

Healthy Eating Advisory Service

Early childhood services

Menu planning guidelines for long day care

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How to use this document

This document includes three key sections:

- The Menu planning guidelines for long day care (pages 5–14) outline what to include, and what to leave off, a healthy menu for long day care.
- The Ingredient quantity guide (pages 15–18) 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 19–24) 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 Guidelines (1) and are consistent with the recommendations in the Australian Government's Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood (2).

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

- Quality Area 2 of the National Quality Standard (3)
- Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations (4)
- Healthy Places Healthy Futures (5)
- The Smiles 4 Miles award (6)

For a simplified version of these guidelines, see the Menu planning checklist for long day care on pages 19–24.

***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.

References:

1. Australian Dietary Guidelines, National Health and Medical Research Council, 2013, https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au
2. Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood, Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/get-up-grow-resource-collection
3. The Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA), https://www.acecqa.gov.au/Childrens-health-and-safety
4. The Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA), https://www.acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework/national-law-and-regulations
5. Healthy Places Healthy Futures, https://healthyplaces.health.vic.gov.au/en
6. Dental Health Services Victoria, https://www.dhsv.org.au/oral-health-programs/smiles4miles

Menu planning guidelines for long day care



The five core food groups, taken from the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating[8].

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

Wholegrain and wholemeal foods keep children's digestive system happy and healthy



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.

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

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
Fun ways to add vegetables to the menu

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

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

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





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.

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.

Legumes are a source of versatile 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



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



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



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

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

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



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 more information
View information on menu planning for allergies and intolerances.

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

Ingredient quantity guide for long day care menus

The Ingredient quantity guide helps you order and prepare foods and drinks in quantities that meet the Menu planning guidelines for long day care. This supports children's nutrition needs while also reducing food wastage.

→ 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.

	What is 1 children's serve?	5 children	10 children	20 children	30 children	40 children	50 children	60 children
Lean red meat, pork, poultry (raw)	50g boneless	250g	500g	1kg	1.5kg	2kg	2.5kg	3kg
Lean red meat (cooked)	30g	150g	300g	600g	900g	1.2kg	1.5kg	1.8kg
Poultry (cooked, skin off)	40g	200g	400g	800g	1.2kg	1.6kg	2kg	2.4kg
Fish (raw)	60g	300g	600g	1.2kg	1.8kg	2.4kg	3kg	3.6kg

	What is 1 children's serve?	5 children	10 children	20 children	30 children	40 children	50 children	60 children
Fish (canned/ cooked)	50g	250g	500g	1kg	1.5kg	2kg	2.5kg	3kg
Egg	1 egg	5 eggs	10 eggs	20 eggs	30 eggs	40 eggs	50 eggs	60 eggs
Legumes (dry)	35g	175g	350g	700g	1.05kg	1.4kg	1.75kg	2.1kg
Legumes (cooked/tinned, drained weight)	85g (½ cup)	425g (2½ cups)	850g (5 cups)	1.7kg (10 cups)	2.55kg (15 cups)	3.4kg (20 cups)	4.25kg (25 cups)	5.1kg (30 cups)
TVP*	20g	100g	200g	400g	600g	800g	1kg	1.2kg
Tofu	85g	425g	850g	1.7kg	2.55kg	3.4kg	4.25kg	5.1kg
Hummus	60g (¼ cup)	300g (1¼ cups)	600g (2½ cups)	1.2kg (5 cups)	1.8kg (7 cups)	2.4kg (9½ cups)	3kg (12 cups)	3.6kg (14 cups)

* TVP stands for Textured Vegetable Protein which is a vegetarian meat substitute.

	What is 1 children's serve?	5 children	10 children	20 children	30 children	40 children	50 children	60 children
Nuts, nut butters, seeds	15g	75g	150g	300g	450g	600g	750g	900g

→ Fruit

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

	What is 1 children's serve?	5 children	10 children	20 children	30 children	40 children	50 children	60 children
Fruit (fresh/ frozen)	75g (½ med piece)	375g (2½ pieces)	750g (5 pieces)	1.5kg (10 pieces)	2.25kg (15 pieces)	3kg (20 pieces)	3.75kg (25 pieces)	4.5kg (30 pieces)
Fruit (cooked/ tinned, drained)	½ cup	2 ½ cups	5 cups	10 cups	15 cups	20 cups	25 cups	30 cups
Dried fruit**	15g	75g	150g	300g	450g	600g	750g	900g

**Dried fruit leaves a sticky residue on teeth and can contribute to tooth decay. If included on the menu it should only be offered once per week.

