



For The Early Learning Centre Sector

Nutrition Fact Sheet

Why Is Vitamin C Important for Young Children

Summer 2025-2026



Vitamin C is an essential nutrient that children need every day for healthy growth and development. Our bodies cannot make or store large amounts of vitamin c, and therefore it must come from food regularly. In this fact sheet, we explore why vitamin C is particularly important for young children and how we can ensure we are getting the right amount of vitamin C each day.

Key Messages

- Vitamin C plays an important role in wound healing, healthy gums, iron absorption and immunity.
- Vitamin C deficiency is uncommon in Australia and most children can easily meet their needs through a healthy, balanced diet.
- Vitamin C is sensitive to heat and light which can cause it to oxidise and reduce its potency. Therefore, consuming raw fruits and vegetables (where possible) can maximise vitamin C content.
- Storing fruits and vegetables in the fridge and help preserve the vitamin C content for longer.

Key Roles of Vitamin C

- **Growth and Development** - supports the formation of healthy skin, cartilage, bones and connective tissue.

- **Wound Healing:** help repair cuts and scrapes by supporting collagen production.
- **Healthy Gums and Teeth** - supports gum health and maintaining strong teeth.
- **Immunity** - strengthens the immune system, helping children fight off common colds and infections.
- **Better Iron Absorption** - Young children have high iron requirements and vitamin C works to enhance iron absorption.
- **Antioxidant Protection** - Protects the body's cells from damage caused by stress, illness or pollution.

How Much Vitamin C Do Children Need?

The Medical Research Council Nutrient Reference Values recommend the following vitamin C intakes per aged group.

- **0-6 months:** 25mg (AI*)
- **7-12 months:** 30mg (AI*)
- **1-3 years:** 35mg (RDI**)
- **4-8 years:** 40mg (RDI**)

Most children can easily meet their needs through a healthy, balanced diet.

*AI - adequate intake - average recommended amount to meet energy levels.

**RDI - Recommended daily intake to meet 97-98% of healthy individuals.



Top Food Sources of Vitamin C

Food Source/100g	Vitamin C (mg)
Orange	52mg
Strawberry	45mg
Broccoli	106mg
Capcicum (red)	330mg
Kiwi Fruit	85mg
Rockmelon	34mg
Tomato	14mg

Practical Tips

- **Include Vitamin C Foods Daily** - offer fruit or vegetables at meals and snacks.
- **Keep It Fun** - Add fruit to yoghurt, top cereal with strawberries, or serve vegetable sticks with dips.
- **Fresh is Best** - Vitamin C is sensitive to heat and light which can cause it to oxidise and reduce its potency - therefore, aim to serve some fruit and vegetables raw where possible.
- **Pair with Iron Foods** - add tomato or capsicum to lentil dishes, or serve fruit after a meal to boost iron absorption.

- **Storage Matters** - store cut fruit and vegetables in the fridge and use within 1-2 days to preserve vitamin content.

Signs of Low Vitamin C Intake

Whilst low vitamin C intake is rare in Australia, signs of low vitamin C can include -

- Frequent colds or slow wound healing
- Bleeding gums or easy bruising
- Fatigue or irritability
- Poor appetite

Vitamin C Supplements - Are They Necessary?

Most children do not need supplements if they eat a variety of fruits and vegetables each day. Supplements should only be given under professional advice, as excessive doses can cause stomach upset.

Take Home Message

- Offer a variety of fruits and vegetables daily.
- Encourage your child to try new foods to make healthy eating fun.
- Vitamin C is essential for strong immunity, healthy growth and iron absorption.

For more information, please visit:
Eat For Health: Nutrient Reference Values -
<https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/nutrient-reference-values/nutrients/vitamin-c>
Queensland Government: How To Meet Your Child's Iron Needs?
https://www.health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0026/147149/paeds_iron.pdf

