The Australian Dietary Guidelines and the Australian Infant Feeding Guidelines

Australian Dietary Guidelines

How were the Australian Dietary Guidelines developed?

The Australian Dietary Guidelines were developed by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) in partnership with the Australian Government Department of Health (2013). This involves prioritising research questions, systematically evaluating new and existing evidence, and applying a structured evidence-to-decision framework to inform recommendations. Multidisciplinary expert committees provide advice throughout the process, with stakeholder and community input incorporated to support transparency and ensure the revised guidelines are relevant and appropriate for Australians.

What are the Australian Dietary Guidelines?

Name: Australian Dietary Guidelines (ADGs)

Developed by: National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) in partnership with the Australian Government Department of Health

Year: 2013

Review date: Currently under review; updated guidelines are anticipated for release in 2027

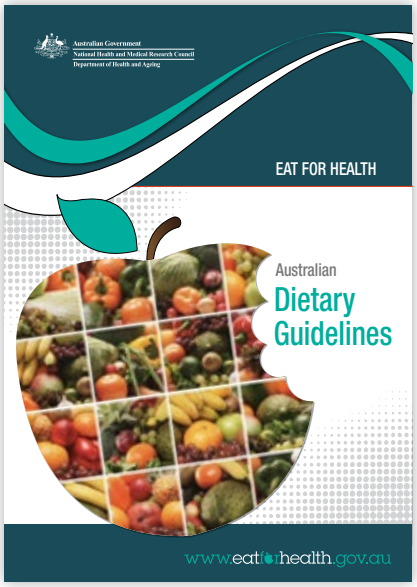
Five core food groups

The ADGs organise foods into five groups that together provide the full range of nutrients children need to grow and develop:

- Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain and/or high-fibre varieties
- Vegetables and legumes/beans
- Fruit
- Lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts, seeds, and legumes/beans
- Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives

Discretionary foods are identified as a separate category, those high in saturated fat, added sugar, or salt, which are best kept to small amounts and offered only occasionally.

Each standard serve within a food group provides approximately equivalent energy, defined by weight or volume. For example, half a cup of cooked vegetables and a full cup of salad vegetables both count as one serve.



Visual presentation

The ADGs are accompanied by the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating, a plate-shaped graphic that illustrates the proportions of each food group to be enjoyed across the day, helping users visualise balance without prescribing exact amounts at each meal (see page 10).

Age bands and serves

The ADGs specify recommended daily serves per food group for different age groups.

For ECEC settings, the most relevant age bands are:

- 1–2 years
- 2–3 years
- 4–8 years.

Australian Infant Feeding Guidelines

What are the Infant Feeding Guidelines?

The Australian Infant Feeding Guidelines provide evidence-informed information and recommendations related to feeding infants from birth to around two years of age. They were written in conjunction with the Australian Dietary Guidelines, which provide recommendations for children aged two years and older.

Published in 2012, they are a revision of the 2003 Infant Feeding Guidelines, utilising updated evidence to ensure recommendations were aligned with current knowledge at the time.

Why were they developed, what are the underpinning intentions?

The Infant Feeding Guidelines were developed by the National Health and Medical Research Council to provide health workers with clear advice around feeding infants. The Guidelines aim to promote and encourage exclusive breastfeeding as the optimal way for babies to be fed until around six months of age, with breastfeeding continuing alongside solid foods to 12 months and beyond. However, they also provide information regarding safe use of infant formula when infants are not breastfed (or partially breastfed), and recommendations regarding the introduction of solid foods.

How were they developed?

A panel of experts gathered evidence surrounding a variety of infant feeding topics, through a systematic literature review of scientific evidence. A draft of the Guidelines were then released to the public for consultation, with feedback from members of the public taken into consideration for the final version of the Guidelines.



What are the Infant Feeding Guidelines?

Name: Infant Feeding Guidelines: Information for health workers

Developed by: National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) in partnership with the Australian Government Department of Health

Year: 2012

Review date: A minor review was conducted in 2024 following the release of the World Health Organization Guideline for complementary feeding of infants and young children 6–23 months of age (2023)

Sections

The Infant Feeding Guidelines are primarily organised into three sections covering the main ways infants are fed:

- Breastfeeding
- Infant formula
- Introduction of solid foods.

This information has been sourced from the Best Practice Guide for Early Childhood Education and Care Food Environment.
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