Vegetables and legumes/beans

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

	What is 1 children's serve?	5 children	10 children	20 children	30 children	40 children	50 children	60 children
Vegetables (fresh/ frozen)	75g	375–500g	750g–1kg	1.5–2kg	2.25–3kg	3–4kg	3.75–5kg	4.5–6kg
Vegetables (cooked/ tinned, drained)	½ cup	2½ - 3¾ cup	5–7½ cups	10–15 cups	15–22½ cups	20–30 cups	25–37½ cups	30–45 cups
Vegetables (salad)	1 cup	5–7½ cups	10–15 cups	20–30 cups	30–45 cups	40–60 cups	50–75 cups	60–90 cups
Legumes (dry)	30g	150–225g	300–450g	600–900g	900g–1.3kg	1.2–1.8kg	1.5–2.25kg	1.8–2.7kg
Legumes (cooked/ tinned, drained weight)	75g (½ cup)	375–500g	750g–1kg	1.5–2kg	2.25–3kg	3–4kg	3.75–5kg	4.5–6kg

Grain (cereal) foods

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

	What is 1 children's serve?	5 children	10 children	20 children	30 children	40 children	50 children	60 children
Bread (all types)	1 slice (40g)	5 slices (¼ loaf)	10 slices (½ loaf)	20 slices (1 loaf)	30 slices (1 ½ loaves)	40 slices (2 loaves)	50 slices (2½ loaves)	60 slices (3 loaves)
Pita bread	½ large pocket (40g)	2½ pockets (200g)	5 pockets (400g)	10 pockets (800g)	15 pockets (1.2kg)	20 pockets (1.6kg)	25 pockets (2kg)	30 pockets (2.4kg)
Breakfast cereal flakes	30g	150g	300g	600g	900g	1.2kg	1.5kg	1.8kg
Breakfast cereal (wheat biscuits)	2 Weetbix™	10 Weetbix™	20 Weetbix™	40 Weetbix™	60 Weetbix™	80 Weetbix™	100 Weetbix™	120 Weetbix™
Bread roll	½ medium	2½ rolls	5 rolls	10 rolls	15 rolls	20 rolls	25 rolls	30 rolls
Pasta/ noodles/rice/ cous cous	30g dry	150g	300g	600g	900g	1.2kg	1.5kg	1.8kg

	What is 1 children's serve?	5 children	10 children	20 children	30 children	40 children	50 children	60 children
Flour	¼ cup(35g)	1¼ cups (175g)	2½ cups (350g)	5 cups (700g)	7½ cups (1.05kg)	10 cups (1.4kg)	12½ cups (1.75kg)	15 cups (2.1kg)
Cracker biscuit/ crisp bread	35g	175g	350g	700g	1.05kg	1.4kg	1.75kg	2.1kg
Crumpet/ English muffin	1 crumpet/ small muffin	5	10	20	30	40	50	60

Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/ or alternatives

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

	What is 1 children's serve?	5 children	10 children	20 children	30 children	40 children	50 children	60 children
Milk	100mL	500mL	1L	2L	3L	4L	5L	6L
Hard cheese	15g (1 slice)	75g	150g	300g	450g	600g	750g	900g

	What is 1 children's serve?	5 children	10 children	20 children	30 children	40 children	50 children	60 children
Yoghurt	80g	400g	800g	1.6kg	2.4kg	3.2kg	4kg	4.8kg
Custard	100mL	500mL	1L	2L	3L	4L	5L	6L
Evaporated milk	50mL	250mL	500mL	1L	1.5L	2L	2.5L	3L
Milk powder	15g	75g	150g	300g	450g	600g	750g	900g
Ricotta cheese	50g	250g	500g	1kg	1.5kg	2kg	2.5kg	3kg

*A 'children's serve' refers to the portion of food appropriate for children aged 1–5 years. To be practical in the childcare setting, children's serve sizes have been adapted from the serve sizes in the Australian Dietary Guidelines.

Menu planning checklist for long day care

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

Please refer to the Menu planning guidelines for long day care for more detailed information.

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

Step 1: Plan main meal variety

Main meals	Tick if menu meets guideline
Red meat: beef, lamb, kangaroo Lean red meat is included on the menu at least 4 times per fortnight	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Pork or poultry Lean pork or poultry is included on the menu at least 2 times per fortnight	☐ ☐
Fish Fish is included on the menu 1-2 times per fortnight	☐ ☐
Vegetarian Vegetarian meals are included on the menu at least once per fortnight	☐

Step 2: Consider five food groups offered daily

Grain (cereal) foods	Tick if menu meets guideline
This menu includes at least 2 children's serves of grain (cereal) foods per child per day.	Mon Tues Wed Thurs Fri Week 1 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Week 2 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
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 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Week 2 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Vegetables and legumes/beans	**Tick if menu meets guideline**
This menu includes at least 1-1½ children's serves of vegetables and legumes per child per day	Mon Tues Wed Thurs Fri Week 1 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Week 2 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
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 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Week 2 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **5 Types of vegetables per week** Week 1 ☐ Week 2 ☐

