



For The Early Learning Centre Sector

Nutrition Fact Sheet

Dairy Food Requirements For Infants and Young Children

Autumn 2026



Dairy foods are full of nutrients and essential for children to learn, grow and develop. It is important to ensure children are having the right amount and the right type of dairy foods. In this factsheet, we explore the benefits of dairy foods and how to ensure children are consuming the appropriate amount everyday.

These include:

- **Healthy Bones and Muscles:** Calcium supports bone building during early years, and protein builds strong muscles and supports tissue repair and development.
- **Healthy Teeth:** Essential nutrients like calcium, phosphorus and protein help strengthen teeth and prevent decay.
- **Healthy Stomach:** Probiotics in yoghurt support gut health including improved digestion, reducing gut discomfort and balancing gut microbiota.

Key Messages

- Dairy foods support children’s growth in various areas, including bone building, strengthening teeth and supporting gut health.
- Include dairy in meals and snacks throughout the day to reach recommended intakes.
- The recommended serving of dairy food differs between infants (<12 months) and young children (1+ years).
- Cow’s milk (or any other type of milk) should not be given as a main drink to infants under 12 months old.
- Reduced-fat milk is not suitable for children under 2 years old.

How Much Dairy Food Do Infants and Young Children Need?

The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating for Children and Caring for Children (NSW) recommends the following dairy intakes per aged group.

	Girl	Boy
6-12 months	1 ½ serves <i>*Include 1 serve of breastmilk / formula</i>	
1-2 years	1 - 1 ½ serves	
2-3 years	1 ½ serves	
4-8 years	1 ½ serves	2 serves

Key Benefits of Dairy Food

Dairy foods are important sources of nutrients including calcium, iodine, B group vitamins, vitamin A and D, which provide various health benefits.



How Much is A Serve of Dairy Food For Infants Aged 6-12 months old?

Food Source	Amount
Breast Milk or Formula	600mL
Yoghurt	20mL
Cheese	10g

Cow's milk (or any other type of milk such as goat's, soy, almond, oat, rice and coconut milk) should not be given as a main drink to infants under 12 months old. Small amounts can be used in cooking or given as yoghurt, cheese, custard or white sauce.

How Much is A Serve of Dairy For Children Aged 1+ years old?

Food Source	Amount
Milk	1 cup (250mL)
Hard Cheese	2 slices (40g)
Ricotta or Cottage Cheese	½ cup (120g)
Yoghurt	¾ cup (200g)
Soy Milk <i>*At least 100mg of added calcium per 100mL</i>	1 cup (250mL)

Tips to Include Dairy Food Everyday

- **Start the day with dairy** - Milk with muesli (suitable from 1+ years).
- **Boosting mid-meals** - Add full fat, no-added sugar plain yoghurt to pureed fruits (suitable from 6+ months).
- **Use it as a spread** - Spread cottage cheese, cream cheese or yoghurt on baked items such as toast and scones (suitable from 1+ years depending on texture).
- **Pack a sandwich** - Add cheese in a whole grain sandwich for lunch (suitable from 1+ years).
- **Mix a dip** - Serve a yoghurt-based dip with vegetable sticks (suitable from 1+ years).

Reduced-Fat Milk - Is It Recommended for Toddlers?

Toddlers (1-2 years old) need higher energy and essential fats for growth and proper absorption of fat-soluble vitamins and calcium. Full cream (full fat/regular) cow's milk should always be used until the age of 2 years.

Take Home Message

- A serving of dairy differs between infants and young children.
- Include dairy food in a variety of meals and snacks throughout the day.
- Full-fat dairy supports healthy growth in children under 2 years old.

For more information, please visit:
 National Health and Medical Research Council (2013) *Australian Dietary Guidelines*.
 The NSW Ministry of Health: Caring for Children
<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/health/Publications/caring-for-children-manual.pdf>
 Dairy Australia - Dairy for Children
<https://www.dairy.com.au/health-and-nutrition/dairy-for-all-ages/children>

