



Healthy eating for children (5–12 year olds)

Eating a wide variety of healthy foods is important for your child's wellbeing, growth and development.

Focus on encouraging the whole family/whānau to eat well rather than on your child's weight. Body weight can be difficult for children to deal with. It is important your child doesn't feel like they are being punished. It's easier to eat healthy meals and snacks if healthier foods are in the house.

- Make sure your child eats a good breakfast every day. Good breakfast choices include: wholegrain cereals, such as Weet-Bix™ or porridge, wholegrain toast, eggs, fruit, low-fat milk (green or yellow top) and low-fat, low-sugar yoghurt.
- Where possible, try to prepare your child's lunch for them each day. This will help stop them buying junk food at school or on the way there – plus it will save you money.
- If your child is buying lunch, encourage them to:
 - choose something healthy, like a wholegrain sandwich or roll, wrap, sushi, boiled eggs, falafel, small can of fish and fresh fruit
 - avoid fried foods, pies and other pastries, cakes, biscuits, sweet muffins and snack foods like sweets, chocolate and chippies.
- If aunties, uncles or grandparents are picking up the children after school, ask them not to buy the children 'treat' foods.
- Afternoon tea should be snack sized, not dinner sized.
- If your child earns pocket money, put it in their bank account rather than giving them cash, or just give them a small amount to spend each week if they will use it to buy sweets.
- Encourage your school to provide only healthier lunch order options and to become a water only school.
- When possible, eat meals together as a family and make sure the TV and other computer screens are turned off – including cell phones.
- Children should eat vegetables at least three times a day and fruit at least two times a day. Include vegetables and/or fruit with each meal. Children often eat more fruit if it is cut into to bite-size pieces.
- Make home-made burgers and oven wedges, wraps or pita bread pizzas instead of buying burgers, pizzas and fried takeaways.
- Remove temptation. Don't buy sugary drinks, chippies, biscuits and lollies.



- If you choose to bake muffins, scones, cakes or biscuits:
 - make them smaller
 - try reducing the amount of sugar you add or use fruit instead
 - try grating a carrot or courgette into the muffin mix
 - replace 1/3 of the white flour with wholemeal flour.
- If you buy packets of biscuits or muesli bars, study the nutrition labels on the back of the packet and look for the ones with the lowest sugar and fat content per 100 g, or the best Health Star Rating (the most stars).
- Choose healthier snacks, such as fruit, low-fat, low-sugar yoghurt, homemade popcorn or nuts.
- Involve your child in preparing meals – they are more likely to eat something that they have prepared and it helps them learn useful skills.
- Downsize. Use smaller plates and dish out smaller portions. Freeze leftovers for another day.
- When dishing up the dinner meal, try to make sure that at least half the plate or bowl is filled with vegetables.
- If your child is hungry before dinner, try giving them raw vegetables to eat first, such as a carrot or celery sticks, peas or pieces of tomato, pepper or cucumber. If possible, try to have dinner earlier.
- Encourage your family to drink water or low-fat milk. Don't buy soft drinks, cordials, juice or sports drinks.
- It can be hard to change the foods you usually eat. Try to work on changing one thing at a time. When your family has got used to one new thing, add another change. Some small changes you can try are:
 - increasing the amount of vegetables or salad to give high fibre, lower energy foods
 - choosing wholegrain bread instead of white bread
 - switching to sandwich-slice rather than toast-slice bread
 - using margarine instead of butter and spreading it thinly
 - choosing low-fat milk and low-fat, low-sugar yoghurt for everyone in the family aged 2 years or older
 - replacing sour cream or coconut cream with low-fat, low-sugar yoghurt, lite coconut cream, coconut milk or light evaporated milk
 - replacing snack bars with popcorn or a piece of fruit
 - grilling, steaming or baking food rather than frying or cooking it in fat or lard.
- Vegetables and fruit don't have to be fresh
 - frozen and canned (in juice) can be good options.

For more advice on the types of food children need to eat to be healthy, see *Eating for Healthy Children: From 2 to 12 years*, available from **healthed.govt.nz**

For more tasty, easy (and healthy) meal ideas and recipes, go to **myfamily.kiwi/foods**