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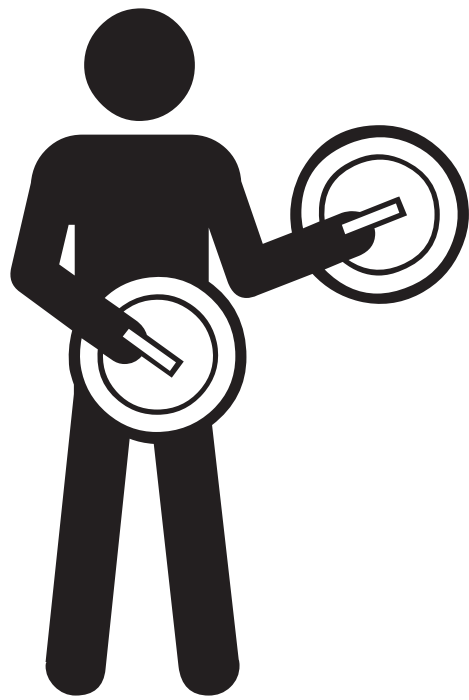
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About this resource

Who is this resource for?

This resource is for people who work with young people. It aims to support youth workers to work together with young people to improve their nutrition and life skills.

Who is the target group?

Young people who are homeless, disadvantaged, marginalised or at risk.

Aims of this resource

Nutrition is an essential part of wellbeing. What we eat affects how we feel, how we think and what we do. Eating well has many benefits for both physical and emotional health.

These include:

- Psychological wellbeing
- Increased self-esteem
- Increased immune system functioning
- Healthy weight

Having more accessible information about nutrition and overall health, better equips youth workers to facilitate the process of making food skills a reality for young people.

This resource is not meant to convert young people to be super healthy and overly diet conscious. What it aims to do is provide youth workers with some health and nutrition information that is up to date and relevant to young people. This information can then be passed on to young people when the opportunity presents.

What this resource aims to do is increase the choices available to young people. To make informed decisions, young people need to know the choices available to them. If young people have the skills to prepare their own food then hopefully one day they will make the good food choice!

As one young homeless woman said:

“...if I want it to be a good future I have to look after my body. I avoid junk food and eat a lot of rice and vegetables. If I don't look after my body, no-one else is going to do it for me”
(From a homeless young woman attending a high school in Victoria. ¹)

About this resource

Why a resource on nutrition for youth workers?

Talking to workers in accommodation services in the central Sydney area, we found that they were keen to learn more about nutrition for young people. Workers believed they would benefit from having accessible and up-to-date information at their fingertips. Other youth health workers consulted agreed that more attention could be paid to young people's nutrition.

When we spoke to young people who live in refuges or were in regular contact with youth services we asked them if their nutrition was a priority, their honest answer was – on the whole – no! When asked who they would go to if they had a question about it - youth workers were at the top of the list.

Budgeting, shopping and cooking are essential life skills. At risk young people come from a variety of different circumstances and backgrounds and for many reasons may not have learned these important life skills. Whatever the reason, young people need to be able to manage these basic needs so they can live healthier and more independent lives.

What is in this resource?

This resource has two sections:

- 1) A **Manual** for youth workers containing basic up-to-date nutrition information important for young people to know. It includes fact sheets on selected topics.
- 2) An easy to use **Cookbook** developed with and for young people that youth workers can distribute when required.

How to use this resource

The Manual and the Cookbook are intended to complement each other. The Manual is designed to assist youth workers to pass on nutrition information to young people. The Cookbook focuses on up-skilling young people in the area of cooking, nutrition and shopping on a more “hands on” level. It is hoped that young people will learn to use the cookbook with the support of youth workers and then take it away with them when they leave the service.

Limitations of this resource

This resource is a guide only. It must **not be used to diagnose or treat young people**. If you are concerned about a young person's nutritional, psychological or physical well-being, please do not attempt to deal with this alone. Contact a professional in the area for assistance. A list of key organizations and contact details are included at the end of this manual. For more information on nutrition and related topics, there are websites and other references listed at the end of this resource.

chapter 1

Why is nutrition important for young people?

Adolescent development - where are young people at?

- Girls/boys differences
- Growth spurt
- Emotional changes

Nutrition for young people - what to eat and why

- What does eating well mean
- What are young people eating
- How to help young people choose the right food
- Australian Guide to Healthy Eating
- How many serves of each food group?
- Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents
- What's in food?
- Important nutrients for young people
- What to limit in the diet
- Water
- Building the immune system
- More than skin deep
- Healthy teeth

Cultural considerations

Adolescent development - where are young people at?

Moving from childhood to young adulthood is a time of big physical and emotional change. During this time, young people need more food to supply the building material and the energy needed for growth. The demand for extra nutrients increases dramatically.

Young people are growing and changing and often want to know - what is normal? In terms of physical changes the following is a guide.

Young people generally hit puberty between the ages 10 - 16 years. Hormones including oestrogen and testosterone kick in.²

The physical changes are different for girls and boys.

Girls

Changes begin at around 10 or 11 years.

They can expect:

- An increase in body fat, particularly on the hips, thighs and breasts
- Widening hips
- Pubic and underarm hair appears (sometimes also on upper lip, arms and around nipples)
- Breast development
- Their first period (anywhere between 10 and 16).²

NOTE: The increase in body fat on a girl is important! It protects muscles, bones and organs as well as regulating female hormones and providing an energy store².

Boys

Changes begin around age 11 or 12 years.

They can expect

- An increase in muscle mass
- Shoulders to broaden
- Voice to become husky and break
- The appearance of pubic hair, underarm and body hair
- Upper lip and chin hair
- Genitals growing
- First ejaculation.²

NOTE: Almost 75% of young people will experience some form of acne.

NOTE: Just as the timing for these physical changes is different for different young people, so is the end product! Everyone's shape and size is different - this is an important message to pass on to young people.

Adolescent development - where are young people at?

The growth spurt

The 'growth spurt' is a sudden increase in the rate of growth - in all directions.

- Over a period of 2-3 years, starting about 10-11 years, girls can expect to add about 16cm to height and 16kg in weight.
- Boys, starting their growth spurt at 12-13 years can expect gains of about 20cm in height and 20kg in weight.³

NOTE: Adolescence is a time when exercise starts to decrease for many young people

Emotional changes

There are many different ways we can think about young people and their emotional development. It is important to remember however, that every young person is different and each of them responds to life's demands and opportunities in a unique and personal way.

One way that may be helpful is to think of their development in three stages.

1. Early adolescence
2. Middle adolescence
3. Late adolescence

These are the stages children are expected to go through to become adults.⁴

1. Early adolescence (approx 12 - 14 years)

This phase involves:

- Onset of puberty (physical changes)
- Rapid physical growth: this leads to preoccupation with body image and changes, young people may wonder - "am I normal?"
- Young people begin their struggle for independence
- Moodiness
- Identity development:
 - Young people are more able to reason in an abstract way
 - They may set unrealistic vocational goals
 - They are likely to test authority as they attempt to better define themselves
 - Young people have a greater need for privacy
 - Sexual feelings develop at this time
 - Value system development occurs at this time also
 - Lack of impulse control at this time leads to risk taking behaviour.⁴

Adolescent development - where are young people at?

2. Middle adolescence (approx 15 -17 years)

This phase involves:

- Risk taking
- Peer Group: during this time in particular, there is deep involvement in peer subculture, which can mean conforming to peer group values and dress
- Sexual experimentation and forming relationships
- Identity development: increased scope and openness of feelings
- Increased intellectual ability/creativity
- There are often more realistic vocational goals.⁴

3. Late adolescence (approx 18-21)

This phase involves:

- More independent sense of self
- Clearer sexual identity
- Vocational choices: young people are developing practical vocational goals and the start of financial independence
- Relationships become more mutual: Young people spend more time in relationships with one or two people
- Identity development: Young people develop more of a conscience and sense of perspective. Moral and sexual values are more evident.⁴

The young people that youth workers come into contact with are likely to be experiencing some difficulties. Thinking about young people in terms of developmental stages may help identify if they are on track and how to best work with them.



Nutrition for young people - what to eat and why?

What does eating well mean?

Eating well means being able to enjoy a wide variety of foods while feeling good about yourself in mind, body and spirit.

Why eat well?

- Food is an enjoyable and essential part of everyone's lives
- There is no one definition of healthy eating
- There is no real "good" food or "bad" food, healthy eating is about **developing good habits**
- Eating well means having the energy to be active and live our day-to-day lives and being happy with our body shape
- Eating well can prevent lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and some types of cancer
- Food and lifestyle not only have an impact on our health years down the track, but what we eat can impact on our lives NOW
- Without food we don't think or have any energy, but with good food we can have more energy, be in a better mood, think clearly and have a better chance to live a long healthy life.
- The amount and type of food we eat affects; our ability to think, our mood, energy level, skin and hair, concentration, sleep pattern, immune system and long term health
- Healthy eating is about the overall intake, not just one meal or snack. It is the overall diet that counts.

The effects food has on the body and mind are numerous.

One of the most important elements of a healthy diet is variety. The wider the variety of foods eaten, the more chance of including a range of essential vitamins and minerals needed for good health. In Australia there are thousands of different foods available. Living in a multi-cultural society means that the world of food is at our fingertips. From curries to cannelloni and sushi to stir-fries, there is no end to our options. Eating well and enjoying a healthy lifestyle will make a huge difference to our energy levels and overall well being.