Fruit	Tick if menu meets guideline
The menu includes at least 1 children's serve of fruit per child per day Fruit juice is a concentrated source of sugar and should not be offered as a drink	Mon Tues Wed Thurs Fri Week 1 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Week 2 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
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 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Week 2 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **5 types of fruit per week** Week 1 ☐ Week 2 ☐
Dried fruit is not offered more than once per week	☐
Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives	**Tick if menu meets guideline**
This 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 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Week 2 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans	Tick if menu meets guideline
The menu includes 1 children's serve of meat/meat alternatives per child per day	Mon Tues Wed Thurs Fri Week 1 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Week 2 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
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)	☐ ☐

Step 3: Vegetarian meals

Vegetarian meals	Tick if menu meets guideline
Vegetarian meals include: • a food containing protein Examples: eggs, chickpeas, milk, yoghurt, cheese, tofu or nuts (if centre policy allows) AND • a food containing iron (if not already included) Examples: chickpeas, baked beans, tofu, eggs, or peas AND • a fruit or vegetable. Many fruits and vegetables are high in vitamin C.	Protein Food / Iron Food / Vitamin C Food Vegetarian meal #1 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Vegetarian meal #2 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Step 4: Meal times

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** ☐ **Milk, yoghurt, cheese/alternatives** ☐
At least one wholemeal or wholegrain choice is provided every day.	☐
Breakfast cereals are low in added sugars. Less than 15g of sugar per 100g if dried fruit is not an ingredient, or less than 25g per 100g if dried fruits is an ingredient	☐
Morning and afternoon tea	**Tick if menu meets guideline**
Morning and afternoon tea are planned and documented on the menu	☐
Morning tea and afternoon tea food groups are based on foods and drinks from the five food groups	☐
Baked items are not provided everyday	☐
Baked items contain 5g or less per serve of added sugar and include some fruit and/or vegetables and wholemeal flour Added sugar includes brown sugar, caster sugar, icing sugar, raw sugar, white sugar, coconut sugar, golden syrup, honey or rice malt syrup.	☐
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.	☐
Late snack is based on foods and drinks from the five food groups.	☐

Step 5: Discretionary foods not to include on the menu

Discretionary foods and drinks	Tick if menu meets guideline
Discretionary foods and drinks are not on the menu. Examples of discretionary food and drinks: • 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 foods and takeaways	☐

Step 6: Drinks

Drinks	Tick if menu meets guideline
Water is offered at all meals and is available freely throughout the day	☐
Soft drinks, fruit juice, fruits drinks, flavoured milks, cordial, sports drinks, sports waters, flavoured waters, flavoured mineral waters, iced teas and energy drinks are not on the menu.	☐

Step 7: Cooking additions

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.	☐
The daily menu includes 10g (2 teaspoons) or less of monounsaturated or polyunsaturated oils or spreads per child.	☐
Palm oil, butter, cream, sour cream, coconut cream, copha, ghee and lard are not used in cooking.	☐
Salt	**Tick if menu meets guideline**
Salt is not added to cooking or available at the table	☐
Salt reduced packaged products are used when available rather than regular salt varieties	☐
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	☐

Step 8: Other considerations

Food allergies and intolerances	Tick if menu meets guideline
Children with food allergies and intolerances are provided with suitable alternatives to foods and drinks that are not tolerated	☐
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.'	☐

Food variety	Tick if menu meets guideline
The menu includes a variety of meals from different cultures.	☐
The menu includes a variety of tastes, colours, textures (e.g. crunchy, soft, etc) 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)	☐
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	☐
From around 6 months, age-appropriate solid foods are offered	☐
Solid foods are an appropriate texture for infants' developmental stages.	☐
Iron rich nutritious foods are offered every day.	☐

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

It take less than hour to do, and you can do it at your own pace by saving your progress as you go
Find out more at https://heas.health.vic.gov.au/training/planning-healthy-menus-for-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 https://heas.health.vic.gov.au/resources/assess-my-menu/using-foodchecker-for-early-childhood-services/

Menu assessment report
After you have reviewed one week of your menu on FoodChecker, you will get a 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 Healthy Places Healthy Futures Food, Nutrition and Oral Health priority area and the Smiles 4 Miles award.

Healthy Eating Advisory Service

The Healthy Eating Advisory Service website has a 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 health eating changes in your service it's important to embed your service's commitment to healthy eating in policy and processes.

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

See http://heas.health.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-servivces/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@nnf.org

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