

Session overview

The aim of this session is to explore the daily serve recommendations from the five food groups and meal planning.

There are two main topics in this session. All recommendations in this session align with the Australian Dietary Guidelines (NHMRC 2013). The focus of this session is not about restricting food intake. Instead, it is about teaching people to portion meals and snacks across the day in line with the recommended standard serve sizes.

1 Portions and serves

Teaching objective: To explore how to eat a variety of foods from the five food groups using standard serve sizes.

By the end of this topic, participants will understand:

- The difference between a portion and a serve.
- What a standard serve size is for different foods.
- How to meet the recommended number of daily standard serves for each of the five food groups in meals across the day.

Summary of key learnings

- The difference between portions (what's on your plate) and serves (standard measurements) is explained, using the Meal Mate cup as a visual tool.
- Participants learn the recommended daily standard serve sizes for each of the five food groups—grains, vegetables, fruits, protein foods, and dairy— as per the Australian Dietary Guidelines based on their age group and gender. In doing so, they are prompted to reflect on whether they are meeting the recommendations, and if not, what changes they can make. Note, these recommendations indicate the minimum daily standard serves. Participants that have greater nutritional needs, for example due to increased physical activity levels require more than the recommendation.
- These recommendations are emphasised as a guide only, not rigid rules to abide by every mealtime, every day. Instead, participants are encouraged to spread out food from the five food groups across the day and adjust choices based on hunger and activity levels.

2 Meal planning

Teaching objective: To explore the importance of planning ahead and how to design meals and snacks with a variety of foods.

By the end of this topic, participants will understand:

- How planning ahead can help you reach your healthy eating goals.
- How to plan meals and snacks across the day to meet the minimum recommended serves from the five food groups.
- How to introduce and explore new foods.

Summary of key learnings

- Participants are introduced to the importance of proactive planning in helping to portion

- balanced meals and snacks with a variety of foods from the five food groups. The many other benefits of meal planning are also highlighted including cost saving, creating happy family mealtimes, and reducing stress to help foster intrinsic motivation to plan ahead.
- Participants have the opportunity to plan a day on a plate. This involves planning a day of meals and snacks to meet the recommended daily standard serve sizes for their gender and age group.
- Practical tips for healthy eating within a food budget are discussed, including eating foods when in season, buying in bulk and shopping at a local fruit and vegetable grocer.
- Participants are encouraged to introduce new foods using the food exposure technique and engaging all five senses. It is emphasised that the more exposures, the more likely participants will eat and enjoy new foods.

3 Put this into practice

Below is a list of suggested SMART goals that participants may choose to work on after completing this session.

Coaches should introduce these SMART goals to participants in the coaching session, or once all education activities and discussions are complete. Participants are encouraged to choose 2 – 3 goals to work on at a time. Coaches should guide participants to select a balance of activity and nutrition goals. Goals can be adapted to be easier or harder, so they are suitable for each participant.

SMART Goal suggestions

- Make a weekly menu for meals this week.
- Prepare healthy snacks to keep in the fridge/freezer so that they're ready and easy to grab this week.
- Cook in bulk and freeze meals for dinners on busy days this week.
- Aim to meet the recommended serves for grain (cereal) foods at least three days this week.
- Aim to meet the recommended serves for vegetables at least three day this week.
- Aim to meet the recommended serves for fruit at least three days this week.
- Aim to meet the recommended serves for dairy at least three days this week.
- Aim to meet the recommended serves for protein foods at least three days this week.
- Include beans/legumes in meals or snacks at least twice this week.
- Include a variety of vegetables in meals and snacks across the day, every day this week.
- Try the exposure technique to explore new foods at least twice this week.
- Try to make mealtimes relaxed and pleasant when introducing new foods this week.
- Cook a new recipe for a meal at least twice this week.
- Involve other family members in shopping, preparing or cooking at least twice this week.

Key references:

National Health and Medical Research Council (2013). Australian Dietary Guidelines. Canberra: National Health and Medical Research Council. https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-09/n55a_australian_dietary_guidelines_summary_131014_1.pdf