What are young people eating?

During adolescence, young people's eating habits often change due to increased socialisation with friends, part-time work and a generally more independent lifestyle. Young people eat more meals outside of their place of living, making their own decisions about what they eat. Young people's food choices may also be influenced by concerns about body image and weight, with a significant number of young women on diets of some kind.⁵ Many of these diets however, are not suitable for young people as nutritional requirements at this age are different from other ages. Therefore, providing young people with information on the nutritional requirements for a person of their age may help them to make better food choices.⁵

Nutrition for young people - what to eat and why?

Facts and figures

A national nutrition survey in 1995 found that:

- By the age of 16-18 years, almost 20% of girls reported being on some form of a special diet.
- Adolescent girls aged 12-15 were less likely to regularly eat breakfast than boys (71% compared to 87%).
- Young people aged 16-18 were much more likely to obtain and consume food and beverages away from home than other younger age groups.
- Food and beverages obtained and eaten away from home were generally of higher fat content than those brought from home.
- 5% of the young women aged 16-18 surveyed reported being on a vegetarian diet and 5.9% on a weight reduction diet.
- The proportion of females who consumed fruit decreased from 62.5% of 8-11 year olds to 41.1% of 16-18 year olds.⁶

Generally, young people need to eat more bread, rice, pasta and grain-based products and less cakes, pastries and high-fat fast foods. They also should be encouraged to eat more vegetables, fruit and dairy products like milk, cheese and yoghurt.

Why don't young people worry about eating well?

Young people in general often overlook the importance of eating well. At risk young people are often unable to make food a priority. On top of the changes that adolescence brings, other issues are taking priority such as coping with family breakdown, finding a place to live, finding a way to support themselves financially, surviving in or out of school, just to name a few. Food and nutrition are often the last thing on young people's minds, whether or not money is an issue. Youth workers can emphasize the benefits of good food; not just for their future health, but also for the way it will make them feel today and every other day.

Tips for eating well

- Variety (eat lots of different types of food)
- Try not to skip meals
- Healthy snacks
- Plenty of water
- Follow a basic model, such as the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating⁷ (See page 8) to help plan meals.

Even if young people do not eat well now, it is important to help them develop skills so that they can choose healthy food, shop, budget and cook so one day when the time is right the skills they've learnt can be put into action.

Nutrition for young people - what to eat and why?

How youth workers can help young people choose the right food

The best way to help young people choose healthy food is to be familiar with the guidelines and models available to help choose a varied diet. Try encouraging young people to base their overall intake from the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating⁷ and the Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents.³ These give a basic overview of the types of food recommended for young people. It is something that youth workers can go over with young people in person and have around the place as a reminder.

Rev it up with body fuel - The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating⁸

Like a finely tuned sports car, our bodies need the best fuel (HEALTHY FOOD), regular use (BEING ACTIVE) and a positive driving attitude (MENTAL HEALTH), to really rev it up!

We can buy a new car but we can't buy a new body, so we have to look after the one we have. Without the best fuel (healthy food) our engine (body) will cough, splutter and stall. Healthy eating means having a wide variety of foods every day. This means choosing from the five food groups and drinking lots of water.

What are the 5 food groups?⁷

- Breads, cereals, rice, pasta and noodles
- Lean meat, fish, eggs, nuts and legumes
- Milk, yoghurt, cheese and dairy alternatives
- Vegetables
- Fruit



Nutrition for young people - what to eat and why?

How many serves of each food group?

Young people are growing quickly and have good appetites. The following table is a basic guide to how many serves are needed from each food group to get the energy, vitamins and minerals needed for growth. Remember, everyone is different and no one guide will suit everyone. Try encouraging young people to get into good habits by eating a variety of foods regularly.

We need to listen to our bodies, eat when hungry and stop when full.

The 5 food groups: How much should young people have?

Food Group:	Important source of:	Includes:	How much to have:	Suggestions:
Breads, cereal, rice, pasta, noodles	Complex carbohydrates, fibre and vitamins and minerals (folate, thiamin, riboflavin, niacin and iron)	Wholemeal, multi-grain and white bread; unleavened breads; bagels etc; breakfast cereals; rice; pasta; noodles; others (polenta, semolina, barley, sago, corn, tapioca, burghul, couscous)	4 - 7 serves (1 serve = 2 slices of bread, 1 cup of breakfast cereal flakes or 1 cup cooked rice, pasta, noodles)	Wholemeal pasta dishes, filled pita bread, wholemeal toasted sandwiches
Vegetables, legumes	Vitamins A, C and folate, dietary fibre and carbohydrates	Dark green vegetables (spinach, broccoli); orange vegetables (carrots, sweet potato, pumpkin); cruciferous vegetables (cauliflower, brussel sprouts); starchy vegetables (potato, sweet potato, corn); salad vegetables (lettuce, tomato, cucumber, cap-sicum) and legumes (dried peas, lentils and chick peas)	5 - 9 serves (1 serve = ½ cup cooked vegetables, ½ cup cooked dried beans, peas or lentils, 1 potato or 1 cup salad vegetables)	Vegetarian pasta; salad on burgers and kebabs; raw vegetables with low fat dip; stuffed potatoes

Nutrition for young people - what to eat and why?

Food Group:	Important source of:	Includes:	How much to have:	Suggestions:
Fruit (including dry and canned fruit)	Vitamin C and folate, fibre and carbohydrates	Tropical fruits (bananas and pineapple); citrus fruits (oranges, mandarins); stone fruit (apricots, peaches) apples and pears, melons, berries	3 - 4 serves (1 serve= 1 medium piece fruit, 2 small pieces eg. apricots, plums, 1 cup diced pieces or canned fruit, ½ cup juice or 1 ½ tablespoons of sultanas)	Fruit salad; fresh fruit juice. Tub of low fat yogurt, cheese slices; milkshakes, smoothies Stir fries; skin-free chicken pieces; grilled fish, omelette
Milk, yogurt, cheese	Calcium, protein, riboflavin and B12	Milk, yoghurt, firm cheeses	3 - 5 serves (1 serve= 250ml fresh, long-life or reconstituted dried milk, 1/2 cup evaporated milk, 2 slices cheese or 200g yogurt)	
Meat, fish, poultry, eggs, nuts, legumes	Iron, protein, niacin and B12, zinc	Beef, lamb, pork, chicken, fish, eggs, nuts and nut pastes, legumes and some seeds (sunflower and sesame)	1 - 2 serves (1 serve= 65-100g cooked meat; 2 small eggs; ½ cup cooked dried beans, lentils; ⅓ cup peanuts or almonds; ¼ cup sunflower or sesame seeds)	

Table adapted from: <http://www.womhealth.org.au/factsheets/assignresources.htm>

“Extra” foods

Of course there is a place for all those “other” foods that don’t exactly fit into one of the 5 groups. These foods are not essential to our diet, which is why they have been classed as ‘EXTRAS’.

Young people have high energy requirements because they are growing. This means they can afford to have about 1-3 serves of extras each day. While it is ok to include these foods, they should be part of a healthy and varied diet, not the only food a young person eats.

Examples of one serve include:

- 1 doughnut or
- 4 plain sweet biscuits or
- 1 slice plain cake or
- 1/2 small chocolate bar or
- 1 can soft drink or
- 1 tablespoon butter or
- Margarine or oil.

Nutrition for young people - what to eat and why?

Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents³

The nutritional needs of children and adolescents are different from those of adults because they are growing and developing.

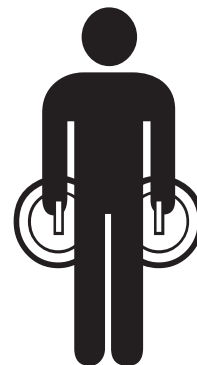
Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents were developed by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) in 1995 and revised in 2003 to remind us about these specific needs. These guidelines apply to the general population of healthy children from birth to eighteen years.

1. Encourage and support breastfeeding.
2. Children and adolescents need sufficient nutritious food to grow and develop normally. Growth should be checked regularly. Physical activity is important for all children and adolescents.
3. Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods.
4. Eat plenty of vegetables, legumes and fruits.
5. Eat plenty of cereals (including breads, rice, pasta and noodles) preferably wholegrain.
6. Include lean meat, fish, poultry or alternatives.
7. Include milks, yoghurts, cheese or alternatives.
Low fat diets are not suitable for children under 2. For older children, a diet low in fat and in particular, low saturated fat, is appropriate.
8. Encourage water as a drink. Alcohol is not recommended for children.
9. Consume only moderate amounts of sugars and foods containing added sugars; and
10. Choose foods low in salt.

Care for your child's food: prepare and store it safely.

Guidelines on specific nutrients

1. Eat foods containing calcium (See page 14).
2. Eat foods containing iron (See page 14).



Nutrition for young people - what to eat and why?

What's in food?

There are many parts of food that play a role in keeping the body and mind healthy and active. Food helps maintain every organ in the body including the skin, heart and brain. In general we know food is made up of macronutrients, micronutrients, fibre and water.⁹

Macronutrients

1. Carbohydrates
2. Protein
3. Fat

1. Carbohydrates provide energy and are especially important for fueling the brain. Carbohydrates are found in most types of foods, except meats and pure fats (butter, oil). About half of the recommended daily diet should come from carbohydrates.

