

# GET UP & GROW

HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

DIRECTOR/COORDINATOR BOOK



Australian Government  
Department of Health and Ageing

## Minister's Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the *Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Guidelines for Early Childhood Settings*, an initiative that is an important element of the Australian Government's *Plan for Early Childhood* and *Plan for Tackling Obesity*.

Our children's early years are arguably their most important and establishing healthy behaviours from birth will lay the foundation for lifelong health and wellbeing. Nutritious food and regular physical activity supports the normal growth and development of children and reduces the risk of developing chronic lifestyle related diseases later in life.

As more children spend time in care, early childhood settings can play an important part in supporting healthy choices around nutrition and physical activity. This resource provides practical information and advice to assist practitioners, carers and families in this role.

The *guidelines* have been designed so that they can be applied in a variety of early childhood settings including centre-based care, family day care and preschools. They are evidence-based and consistent with current thinking on early childhood development.

They will also complement a range of other programs such as the Healthy Kids Check for all four-year-olds before they start school and resources such as the *Get Set 4 Life – habits for healthy kids* Guide.

These initiatives will help to ensure that all Australian children have the best possible start in life and every opportunity for the future.



**The Hon Nicola Roxon**  
**Minister for Health and Ageing**

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# Director/Coordinator Book



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*Get Up & Grow: Healthy eating and physical activity for early childhood* provides general non-commercial, evidence-based information to early childhood education and care settings, to assist in developing healthy habits for children birth to five years. For children with particular medical or nutrition conditions, professional medical advice may be required.

Readers should be aware that these resources may contain images of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are now deceased.

## Summary of guidelines and recommendations

### HEALTHY EATING GUIDELINES

**Healthy eating guideline 1:** Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended, with positive support, for babies up to six months. Continued breastfeeding is recommended for at least 12 months – and longer if the mother and baby wish.

**Healthy eating guideline 2:** If an infant is not breastfed, is partially breastfed, or if breastfeeding is discontinued, use an infant formula until 12 months of age.

**Healthy eating guideline 3:** Introduce suitable solids at around six months.

**Healthy eating guideline 4:** Make sure that food offered to children is appropriate to the child's age and development, and includes a wide variety of nutritious foods consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia* (see page 3).

**Healthy eating guideline 5:** Provide water in addition to age-appropriate milk drinks. Infants under the age of six months who are not exclusively breastfed can be offered cooled boiled water in addition to infant formula.

**Healthy eating guideline 6:** Plan mealtimes to be positive, relaxed and social.

**Healthy eating guideline 7:** Encourage children to try different food types and textures in a positive eating environment.

**Healthy eating guideline 8:** Offer an appropriate amount of food, but allow children to decide themselves how much they will actually eat.

**Healthy eating guideline 9:** Offer meals and snacks at regular and predictable intervals.

**Healthy eating guideline 10:** Ensure that food is safely prepared for children to eat – from the preparation stages to consumption.

### PHYSICAL ACTIVITY RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation:** For healthy development in infants (birth to 1 year), physical activity – particularly supervised floor-based play in safe environments – should be encouraged from birth.

**Recommendation:** Toddlers (1 to 3 years) and pre-schoolers (3 to 5 years) should be physically active every day for at least three hours, spread throughout the day.

**Recommendation:** Children younger than two years of age should not spend any time watching television or using other electronic media (DVDs, computer and other electronic games).

**Recommendation:** For children two to five years of age, sitting and watching television and the use of other electronic media (DVDs, computer and other electronic games) should be limited to less than one hour per day.

**Recommendation:** Infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers should not be sedentary, restrained or kept inactive for more than one hour at a time – with the exception of sleeping.



## ***Food for Health: Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia***

### **Encourage and support breastfeeding.**

**Children and adolescents need sufficient nutritious foods to grow and develop normally.**

- Growth should be checked regularly for young children.
- Physical activity is important for children and adolescents.

### **Enjoy a wide range of nutritious foods.**

Children and adolescents should be encouraged to:

- eat plenty of vegetables, legumes and fruits
- eat plenty of cereals (including breads, rice, pasta and noodles), preferably wholegrain
- include lean meat, fish, poultry and/or alternatives
- include milks, yoghurts, cheeses and/or alternatives. Reduced-fat milks are not suitable for children under two years, because of their high energy needs, but reduced-fat varieties should be encouraged for older children and adolescents
- choose water as a drink

and care should be taken to:

- limit saturated fat and moderate total fat intake. Low-fat diets are not suitable for infants
- choose foods low in salt
- consume only moderate amounts of sugars and foods containing added sugars.

### **Care for your child's food: prepare and store it safely.**

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# Introduction

The *Get Up & Grow: Healthy eating and physical activity for early childhood* guidelines and accompanying resources have been developed by child health and early childhood professionals in collaboration with the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. State and territory governments were also consulted in the development of these resources.



The *Get Up & Grow* resources are designed to be used in a wide range of early childhood settings by families, staff and carers, and to support a consistent, national approach to childhood nutrition and physical activity. When applying the guidelines and recommendations outlined within the resources, early childhood settings will also need to meet any other requirements set out in state, territory or federal regulatory arrangements.

These healthy eating and physical activity resources are based on two key national health documents that focus on children, namely:

- The *Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia incorporating The Infant Feeding Guidelines for Health Workers* (2003), which forms the basis for nutrition policy in Australia (available in Section 4: Further Reading).
- The *National Physical Activity Recommendations for Children 0 to 5 years*, which has been developed to guide policy and practice around physical activity for young children (summary available at the end of Section 2: Physical Activity).



This collection of resources has also been developed in recognition of the rich cultural and religious diversity in Australia. To ensure that a range of needs were considered in the development, early childhood staff and carers, associated professionals, and parents from around Australia were consulted through surveys and focus groups. This consultation included a diverse range of people: some from urban, regional and remote locations, some with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, some from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, and some who care for children with a disability.

In Australia, we presently face an increasing problem with overweight and obese children. The intention of these resources is not to specifically target overweight and obesity, but to establish healthy lifestyle habits in children, in particular healthy habits for eating and physical activity. In turn, this will contribute to the prevention of weight problems in children, while promoting optimum growth, addressing other health issues such as dental health, and allowing children to thrive through social, physical and intellectual development.



The goal of the healthy eating guidelines is to promote offering healthy food choices to children (whether food is provided in the setting or brought from home), while also encouraging children to eat to their own appetites, develop positive attitudes toward selecting food, and enjoy eating. The goal of the physical activity recommendations is to support making play a priority, and encourage early childhood staff, carers and families to provide frequent play opportunities in a positive environment.

Four books have been developed to support those who work in early childhood settings and the families of settings:

- *Director/Coordinator Book*
- *Staff and Carer Book*
- *Cooking for Children*
- *Family Book*

Directors and coordinators are responsible for the design and equipment of a setting, reviewing or developing healthy eating and physical activity policies, and supporting staff.

This book will assist in:

- understanding the rationale behind the outlined guidelines
- developing healthy eating and physical activity policies for an early childhood setting
- understanding the role of staff, including carers and cooks, and how they can support healthy habits for children and their families.



## 'Directors and coordinators play a key role in children's development...'



The *Director/Coordinator Book* includes copies of each of the resource books and a CD with additional materials, such as flyers for parents, posters and stickers for the setting, and 11 healthy eating and physical activity newsletter inserts. The newsletter inserts can be easily added into a setting's newsletter.

Directors and coordinators play a key role in children's development in early childhood settings. The information in this book will act as a guide for encouraging children and families to get up and grow!