



For The Early Learning Centre Sector

# Nutrition Fact Sheet

## Getting To Know The Five Food Groups



**Studies have found that the eating behaviors of children tend to be developed at a young age and followed into adulthood.**

**Encouraging healthy eating behaviors at this time is therefore of high importance as a child's eating behaviours at this time can directly impact their food choices and overall health as adults.**

**In this fact sheet, we explore the benefits of the Healthy Plate Model in the promotion of**

### WHY IS THE HEALTHY PLATE MODEL IMPORTANT?

The healthy plate model has been developed to help ensure that a child's meal is balanced and provides a variety of different vitamins and minerals. Benefits include that it:

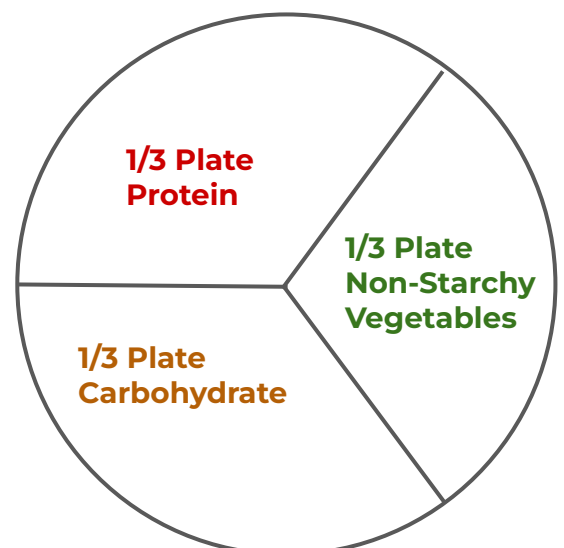
- Allows children to understand what a balanced meal looks like - The healthy plate model visually demonstrates the importance of including a variety of food from different food groups at every meal. This can help children to learn what a balanced meal should look like and make healthier food choices.

- Encourages variety - The healthy plate portion model encourages children to include a variety of foods in their diet. This can help ensure they get all the essential nutrients they need for growth and development.
- Established healthy eating habits early on - by providing meals following the healthy plate portion model we can help them to establish healthy eating habits early on.

### BUILDING A HEALTHY PLATE

A main meal consists of three main components. These include:

1. **Protein.**
2. **Vegetables.**
3. **Carbohydrates.**





### 1/3 PLATE PROTEIN

- Choose lean cuts or remove the skin/fat.
- e.g. meat, chicken, fish, eggs, legumes, tofu, etc.

### 1/3 PLATE CARBOHYDRATE

- Choose whole grain varieties or starchy vegetables.
- e.g. bread, pasta, rice, potato, sweet potato, corn, etc.

### 1/3 PLATE NON-STARCHY VEGETABLES

- Aim to include at least three types with different colours.
- e.g. lettuce, tomato, cucumber, capsicum, celery, carrot, spinach, broccoli, cauliflower, etc.

### ADDITIONAL TIPS

- Choose water as a drink
- Include a small portion of healthy fat such as olive oil, avocado and seeds.

### WHAT ABOUT MIXED DISHES?

Not all meals fit neatly into the three sections of the plate. Dishes such as soups, casseroles, sandwiches, pasta, paella, etc. are cooked by combining different food types together.

We can still use the Healthy Plate Model when preparing and portioning mixed dishes by identifying and grouping the ingredients into the three groups (protein, carbohydrates, vegetables) with the same proportions as the Healthy Plate.

For example, in a bowl of pasta, the meat/poultry/seafood/legume and any cheese on top would be the protein portion, the pasta would be the carbohydrate portion, and the vegetables would be the non-starchy vegetable portion.



**For more information, please visit:**

Baker IDI Portion Plate Guide

<https://baker.edu.au/-/media/documents/fact-sheets/baker-institute-factsheet-portion-plate-guide.pdf>

The Use of Portion Control Plates to Promote Healthy Eating and Diet-Related Outcomes: A Scoping Review

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8874720/>