2. Protein is found mostly in meats and dairy products. Protein is used to build and repair body parts. Cells, organs, tissues and muscles - all are made with protein. Daily protein requirements are about 15 - 20 % of our daily diet.

3. Fats are not all bad! Fat is needed to keep the body functioning. Fat helps the body use vitamins and minerals (the micronutrients) and provides extra energy. If a person does not use the extra energy, the body can store it as fat. Fat should be eaten in moderation by limiting foods such as take away, crisps, cakes, pastries and chocolate.⁹

Micronutrients

- A) Vitamins
- B) Minerals

A) Vitamins - Vitamins regulate the body's metabolism by speeding up chemical reactions, acting as antioxidants or forming an integral part of the structure of proteins, hormones and blood. The body cannot produce them so they must be supplied by food.

Vitamins are needed in minute amounts for health, growth and to prevent vitamin-deficiency diseases such as scurvy (lack of vitamin C), beri-beri (lack of vitamin B1), pellagra (lack of vitamin B2) or rickets (lack of vitamin D).¹⁰

B) Minerals - Minerals are elements required in small amounts for good health and growth.

Eight major minerals are required - calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium, sodium, chlorine, iron and sulphur.¹⁰

At least seventeen trace minerals are established as necessary for humans, but, because of the difficulties of measuring such tiny amounts, more may be needed. The most important are zinc, copper, iodine, fluorine, manganese, chromium, selenium, molybdenum and cobalt.¹⁰

Nutrition for young people - what to eat and why?

Minerals:

- Form the hard bone structure of the body
- Are important in chemical reactions
- Regulate water balance
- Control nerve response and muscle contraction¹⁰.

Other things in food

Food also contains many other components that we don't know a lot about. Antioxidants such as phytoestrogens, flavonoids and carotenoids are just a few of the beneficial components in food just waiting to be discovered. That is the beauty of food and nutrition, new discoveries are always being made.

Water - Yes, water is a drink, but it is also in most foods. The body needs water to live, so it is considered a nutrient. Fruit is a good example of a food that has lots of water in it. Water is what makes the fruit so juicy. The juicier a food is, the more water it contains.



Nutrition for young people - what to eat and why?

Important nutrients for young people

It is important for young people to get enough calcium and iron in their diets.

As the rate of growth is significant at this time of life, the body is craving these two nutrients in particular as they are important to support this growth.

Calcium

- Bones are a massive storage area of calcium and are growing really quickly. Unfortunately this storage area closes when young people reach their mid twenties or when growth finishes. This means young people can't increase their bone density after this time, they can only maintain it.
- Achieving a good bone mass lowers the risk of developing osteoporosis later in life.
- The best sources of calcium include dairy products (milk, yoghurt, cheese), fish with edible bones (salmon, sardines) and calcium-fortified soy products (milk, tofu).⁵

Iron

- As young people are growing so rapidly, the amount of blood circulating also increases.
- Iron is needed in the blood to provide oxygen to each cell. Without enough oxygen, young people will lack energy.
- Young women require large amounts of dietary iron to replace the iron lost during menstruation and for general growth needs. It is estimated that menstruation approximately doubles the iron requirements of women compared to men.
- Iron depletion can cause tiredness, lack of energy and fatigue.
- There are two different types of iron found in food.
 1. **Haem iron:** found in lean meat, chicken and fish and is easily absorbed by the body.
 2. **Non-haem iron:** found in plant foods and eggs but is not as readily absorbed by the body.
- Young people need to eat foods that are rich in iron such as lean red meat, leafy green vegetables, iron-enriched breakfast cereals, legumes and dried fruit. It is possible to boost absorption of non-haem iron by including Vitamin C, meat, fish or chicken in the same meal. Coffee, tea and unprocessed bran can all interfere with iron absorption and so should be limited.⁵

Nutrition for young people - what to eat and why?

What to limit in the diet

Substances that should be monitored in the diet and only consumed in small amounts include:

- Fat
- Salt
- Sugar

Fat

The type of fat eaten is the main thing to be concerned about.

There are 3 types of fat

1. Saturated
2. Polyunsaturated
3. Monounsaturated

- All fat is energy dense (has lots of calories) and will contribute to weight gain, but not all fat is harmful to the body.
- Diets high in saturated fats may lead to obesity and diabetes as well as increase the risk of cardiovascular disease and some forms of cancer.
- Saturated fat is mainly from animals but also includes coconut and palm oil. These fats can typically be found in cakes, biscuits, takeaway foods, dairy products and high fat meat.

Salt

- The amount of salt needed in the diet is small and can easily be met through eating a range of foods.
- By adding salt and eating processed food, much more salt than needed is eaten.
- A high salt intake is linked to high blood pressure, a risk factor for heart disease.
- Like fat, salt is often hidden in the foods that we eat. Foods typically high in salt include chips, pretzels and nuts, pickles, olives, canned fish, cheese, condiments and sauces, canned vegetables, smoked meats and packet and tinned soups.

Sugar

- Sugar naturally occurs in many foods including milk, grains, and fruit.
- Added sugar provides energy but nothing else.
- A high intake of added sugar in the diet can lead to increased risk of obesity and dental problems.
- Products high in sugar include soft drinks, confectionery, canned fruits in syrup, biscuits, cakes, jam, ice-cream and some breakfast cereals.⁵

Nutrition for young people - what to eat and why?

Water

Sometimes young people might forget the fact that water is essential to their health. Water regulates body temperature, cushions joints, helps transport nutrients throughout the body, builds body tissue, digests food and rids the body of wastes. Water also helps prevent dry skin, constipation, urinary tract infections and kidney stones.

Top ten reasons for drinking water

1. Without water we can't live! Adults can survive about 10 days without water and children about 5 days.
2. The body is comprised of 65 - 75% water - this ratio must be maintained for good health.
3. It is difficult for the body to get water from any other source than water itself.
Some foods contain water but drinking water is more efficient.
4. Water plays a vital role in nearly every bodily function.
5. Water is essential for proper digestion, nutrient absorption and chemical reactions.
6. Water is essential for proper circulation in the body.
7. Water helps remove toxins from the body, in particular from the digestive tract.
8. Water regulates the body's cooling system.
9. Consistent failure to drink enough water can lead to Chronic Cellular Dehydration.
This is a condition where the body's cells are never quite hydrated enough and leaves them in a weakened state, vulnerable to attack from disease. It weakens the body's overall immune system and leads to chemical, nutritional and pH imbalances that can cause a host of diseases.
10. Dehydration can occur at any time of the year, not only during the summer months when it is hot. The dryness that occurs during winter can dehydrate the body even quicker than when it is hot.

Caffeine-based beverages including coffee, tea and colas act as diuretics.
Alcohol can make a person even more dehydrated.

We need to drink about 8 glasses of water a day, but everyone is different and water requirements depend on body size and how much exercise you do.

What happens when the body doesn't get enough water?

- Constipation
- Dry, itchy skin
- Acne
- Nose bleeds
- Repeated urinary tract infections
- Dry and unproductive coughs
- Constant sneezing
- Sinus pressure
- Headaches

Nutrition for young people - what to eat and why?

Building up the immune system

Sometimes the changeable lifestyles of young people may not be helpful for their immune systems. The lifestyle factors that influence (strengthen and weaken), the immune system include: diet, stress, physical activity and sleep.

Immune strengtheners

Diet

- A varied diet with large amounts of antioxidants from fruit and veggies will protect immune cells from damage. A varied diet includes eating food from each of the 5 food groups every day (See The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating, page 8).
- Skipping meals regularly or inadequate nutrition can impair the immune system.

State of mind

- The immune system loves a stress free environment. When all is well, wounds heal nicely and people suffer less illness.
- Mental stress can weaken the immune system. Events such as moving, relationship and family problems, and undue anxiety have been shown to have a weakening effect on the immune system.
- No one can avoid stress entirely, but finding a way to deal with it can keep the immune system functioning well.
- Getting adequate rest and taking care of yourself as much as possible are all good weapons to keep the immune system fired up.

Exercise

- Mild exercise has always been considered an immunity booster.
- Too much vigorous exercise may cause the immune system defenses to drop.
- Research shows that those who exercise are less likely to get colds or flu than those who don't exercise.

Sleep is essential

- There is no evidence that missing out on sleep can increase the likelihood of getting sick, but sleepless nights can make people feel more irritable and that may worsen the immune-suppressing effects of stress.

Immune weakeners

Cigarette smoke

Cigarette smoke can wreak havoc with the immune cells lining the lungs. Immune cells that are regularly exposed to smoke become less able to ward off invading microbes.

Smog

Airborne pollutants can weaken defense systems by causing free radical production in the lungs and impairing the ability of the body's usual army of killer cells to hunt and destroy. Short of moving, there isn't much one can do to avoid smog.

Nutrition for young people - what to eat and why?

More than skin deep

All young people end up with a few pimples, this is normal. Hormonal changes that occur throughout adolescence and in times of stress are the major contributors.^{10,11} Hormones affect everyone in different ways.

Food is often wrongly associated with causing outbreaks of pimples and acne. What affects one person will not affect the next, so no one single food can be the cause of all outbreaks. Although chocolate and greasy food do not cause acne, a healthy diet has all sorts of benefits for the skin. Eating a healthy diet with lots of fruit and veggies, bread, cereal, dairy foods and meat will nourish the skin from the inside and work its way out.¹⁰

Why should young people look after their skin?

