="checkbox"/>			

Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives

Tick if menu meets guideline

The menu includes at least **2** children's serves of milk, yoghurt, cheese or calcium fortified alternatives per child per day. Calcium fortified alternatives contain at least 100mg of calcium per 100mL.

Full fat varieties of milk, yoghurt, cheese and alternatives should be used for children less than 2 years. Reduced-fat milk, yoghurt, cheese and alternatives are suitable for children over 2 years of age. Skim milk must not be provided.

Cream, ice cream, sour cream, some frozen yoghurts and butter are not substitutes for milk, yoghurt and cheese.

Flavoured milk is not an appropriate drink for young children and should not be included in the daily menu.

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
Week 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Grain (cereal) foods

Tick if menu meets guideline

The menu includes at least **2** children's serves of grain (cereal) foods per child per day.

High fibre varieties (e.g. wholegrain and wholemeal) are included at least **3** times per week, preferably every day.

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
Week 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
Week 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Discretionary foods and drinks

Tick if menu meets guideline

Discretionary foods and drinks **are not** on the menu.
 chocolate, confectionary, jelly
 high fat/salt savoury biscuits, chips, crackers
 high sugar/high fat sweet and savoury baked and raw items
 cream, ice cream, some frozen yoghurts
 deep fried foods (e.g. chips, falafels, tempura vegetables)
 pastry based foods (e.g. pies, sausage rolls and pasties)
 processed meats (e.g. sausages/sausage mince, frankfurts/hot dogs, salami, strasburg, devon, some commercial chicken nuggets and fish fingers)
 soft drinks, fruit juice drinks, flavoured milks, cordial, sports drinks, sports waters, flavoured waters, flavoured mineral waters, iced teas and energy drinks.
 most fast food and takeaway foods

Spreads

Tick if menu meets guideline

Spreads are used sparingly and not offered every day.

Fats and oils	Tick if menu meets guideline
Monounsaturated (e.g. canola, olive, peanut, sesame, sunflower, soybean) and/or polyunsaturated (e.g. safflower, sunflower) oils and spreads are used in cooking and baking.	<input type="checkbox"/>
The daily menu allows 10g (2 teaspoons) or less of monounsaturated or polyunsaturated oils or spreads per child.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Palm oil, butter, cream, sour cream, coconut cream, coha, ghee and lard are not used in cooking.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Salt	Tick if menu meets guideline
Salt is not added to cooking or available at the table.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Salt reduced packaged products are used when available rather than regular salt varieties.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sauces that contain very high levels of salt (such as fish sauce, original soy sauce, and regular tomato sauce) are restricted to less than 5g per serve.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Breakfast	Tick if menu meets guideline
If breakfast is provided it is based on grain foods as well as milk, yoghurt, cheese and alternatives.	Grain foods <input type="checkbox"/> Milk, yoghurt, cheese/alternatives <input type="checkbox"/>
At least one wholemeal or wholegrain choice is provided every day.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Breakfast cereals are low in added sugars. <i>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.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Morning and afternoon tea	Tick if menu meets guideline
Morning and afternoon tea are planned and documented on the menu.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Morning tea and afternoon tea are based on foods and drinks from the five food groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Baked items are not provided every day.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Baked items contain 5g or less per serve of added sugar and include some fruit and/or vegetables and wholemeal flour. <i>Added sugar includes brown sugar, caster sugar, icing sugar, raw sugar, white sugar, coconut sugar, golden syrup, honey or rice malt syrup.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Late snack	Tick if menu meets guideline
An extra snack is provided for children attending 8 or more hours of care and is documented on the menu.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Late snack is based on foods and drinks from the five food groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drinks	Tick if menu meets guideline
Water is offered at all meals and is available freely throughout the day.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Soft drinks, fruit juice, fruit drinks, flavoured milks, cordial, sports drinks, sports waters, flavoured waters, flavoured mineral waters, iced teas and energy drinks are not on the menu.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Food allergies and intolerances	Tick if meets guideline
Children with food allergies and intolerances are provided with suitable alternatives to foods and drinks that are not tolerated.	<input type="checkbox"/>
A statement about offering allergy friendly alternatives is documented on the menu. For example 'Children with food allergies and intolerances are provided with suitable nutritious alternatives.'	<input type="checkbox"/>
Food variety	Tick if meets guideline
The menu includes a variety of meals from different cultures.	<input type="checkbox"/>
The menu includes a variety of tastes, colours, textures (e.g. crunchy, soft, etc) and flavours.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Main meals are not repeated in a two-week menu cycle.	<input type="checkbox"/>
The main ingredient in a meal is not repeated on the same day each week (e.g. fish is not provided every Friday only).	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feeding infants under 12 months of age	Tick if menu meets guideline
Breast milk, infant formula and cooled boiled tap water are the only drinks provided to infants under 12 months of age.	<input type="checkbox"/>
From around 6 months, age-appropriate solid foods are offered.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Solid foods are an appropriate texture for infants' developmental stages.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Iron rich nutritious foods are offered every day.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Menu planning support

Online training

Learn more about the *Menu planning guidelines for long day care* in our free online training for cooks, directors and educators.

You will learn:

about the *Menu planning guidelines for long day care*
how to plan healthy menus online using FoodChecker
simple meal, snack and drink ideas for children
healthy ingredient swaps and shopping tips
ways to deal with challenges like food allergies and budgeting
how educators can promote healthy eating at meal times and play time
and much more!

It takes less than an hour to do, and you can do it at your own pace by saving your progress as you go.

Find out more at <http://heas.health.vic.gov.au/training/long-day-care>.

FoodChecker: online healthy menu planner

FoodChecker is a free Victorian government website that helps long day care centres review and plan healthy menus to meet the *Menu planning guidelines for long day care*.

You can review one day, or one week, of your menu at a time to get instant feedback and recommendations on how you can meet the guidelines.

FoodChecker also helps you get organised!

You can print a copy of your menu, save your favourite recipes, and download a shopping list that includes every ingredient you'll need.

Find out more at <http://heas.health.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-services/menu-assessments>

Menu assessment report

After you have reviewed one week of your menu on FoodChecker, you will get report that says whether or not the menu has met the *Menu planning guidelines for long day care*.

If your menu has met the guidelines you can use your FoodChecker report as evidence when working towards the Achievement Program's Healthy Eating and Oral Health benchmarks and the Smiles 4 Miles award.

Healthy Eating Advisory Service

The Healthy Eating Advisory Service website has a wide range of resources and tools to help childcare services provide and promote healthy food and drinks.

Visit our website for:

recipes with the number of serves per food group, and allergy notes

healthy food and drink ideas

seasonal sample menus that meet the *Menu planning guidelines for long day care*

information on common food allergies and intolerances

advice and resources to promote healthy eating

how to develop a healthy eating policy

case studies on how other early childhood services provide healthier menus

menu assessments (FoodChecker)

online training

and more!

Visit the Healthy Eating Advisory Service website at <http://heas.health.vic.gov.au>

Embedding healthy eating in your centre

To make permanent healthy eating changes in your service it's important to embed your service's commitment to healthy eating in policy and processes.

Visit the Healthy Eating Advisory Service website for healthy eating policy templates

See <http://heas.health.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-services/developing-healthy-eating-policy>

If you require help to get your management team support for healthy eating in the childcare centre please contact the Healthy Eating Advisory Service. Our team of accredited nutrition professionals have supported many businesses across Victoria to achieve healthier eating environments.

Contact us on 1300 22 52 88 or email heas@nutritionaustralia.org.

For more information visit our website
heas.health.vic.gov.au