The skin is the largest organ in the body and does a pretty important job.

- It is a barrier between people and the environment, protecting people from pollution, UV light, humidity, and air conditioning.
- Skin regulates the body's heat and helps to get rid of waste via sweat.¹⁰

Youth workers can encourage young people to:

- Manage stress - talk with someone who can help them work through their problems
- Drink lots of water to hydrate the skin.
- Limit alcohol and drinks containing caffeine - these will dehydrate the skin.
- Quit smoking and stay out of the sun to reduce wrinkles and the risk of skin cancer.
- Eat a healthy balanced diet with lots of variety. This will help young people get all the vitamins and minerals needed to help their skin look great and make them feel great at the same time.¹⁰

Nutrition for young people - what to eat and why?

Healthy teeth

Youth workers can remind young people how important looking after their teeth is. If left up to the young person, a trip to the dentist may not eventuate. Homeless young people are at risk of poor dental health, the simple things like having a toothbrush or toothpaste are not always a given.

Dental health depends on dietary habits. Food affects teeth even during their formation and after they first emerge. Good nutrition, good eating habits and daily dental care need to be established as early in life as possible to reduce the incidence of decay.¹²

Youth workers can remind young people that a healthy set of teeth LOOKS GOOD and enables us to enjoy a wide variety of foods. You can also let them know that tooth and gum diseases can result in a lot of pain and discomfort and the earlier these get picked up by a dentist - the better!

Common dental problems in young people

Common problems include tooth decay, gum disease and dental erosion. In addition, at risk young people often present with trauma (as a result of violence) and in later adolescent years problems with their wisdom teeth.

Young people are at risk of developing dental problems if one or more of the following applies to them:¹³

- Poor diet
- Poor teeth cleaning habits
- Hormone changes e.g. puberty, pregnancy
- Cigarette smoking (gum disease and cancer risk)
- Alcohol or other drug use
- An eating disorder
- Chronic medical condition
- Dry mouth
- Medicines that contain sugar or that cause dry mouth
- High caffeine intake (more than 3 - 4 cups per day).

How should young people look after their teeth?

Regular dental check-ups and good oral hygiene (brushing and flossing teeth twice daily) mean better teeth with less problems. The next best strategy is for young people to chew sugarless gum after meals or snacks.¹³ Encourage young people to see a dentist as regularly as possible not only when there are dental problems.

Nutrition for young people - what to eat and why?

Nutrition tips that dentists recommend

Young people need to consider:

- The type of foods they eat
- The amount of sweet foods and drinks they consume
- The number of times sweet food or drinks are consumed between meals.

Things youth workers can do

Encourage young people to:

- Eat healthy balanced meals at regular times, including a wide variety of foods each day.
- Start the day with a nutritious breakfast.
- Limit sticky, sweet snacks eaten, especially foods containing fat and sugar e.g. biscuits, chocolates, lollies and soft drink. The more times food or drink is around the teeth, the more times acid is produced increasing the risk of tooth decay.¹³
- Choose snacks like:
 - Fruit, vegetables, nuts, cheese, yoghurt, milk drinks, sandwiches
 - Soup, corn on the cob, noodles, pop corn etc (think of snacks as “mini meals”)
- Allow teeth 2-3 hours rest after each meal, drink or snack, before eating or drinking again, and limit the number of eating and drinking times to no more than five a day.
- Any sweet food or drink should be had with meals rather than in between.
- Chew sugar free gum after a meal or snack to help to lower the risk of tooth decay.
- Choose drinks carefully - most drinks contain lots of sugar, acids and caffeine.
- Diet drinks are acidic and should not be consumed too often.
- Drink plenty of water every day (preferably tap water as bottled water does not contain fluoride) especially after eating sticky sweet snacks.
- Drink sweet drinks with a straw so that teeth aren't constantly in contact with sugar.¹³

Alcohol and tooth care

Less alcohol intake is better for dental and general health. Wine, beer and spirits are acidic, while mixed drinks (containing soft drink) contain sugar and acids.

Encourage young people to consume alcohol with a meal, avoid frequent sipping over long periods of time and drink plenty of water.¹³

Young people who do not have the facilities to brush their teeth regularly or chew sugarless gum, should be encouraged to:

- Drink water frequently.
- Rinse mouth with water to remove debris.

Cultural considerations

At risk young people are culturally and linguistically diverse. One of the major factors that make any person (young or old) who they are is their cultural background.

A person's cultural background will often influence their eating patterns and subsequently influence their nutritional well being. Rather than discussing the details of every possible cultural background, this section looks at some general cultural issues.

Principles

- Religion, cultural beliefs and practices, locally available foods and familiarity all play a role in determining what we eat.
- Every young person is different. Two young people from the same cultural background may have similar up-bringsings but be completely different in their day-to-day practices.
- A young person may choose to observe or reject their cultural and religious background or still be trying to work this out.
- Having different cultural backgrounds or religions can mean having specific eating habits or practices.
- Workers are all from different cultural backgrounds and can bring knowledge and skills to the workplace.
- Food is closely linked with emotions and habits, the foods we choose to eat have a lot to do with where and how we grew up. We don't eat food just to keep us going, it is used as a comforter in times of stress, for fun and pure pleasure.¹⁴
- Foods, recipes and dishes from different cultures are an integral part of the kitchen.
- We all have something to learn from different cultures and religions, as well as a variety of different foods to experience.
- Above all, young people need to feel valued and respected as individuals, this includes respect for their cultural and religious backgrounds.



Cultural considerations

Tips for youth workers

Following are some suggestions that youth workers can put into practice (if you are not doing so already!)

- The general assessment of a young person when they enter an accommodation service should cover their dietary requirements. These should be discussed in a way that is respectful of diversity and so that the young person is not made to feel “different”.
- Ask young people what they like to eat, what sorts of foods they are used to eating and if that is something they would like to have in the pantry or as part of the cooking program.
- A young person should never be expected to eat something they do not feel comfortable eating or made to feel embarrassed because they are different. Other young people may need education or support in this area.
- It is always essential to check with the young person whether or not they prefer eating foods from their cultural or religious background. The reasons for being away from home may be strong enough to make the young person want to totally break their links with tradition. Conversely, the person may be proud of their heritage and keen to share traditional foods with others.
- Be aware that there are times during the year for different religions that mean fasting or not eating certain foods.
- Australia has a huge variety of different foods to choose from thanks to the many different cultural and religious backgrounds of the people that live here. Why not incorporate different foods from different cultures into the weekly meal plan?
- Explore different take away options rather than the standard pizza option - why not encourage young people to try Turkish pizza, falafel and different types of Asian or African food?
- Why not choose the better (and often healthier) option and get young people to cook traditional foods for other young people and then teach them how to do it?
- Young people could cook traditional foods for other young people on special, cultural or religiously significant days.
- Some young people may be at risk of malnutrition if they have recently arrived from another country and the food they are used to eating is not readily available here. It is also important to ascertain their skills in food preparation, as they may not be used to preparing and eating the foods we are used to eating in Australia.
- If you are unsure about something e.g. whether a young person can eat something or not, it is always a good idea to start by asking the young person themselves! If this fails, try contacting local Multicultural services.

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chapter 2

So what do I do if a young person has...

- **A vegetarian diet**
- **Constipation**
- **Allergies and food intolerance**
- **Asthma**
- **A weight problem (obesity)**
- **Diabetes**
- **Iron deficiency**
- **Hepatitis C**
- **HIV/AIDS**
- **A baby on the way (pregnancy)**

So what do I do if a young person has...

Young people with various health issues such as allergies, asthma, diabetes, hepatitis C, pregnancy or those who choose a vegetarian diet may need extra nutrition information to help them meet their special dietary requirements.

This chapter looks at:

- A variety of conditions and identifies the role of general nutrition information for each
- Things youth workers can do, and
- The importance of referral to appropriate professionals.

The topics covered include:

- Vegetarian diets
- Constipation
- Allergies and food intolerance
- Asthma
- Weight problem (Obesity)
- Diabetes
- Iron deficiency
- Hepatitis C
- HIV/AIDS
- Pregnancy

... A vegetarian diet

A vegetarian diet

This section:

- Clarifies the different types of vegetarian diets
- Includes information on the sorts of food vegetarians need to eat
- Describes the benefits and concerns of a vegetarian diet
- Lists some things youth workers can do.

All young people have high nutritional needs due to rapid growth and development. Young vegetarians have the same nutritional needs as any other young person. The main concern is vegetarian eating is not as simple as not eating meat. Certain foods need to be added to a vegetarian diet to ensure young people get all the nutrients they need for growth. A vegetarian diet can compromise growth and development if a young person doesn't know what they are doing. Most importantly, young people who become vegetarian need to ensure they follow a well-balanced vegetarian diet that supplies adequate protein, calcium, iron, vitamin B12 and zinc.¹

When trying a new eating style, it is important that young people have all the right information so that their health is not negatively affected.

Types of vegetarian diets

Vegetarian diets are not simply diets without meat. A vegetarian needs to replace meat with other sources of protein and minerals needed for health. There are several different types of vegetarian diets and these are outlined below.

- 1. Vegans** don't eat animal products at all (i.e. no meat, chicken, fish, eggs or dairy products)
 - A vegan diet is made up of grains, fruit and veggies, dried beans, lentils and peas, nuts and seeds.
 - Vegans are at the highest risk of becoming deficient in Vitamin B12 as this vitamin is only found in dairy products and meat.
 - A vegan diet needs to be well planned to ensure adequate protein, vitamins and minerals. Protein combinations are important in vegan diets to ensure sufficient protein quality.
- 2. Lacto vegetarians** eat dairy products as well as fruit and vegetables, grains, dried beans, lentils and nuts but no meat, chicken, fish or eggs.
- 3. Ovo-vegetarians** eat eggs as well as fruit and vegetables, grains, dried beans, lentils and nuts but no meat, chicken, fish or dairy products.
- 4. Lacto-ovo vegetarians** eat fruit and vegetables, grains, dried beans, lentils, nuts, eggs and dairy products, but no meat, chicken or fish. When young people follow this type of diet they shouldn't have too much trouble maintaining a well balanced diet.
- 5. Pesco-vegetarians** eat fish, dairy foods, eggs, fruit and vegetables.
- 6. Semi-vegetarians** eat dairy foods, eggs, fish, chicken, fruit and vegetables but no red meat.^{1,2}

... A vegetarian diet

Why do people choose vegetarian diets?

There are many reasons why young people choose vegetarian diets or try vegetarian eating for a short time. Some reasons include:

- Concerns for animal welfare
- Concern for the environment
(e.g. farming often means clearing virgin land, forests and jungles)
- Concern with the health benefits
- Preferring the tastes of vegetarian food
- Disliking the taste of meat
- Feeling “heavier” after eating meat
- Religious beliefs
- Growing up in a vegetarian household
- Influenced by vegetarian friends
- High cost of meat.^{2,3}

Some young people, particularly girls, adopt a vegetarian diet because they think it will lead to weight loss. In a few cases, changing to an extreme vegetarian diet can be a smokescreen for an eating disorder. Although many girls follow a vegetarian diet, and only a small number develop an eating disorder, it is worth watching for any changes that lead to severely restricted total food intake.³

What are the benefits of a vegetarian diet?

A well balanced vegetarian diet will help keep good health and may lower the risk of some diseases including high blood pressure, heart disease and some cancers.² This reduced risk could be a result of a number of factors such as, the absence of meat and saturated fats in the diet, the increased consumption of fruits, vegetables and grains, and living a generally healthier life through not smoking, limiting alcohol intake and regular exercise. Choosing a vegetarian diet does not automatically mean a person is healthy. To get the full benefit of a vegetarian diet, young people need to know that it is about the whole lifestyle, not just the food. If vegetarians smoke cigarettes and misuse alcohol or other drugs, this may negate any benefits derived from a vegetarian diet.

A vegetarian diet must be well planned to avoid deficiencies in nutrients like protein, vitamin B 12, calcium, iron and zinc (usually obtained largely from animal products in the diet).

Vegetarians need to include foods rich in these nutrients such as: nuts, seeds, soy products, yellow, starchy and green leafy vegetables, wholegrain varieties of breads and cereals, meat substitutes (textured vegetable protein), and fortified breakfast cereals.

... A vegetarian diet

What are the concerns of a vegetarian diet?

The main concern is when people decide to be vegetarian by simply cutting meat out of their diet. This leads to a poor quality diet. The nutrients usually supplied by meat in a diet need to be replaced by other foods containing the necessary protein, iron, and vitamin B12. Finding out which vegetarian foods contain all of these nutrients is important, so if a young person is considering becoming vegetarian make sure they know how to replace meat in their diet.

Vegetarians need to ensure their diet contains sufficient iron, vitamin B12, and calcium.

Avoiding iron deficiency.

Iron deficiency results in little or no energy to get out and have fun. It is commonly thought that vegetables, eg. spinach, contain lots of iron. However, the iron in vegetables is not well absorbed by the body.

Iron comes in 2 forms.

1) Haem iron is found in meat and animal sources (especially red meat).

2) Non-haem iron is found in vegetables and cereal based foods.

Our body easily absorbs haem iron but needs a lot more non-haem iron to be equivalent.

Combining foods with a high vitamin C content (such as oranges, tomatoes, strawberries, broccoli and capsicum) with foods containing non-haem iron (such as wholemeal bread and legumes) will help the body to absorb the non-haem iron.

Getting enough vitamin B12.

Vitamin B12 helps maintain healthy nerve cells and red blood cells, and is also needed to make DNA, the genetic material in all cells. Vitamin B12 is naturally found in animal foods including fish, milk and milk products, eggs, meat, and poultry.⁴ It is a widely held belief that vitamin B12 can be obtained from mushrooms, tempeh, miso and spirulina but this is not true. Vitamin B12 in a form that can be absorbed by humans is only found in foods of animal origin.⁵ To get enough Vitamin B12, vegetarians should eat foods fortified with B12 including some breakfast cereals, fortified yeast extract such as vegemite, brewers yeast, soy drink fortified with B12, some soy products or take B12 supplements.⁶

Getting enough calcium.

Calcium helps keep teeth pearly white and in good smiling order, and is essential for strong bones. If young people choose to be vegan, the calcium content of their diet may also be very low. It is important they know this and need to be encouraged to include soy based foods that have been fortified with calcium (100mg/ 100gm) in their diet.

... A vegetarian diet

Tips for youth workers

Youth workers can help young vegetarians stay healthy by encouraging them to eat:

- Protein based foods every day. Foods such as legumes (eg. baked beans, veggie burgers, falafel, lentils, chick peas, red kidney beans), seeds, nuts (peanuts, peanut butter, cashews, almonds), eggs, dairy foods, tofu and other soy based foods.
- Iron rich food such as lentils, baked beans, iron-fortified breakfast cereals, sesame paste, dried peaches, dried figs, dried apricots, broccoli, wholemeal bread.
- Foods high in vitamin C when eating iron rich food. Vitamin C helps the body to absorb non-haem iron. Examples of foods high in vitamin C include tomatoes, oranges, grapefruit, mangoes, bananas, pineapple, capsicum and broccoli.
- Foods rich in calcium such as milk or calcium enriched soy drinks, yoghurts or cheese.

NOTE: Some people may need vitamin supplements, most commonly vitamin B12 if they are vegans, i.e. don't eat any animal products at all. Vitamin supplements can be found in chemists, supermarkets and health food shops.

Important information for young vegans

If young people are eating only plant-based foods (vegan diet) they need to combine certain protein foods together to get the correct combination of amino acids,

eg. they need to combine:

- Grains with legumes
- Nuts with legumes
- Seeds with legumes.

Some examples are:

- Baked beans on multi grain bread
- Peanut butter on multi grain toast
- Breakfast cereal with soy milk
- Hommous dip with bread.

If you are concerned a young vegetarian is not eating well, give them a few tips from those listed above and encourage them to see a dietitian or doctor.

... Constipation

Constipation

It is not uncommon for young people to suffer from diet-related constipation, so it is important that youth workers know some of the facts.

This section:

- Provides a few facts on constipation
- Outlines the role of diet and ways diet can assist
- Lists things youth workers can do to assist young people to eat well and prevent constipation.

Facts about constipation

Constipation is a common condition in Australia but fortunately it is also one of the easiest to do something about. Constipation is NOT defined by how often a person goes to the toilet because everyone is different. It is defined by having hard stools that are difficult to pass.⁷

Fibre is important. Constipation is almost always caused by insufficient fibre in the diet.³ Young people can be particularly susceptible if they are eating large amounts of processed and take away food, which tend to be low in fibre. Young people are also at high risk of constipation if they eat irregularly, often skip meals and have restrictive dieting patterns.

Common causes of constipation are:

- Not enough fibre and fluid in the diet
- Dieting and irregular eating habits
- Diet high in processed food
- Pain killers that contain codeine and other drugs such as heroin and methadone
- Iron and calcium supplements
- Stress
- Some medications used for treating depression
- Some women also get constipated just before their period due to the release of certain hormones.

Things youth workers can do:

- Encourage young people to have regular meals.
- Encourage young people to drink water. Water is important particularly when fibre is increased in the diet. This is because fibre absorbs a lot of water. If fibre is increased without more fluid, constipation could get worse. More water will help everything move smoothly!
- Encourage breakfast cereals, particularly cereals containing fibre.
- Encourage young people to base meals on high fibre cereal foods such as wholegrain and wholemeal bread, rice and pasta.
- Encourage an increase in the amount of vegetables young people eat. These can be fresh, frozen, or canned. They are all good.
- Encourage young people to eat whole pieces of fruit (including the skin) rather than fruit juice - this way they get more fibre in their diet.
- Encourage exercise because moving more helps everything move better!

... Constipation

How much fibre is enough?

Adults are recommended to have 30 grams of fibre every day to prevent constipation.

Children should have their age plus 5 grams.

So, a 15 year old should have $15 \text{ gm} + 5 \text{ gm} = 20 \text{ gm/day}$.^{7,3}

Try to encourage young people to slowly increase their fibre intake rather than totally changing what they eat and putting their body into shock!

HOW MUCH FIBRE IS IN FOOD?

FOOD	SERVE	FIBRE in GRAMS
White bread	1 slice	0.8g
Wholemeal bread	1 slice	2g
Weet Bix	2 biscuits	3.2g
Porridge	1/2 cup	1.7g
White rice	1/2 cup	0.75g
Brown rice	1/2 cup	1.5g
White pasta	1/2 cup	1.6g
Wholemeal pasta	1/2 cup	4.9g
Baked beans	100g	4.7g
Kidney beans	100g	6g
Peanuts	1/4 cup	1g
Potato & skin	100g	1.3g
Carrot	1/2 cup	2.3g
Apple	1 medium	3.1g
Banana	1 medium	3g
Peas	1/3 cup	3.6g

Table adapted from: *Women's and Children's Health. The Royal Women's Hospital and the Royal Children's Hospital* <http://www.rch.unimelb.edu.au/corporate/nutrition/pages/fibre.html>

... Constipation

The benefits of fibre

Avoiding constipation is only one benefit of fibre in the diet. Fibre also:

- Reduces the risk of bowel and colon cancer
- May help protect against heart disease and lower cholesterol (particularly soluble fibre found in some fruit, veggies and rolled oats)
- Keeps hunger at bay for longer and therefore helps control weight.

HIGH FIBRE MEAL AND SNACK SUGGESTIONS

- Bowl of cereal, morning, noon or night (a great snack when ever you're hungry)
- Baked beans on toast
- Add canned beans (kidney, chickpeas, lentils) to pasta meals and soups
- Add more veggies to fried rice, pasta dishes and pizza.
- Porridge, mash in banana for extra taste and fibre
- Bean nachos and tacos instead of meat
- Add fruit (fresh, tinned or dried) to cereal, icecream, yoghurt or custard
- Eat a piece of fresh fruit for morning or afternoon tea
- Use wholemeal bread, rolls, crackers and lavash bread as snacks.



... Allergies and food intolerance

Allergies and food intolerance

A food allergy is an immune reaction whereas food intolerance is sensitivity to chemicals in food.³ Some at risk young people will have food allergies. Youth workers can assist them if they have basic knowledge about some of the symptoms and precautions that need to be taken in certain situations.

This section:

- Provides basic information on food allergies and food intolerance
- Recommends referral to a doctor or dietitian for diagnoses and more information.

Food allergies

Allergies are a serious business

- If a young person says they have an allergy take them seriously. Some of the symptoms are life threatening.
- If a young person suspects he or she has an allergy or food intolerance and has not consulted a doctor, encourage them to do so.
- The need for a restrictive diet because of an allergy or intolerance can also be dangerous and lead to malnutrition if a young person avoids foods unnecessarily.

Food allergies are reactions to proteins in certain foods. These proteins are perceived as foreign to the body so the body produces antibodies. This process releases a mediator which kick starts the allergic reaction.³

Food that contain the problem proteins include:

- Nuts
- Fish
- Eggs
- Milk
- Wheat

Reactions to these foods occur immediately after eating the food.

The symptoms of an allergy are normally easy to recognise and can include one or more of the following:

- Asthma
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Eczema
- Hives
- Runny nose
- Swelling of the skin
- Anaphylactic shock (total collapse)³

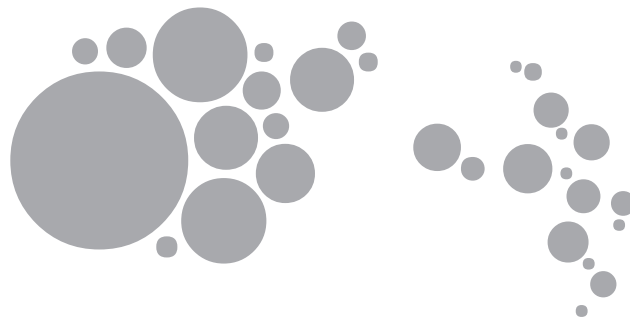
If someone has an allergy to a certain food they must **TOTALLY** avoid it!

... Allergies and food intolerance

Food intolerance

Food intolerances are different from allergies in that they aren't an immune response. They are caused by chemicals (natural and added) in food and have drug like side effects.

- Intolerances are more common than allergies.
- Symptoms are a bit more vague such as headache, irritability, fatigue, muscle aches and pain and drowsiness.
- Unlike allergies, these symptoms may occur over time rather than immediately.
- The severity of intolerances is dose related; so the more food a person has, the more severe the symptoms. However, everyone's threshold is different making intolerances hard to diagnose.
- Encourage young people to recognise how they feel after eating particular foods.



... Asthma

Asthma

Asthma is the most common chronic disorder in Australia, so the probability that youth workers will come across young people with asthma during their work is very high.

This section:

- Briefly discusses asthma and food
- Highlights some mistaken beliefs about food and asthma
- Lists things youth workers can do.

Asthma and food

Asthma is a constriction of the airways caused by a trigger that the body reacts to, making breathing difficult. In Australia more than 2 million people have asthma, with 1 in 7 young people affected.⁸

Diet is often wrongly accused as a common asthma trigger. Because of this, some people simply remove a food, or worse, a food group, from their diet. This can be really dangerous, especially for young people as they need all the nourishment they can get to support growth.

The most common triggers for asthma are not food.

They include:

- Cold and flu
- House dust mites (which live in mattresses, pillows, carpet and soft toys)
- Pollens from grass, flowers and plants
- Animal fur or feathers
- Mould (often found in damp areas in bathroom and kitchens)⁸

Food, drink and food chemicals affect less than 5% of people with asthma.

MYTH: Dairy foods cause mucus wheezing and asthma.

Things youth workers can do:

- Explain to young people with asthma they need to eat the same as everyone else.
This means they need plenty of good food from each of the food groups with lots of variety!
- Try to encourage young people to have their triggers for asthma properly diagnosed rather than diagnosing themselves and eliminating any food from their diet.

NOTE: For those people with true food allergies (a very small number of people), asthma can be a symptom. These reactions can be severe. A special diet for asthma is only necessary if a specific food or food chemical has been medically diagnosed to trigger asthma.

... A weight problem (obesity)

A weight problem (obesity)

Unfortunately overweight and obesity are becoming common problems for everyone including young people. In Australia, over the past 10 years, the number of overweight children and young people has doubled and obesity has tripled. This means that almost 1/4 of children and young people are either overweight or obese.⁹

This section:

- Outlines the negative impact of overweight and obesity on young people
- Highlights some common causes of obesity
- Includes tips for youth workers who are concerned about young people who are overweight or obese.

Research in the US has identified that obesity is the most significant health problem in disadvantaged and homeless young people.¹⁰

Why overweight and obesity is a concern

- Serious physical and psychosocial health problems are associated with obesity.
- Overweight and obese young people are exposed to negative labelling, discrimination, social rejection and isolation. Distorted body image can develop from as young as six years of age.
- In young people, obesity can result in lower self-esteem and increased rates of sadness, loneliness and nervousness.
- Overweight and obese young people are at risk of developing type 2 diabetes (non-insulin dependent) and risk factors for diseases like elevated cholesterol and high blood pressure. These adverse consequences can last a lifetime.
- Overweight young people are at risk of becoming overweight adults and therefore are at increased risk of chronic obesity related health problems such as cardiovascular disease and premature death.¹¹

Many social factors such as low income, and low levels of education have been linked to an increased risk of obesity.¹²

Main factors contributing to overweight and obesity

- 1) Too much inactive behaviour
- 2) Not enough physical activity
- 3) Large amounts of high energy foods

... A weight problem (obesity)

While it is acknowledged that genes and hereditary factors may play a role, the majority of overweight and obesity is due to lifestyle factors.

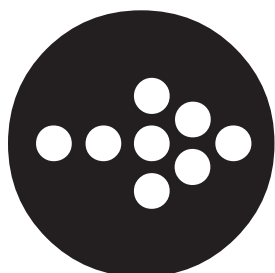
If concerned about a young person's weight remember:

- 1) It is essential that you discourage young people from going on fad diets (see Dieting on page 70). Fad diets can be dangerous for their growth and metabolism and will probably cause people to gain weight in the long run.
- 2) Instead of fad diets, encourage young people to eat a wide variety of foods from the 5 food groups (See Australian Guide to Healthy Eating on page 8). They need to eat enough food for growth and development.
- 3) Exercise and a generally active lifestyle is just as important as the food eaten. Encourage young people to get active by walking more, using the stairs instead of elevators and lifts or taking up a regular sport.

Things youth workers can do

Encourage young people to:

- Eat small amounts regularly to keep their metabolism 'burning'.
- Drink water. Advise them to take note of how much soft drink and fruit juice they usually drink. Point out how quickly the amount of extra sugar consumed adds up and contributes to weight gain.
- Fill up on bread and cereal based foods such as bread, rice, pasta and noodles (watch what is added and limit creamy sauces, fried rice and noodles).
- Include vegetables with every meal.
- Cut off the white visible fat from meat and use low fat cooking methods such as stir fry-ing and grilling rather than deep frying.
- Consider using reduced fat dairy products (milk, cheese, yoghurt and ice cream).
- Encourage healthy snacks like baked beans instead of high fat snacks like 2 minute noodles.
- Be active every day, even if it is only for a short time.
- Limit the amount of TV they watch and sedentary activities such as using the computer.



... Diabetes

Diabetes

Diabetes is an increasing problem in Australia with more and more young people being diagnosed.

This section:

- Provides information on diabetes and outlines the different types of diabetes
- Looks at food and physical activity in relation to diabetes
- Lists things that youth workers need to know and things they can do.

What is diabetes?

Diabetes occurs when the body can't change the food that has been eaten into enough useable energy because of insufficient insulin. Insulin is a hormone which is made in the pancreas and helps the glucose go from the blood stream into the body's cells. Insulin is essential to control the levels of glucose in the blood.²

Why is this relevant for young people?

Managing diabetes can be difficult for young people, especially at risk young people, when they have many other concerns in their lives.

During times of growth, most young people need to eat a lot more food, and their diabetes may be more difficult to control (though some young people will find it easier than others).²

Types of diabetes

There are 3 types of diabetes

- 1) Type 1 (Insulin dependent diabetes or IDDM)
- 2) Type 2 (Non Insulin Dependent Diabetes or NIDDM)
- 3) Gestational Diabetes (occurs when women are pregnant)

Most young people who have diabetes will have **type 1 diabetes**. This means they will need to have insulin injections every day of their lives, and they will need to be careful about:

- What and when they eat
- How much they exercise
- Use of alcohol and other drugs including smoking.²

Control is a very big issue for young people with diabetes. Even so, people with diabetes are able to do pretty much everything that other people are able to do. They are not 'ill' but they do have a health problem in which diet and exercise play a very important role.

Type 2 diabetes used to be only seen in people over 40 but due to the increase in overweight and obesity, type 2 diabetes is now seen in young people.

... Diabetes

What youth workers need to know

Most people diagnosed with diabetes will have received specific diet and exercise related information and will probably know more about their condition than youth workers. The following general information about diabetes will not make youth workers experts in the knowledge of diabetes and nutrition nor is that intended or desirable. The purpose of the following information is to ensure youth workers have a basic understanding of the relationship between diabetes and food.

- Contrary to common belief there is no “special” diet for diabetes, nor does sugar need to be cut out from the diet.
- Young people with diabetes need to eat regular meals.
- If young people are taking insulin, they need to have **regular food at regular times**. Three meals and three healthy snacks at regular intervals during the day are usually recommended. Skipping meals (too tired, being out, sleeping in) can lead to ‘hypos’ (low blood sugar levels). More information on ‘hypos’ or **hypoglycaemia** is given below because this state can be dangerous.
- Carbohydrates are ‘energy’ foods and are important in controlling diabetes. Young people need to have a diet that is **high in the right carbohydrates ie those with a low ‘glycaemic index’ (GI)**. Encourage young people to include low GI carbohydrates at each meal. The table below lists the GI of different carbohydrate foods.
- When young people are sick they often don’t feel like eating. How illness affects the amount of insulin needed is complex. They might need the same amount of insulin or they might need less.

What is glycaemic index?

The ‘glycaemic index’ is a rating on a scale of 1-100 of how quickly or slowly carbohydrate is absorbed into the blood stream. Carbohydrate foods that break down quickly during digestion have the highest glycemic indexes. The blood sugar response is fast and high. Carbohydrates that break down slowly, releasing glucose gradually into the blood stream, have low glycaemic indexes.¹³ This is why low GI foods are recommended.

How are carbohydrate food categorised?

Foods can be categorised as low, medium and high GI depending on how quickly they are absorbed into the bloodstream.

- **Low GI** (less than 55) - soy products, beans, fruit, milk, grainy bread
- **Medium GI** (55 to 70) - sugar, orange juice and oats
- **High GI** (greater than 70) - potatoes, wholemeal and white bread, and rice.¹³

... Diabetes

What is the GI of different foods?

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Cereals		
Rice, bran, All Bran, Fruit 'n oats, toasted muesli, Frosties, rolled oats, porridge, Guardian, oat bran.	Special K, untoasted muesli, Bran Buds, Just Right, Mini Wheats, Vitabrits, Nutrigrain, Sustain, Weetbix, Honey Smacks, untoasted muesli.	Cornflakes, Sultana Bran, Bran flakes, Coco pops, Puffed Wheat, Rice Bubbles, Rice Chex, Wheat bites, Breakfast bars.
Breads		
Oat bran bread, multigrain bread, soy-linseed bread, kibbled barley, fruit loaf, pumpernickel, Ploughman's loaf.	Pita bread, croissant, crumpet, white bread, hamburger bun, light rye bread, sourdough, rye, wholemeal bread.	Bagels, Wonderwhite, Dark Rye bread, French baguette, melba toast, gluten-free bread.
Crackers/Crispbreads/Biscuits/Cakes		
Jatz, oatmeal, Rich tea biscuits, banana cake, pound cake, apple muffin.	Ryvita, Saos, Breton wheat, Stoned wheat thins, digestives, milk arrowroot, shredded wheatmeals, shortbread, flans, angel food cake, muesli bars with fruit, bran muffins, blueberry muffin.	Kavli, water crackers, rice cakes, crackerbread, Morning Coffee, vanilla wafer, donuts (cinnamon).
Grains/Pasta		
Noodles, cracked wheat, egg fettucine, vermicelli, meat ravioli, spaghetti, long grain white rice, pearl barley, buckwheat, bulghur, macaroni, tortellini.	Buckwheat, brown rice, Doongara, Basmati, taco shells, gnocchi, couscous, maize cornmeal, macaroni cheese (packet).	Sunbrow quick rice, Calrose shortgrain rice, Instant cooked, tapioca, Corn chips, millet, rice pasta.
Legumes		
Soya beans, kidney beans, lentils, butter beans, chick peas, haricot beans, lentils, baked beans, bengal gram.	Green gram dahl, green pea soup.	Broad beans, lima beans, pinto beans.

Table continued next page

... Diabetes

What is the GI of different foods?

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Vegetables		
Green peas, sweet corn, sweet potato, carrots.	New canned potatoes, new potatoes, beetroot.	Baked potatoes, pumpkin, parsnip, Pontiacs, Desiree, instant potato, french fries.
Fruit		
Cherries, plums, grapefruit, peaches, apples, pears, dried apricots, grapes, kiwi fruit, oranges.	Mango, paw paw, sultanas, bananas (just ripe), raisins, rockmelon, pineapple, fresh apricots.	watermelon, very ripe "medium fruits".
Dairy Foods		
Whole milk, skim milk, chocolate milk, low fat flavoured yoghurt, low fat ice-cream, custard, Vitari fruit ice-cream.	Icecream (full fat).	Tofu frozen dessert.
Sugars		
Fructose (fruit sugar).	Lactose (milk sugar), sucrose, honey.	Glucose, Glucodin, jelly beans, lifesavers, maltose.
Beverages		
Apple juice, grapefruit juice, orange juice, Sustagen.	Cordial, Fanta.	Lucozade, Gatorade, Sports Plus.

Table adapted from: The University of Sydney GI Web site: <http://www.glycemicindex.com>

... Diabetes

Signs and symptoms of high and low blood sugar levels

Youth workers with knowledge of the signs and symptoms of high and low blood sugar levels can not only be of great benefit to young people with diabetes but may even save their lives.

1) High blood sugar levels (known as **hyperglycaemia**)

If there is not enough insulin around to move glucose from the blood into the body cells, this results in a high blood sugar level and no glucose for the cells to make into energy. To produce energy, the body will start to break down fat. When this happens, substances called **ketones** are formed which build up in the body and are very harmful.

Symptoms of high blood sugar or hyperglycaemia

- 'Acid breath' where the breath smells 'fruity' or like acetone (nail varnish remover).
- Blood glucose levels over 15mmol/L
- Excessive passing of urine with dehydration of the body tissues.
- Excessive thirst, abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting.
- Ketones in the urine
- A spill over of glucose into urine because of high blood glucose levels.
- Difficult or laboured breathing
- Eventually loss of consciousness and death.²

When should you act and what should you do?

Call for help. The emergency treatment usually needs to be done by a medical team. It aims first to give patients fluid to re-hydrate them usually via a saline 'drip'. Levels of chemicals in the blood, such as potassium, need to be checked and insulin is used to bring the blood glucose level back to normal. This needs to be done in a hospital.²

2) Low blood sugar levels (called **hypoglycaemia**)

Hypoglycaemia occurs when blood glucose levels get too low (below 3mmol/L) usually as a result of:

- Missed or delayed meals or snacks
- Being unwell and not eating properly
- Doing strenuous activity without eating extra carbohydrate
- Not taking the correct dose of insulin
- Drinking too much alcohol.

Symptoms of hypoglycaemia

A young person with low blood glucose may:

- Feel shaky, nervous and weak
- Sweat
- Feel hungry
- Have a headache.

... Diabetes

Treatment of hypoglycaemia

If conscious the young person should:

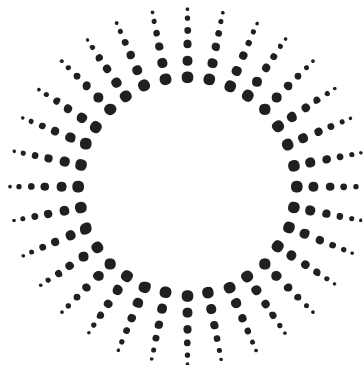
- Eat or drink something with sugar e.g. sweetened orange juice, lemonade (not diet) or jelly beans
- Follow with long acting carbohydrate food e.g. wholemeal sandwich or piece of fruit.

Young people with diabetes need to carefully manage:

- Meal times (missing meals can lead to problems)
- Sleep-ins (they may have to wake up early to eat, have their insulin,)
- Alcohol (can be complicated)
- Exercise (need to carry extra food).

Smoking is discouraged and young people with diabetes should avoid being around others who smoke; it makes some of the negative effects of diabetes worse.

Uncontrolled diabetes during pregnancy can result in harm to the developing baby. If a young person with diabetes is pregnant, get them to see a doctor to help them with their blood glucose control.



... Iron deficiency

Iron deficiency

Young people can often be deficient in iron because their rate of growth is very rapid. Young girls are especially susceptible because of menstruation and have an even higher risk of deficiency if they are dieting.

Iron is a mineral that makes people feel good by giving them energy. Young people are one of the groups most likely to be iron deficient.

This section:

- Explains common warning signs of a diet low in iron
- Looks at iron containing foods and the amounts in each
- Lists things youth workers can do.

How much iron does the body need?

Our bodies need iron for:

- Manufacturing of new blood as growth occurs
- Muscle protein growth to supply oxygen.

How much iron do we need every day?¹⁴

GROUP	AGE	AMOUNT
Young People	12 - 18 years	10 - 13 mg
Men	19 - 54 years	7 mg
Women	19 - 54 years	12 - 16 mg
Pregnant Women		22 - 36 mg
Breastfeeding Women		12 - 16 mg

Iron deficiency is one of the most common nutritional deficiencies in Australia. A study found that 2% of 15 year old males and 9% of 15 year old females were iron deficient.¹⁵

Who is at risk?

- Females
- Adolescents
- Pregnant women
- Those on weight loss diets
- Heavy tea drinkers
- Vegetarians
- Those who eat irregularly
- Children
- Elite athletes
- Babies not on solids after 3 months.

... Iron deficiency

Research in the US shows that iron deficiency anaemia is 2-3 times more common in disadvantaged and homeless young people.¹⁰

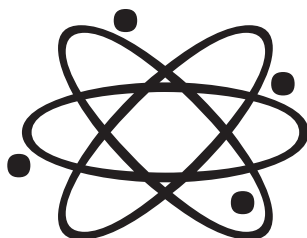
What are the signs of iron deficiency (anaemia)?

- Feeling tired and weak (depressed or bored) all the time
- Decreased appetite
- Irritability
- Poor resistance to infections
- Lacking in spark.

Things youth workers can do

Encourage increased iron uptake by:

- Explaining the need for small but regular amounts of meat (such as beef, lamb, chicken, pork or veal) or good meat substitutes.
- Explaining that baked beans, kidney beans and soy beans are good meat substitutes.
- Explaining the importance of breakfast cereal.
- Explain iron comes in 2 forms **haem** and **non-haem**:
 - **Haem**, which is found in meat and animal sources (especially red meat) and **non-haem** iron which is found in vegetables and cereal based foods. Our body easily absorbs haem iron but needs a lot more non-haem iron to be equivalent.
 - Combining foods containing non-haem iron (such as legumes and wholemeal bread) with food that is high in vitamin C (such as oranges, tomatoes, strawberries and broccoli) will help the body to absorb the non-haem iron.



... Iron deficiency

Which foods supply the best sources of iron?

FOOD	Iron Content (mgs)
50-100g red meat – about the amount of 1-2 chops	2
180-200g pork or chicken mince, about ¼ chicken	2
150-200g tuna or salmon (a full small tin)	2
2 slices of devon	1
2 sausages	2
3 slices of wholemeal bread	2
3 slices of white bread	1
2-3 teaspoon of chocolate flavoured powder (Milo, Aktivite, Ovaltine)	2
½ - ¾ cup (small bowl) of breakfast cereal with added iron (check label for 8mg of iron per 100g of cereal)	2
2 Weetbix or Vitabrits	2
1 egg	1
½ cup cooked or canned soybeans, kidney beans or lentils	2
1 medium tin of baked beans (375g)	6
1 medium tin of spaghetti (375g)	2
1 Mars Bar	1
55g milk chocolate (small bar)	1
½ medium pizza	2

Adapted from: Nutrition Project Team (1994). A Youth Worker's Guide to Nutrition. Everything you never wanted to know about food and young people. West Moreton Regional Health Authority.

- Encourage young people to eat well to make sure iron deficiency doesn't affect them.
- Be aware of the signs of possible insufficient iron levels.
- As always, when in doubt encourage the young person to seek expert opinion.

... Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C is a blood-borne virus that affects the liver. Transmission occurs when the blood of someone who is already infected with hepatitis C enters the bloodstream of another person.¹⁶ Hepatitis C is a growing public health issue among young people.

This section:

- Looks at how Hepatitis C affects nutrition
- Provides a very general overview of symptoms, management and treatments
- Lists things youth workers can do.

Hepatitis C infection rates among young people have tripled in the last five years. Young people who inject drugs are at risk of contracting Hepatitis C through sharing contaminated injecting equipment. Less risky behaviours include tattooing or other body art practices and sharing razors or toothbrushes. Unlike Hepatitis A and B, there is currently no vaccine for Hepatitis C. Hepatitis C is a slow acting virus and for the majority of people, infection will not result in serious disease or death.¹⁶ However, it can cause liver damage but even if the liver is not significantly damaged, a person can feel sick.¹⁷

Remember that a young person's Hepatitis C status is confidential!

Healthy eating and hepatitis C - Some facts

- Everyone, including young people with Hepatitis C, can make the most of what they put into their bodies and their resistance to infections by selecting a variety of healthy foods.
- About half of the people with Hepatitis C develop long term symptoms or signs of liver damage.
- Most people with hepatitis C will not develop advanced liver disease and their lives will not be shortened by hepatitis C. This means most of what they have to consider to do with food will be a lot like everyone else!¹⁸

... Hepatitis C

Things youth workers can do

Explain that the dietary recommendations for people with hepatitis C are the same as those for the general population. So, healthy eating with or without hepatitis C means:

- Choosing a variety of foods from the 5 food groups (see chapter 1)
- Drinking plenty of water
- Enjoying the occasional foods outside the 5 groups
- Eating foods high in fibre
- Eating foods that are low in fat, especially saturated fat
- Limiting alcohol intake.
- Explain that a balanced diet enables the body to meet energy, growth and repair needs.
- Recognise that changing to a “normal healthy diet” can be difficult for a young person (or any person) who hasn’t had the knowledge or the means to pay attention to what they eat or is used to eating certain foods.
- Explain that hepatitis C affects the liver and that is why alcohol intake should be limited or avoided. Exactly how much alcohol is OK depends on a variety of factors and is something that should be discussed with a professional in the area who can look at the individual’s particular situation and make decisions based on that assessment.¹⁸
- Discuss harm minimization with young people who are injecting. Options include health information or support from the local youth health service or needle syringe program.
- Where people with hepatitis C are experiencing symptoms such as nausea, reduced appetite or unplanned weight change, youth workers can refer the young person to a dietitian.¹⁸
- Plan physical activity with the young person to help him or her feel better. Physical activity can often lift one’s mood and improve appetite. Physical activity need not be a chore, it can be “incidental” such as walking to the shops regularly as opposed to getting the bus.
- Advise young people who are unwell that physical activity should be interspersed with rest because fatigue is often a symptom of hepatitis C.

Information and referral for professional help and advice

If you are concerned about a young person’s nutrition or general wellbeing, please refer them on to an appropriate health professional skilled in the area. For more information on professional help see Chapter 8.

... HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS

This section:

- Touches on the nutritional needs of HIV positive young people
- Does not focus on transmission of the infection, symptoms or management
- Outlines some basic tips for nutrition and healthy lifestyle.

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a virus caught by blood-to-blood contact or the exchange of sexual fluids with a person infected with HIV.¹⁹

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is a set of symptoms, which develops in a person with HIV, after the virus has damaged their immune system enough to lead them to develop AIDS-related diseases and symptoms.¹⁹

As with any health condition, individual nutritional needs will vary and it is important that expert nutrition and dietary advice be obtained from a skilled professional in the area.²⁰

Why is this relevant for young people?

Young people are at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS through unsafe sex practices and unsafe injecting drug use. Some young people that youth workers come into contact with will be HIV positive.

Remember that a young person's HIV status is confidential!

Healthy eating and HIV/AIDS

Despite what some may think, when a young person is HIV positive, the food in the kitchen does not need to be changed that radically! In fact, all young people can benefit from the general nutrition recommendations that apply to looking after yourself if you are HIV positive. Young people who are living with HIV/AIDS should know that good nutrition is an essential part of maintaining their overall health and wellbeing.

A young person's diet and lifestyle are important factors in their physical, psychological and spiritual health (whether they are HIV positive or not!). Good nutrition has many benefits that go beyond physical health. These benefits include psychological wellbeing and improved self-esteem, weight maintenance, increased efficiency of HIV medication, optimising immune function and actually reducing risk of hospitalisation.¹⁸

Tips for youth workers

A balanced diet is very important for the young person living with HIV. It is also essential that the diet meets individual nutritional needs. Dietitians recommend that the young person choose a variety of foods from the 5 food groups (see chapter 1) as well as plenty of water each day and also have some snacks or treats in small amounts now and then.²⁰ Variations in serving size will depend on a young person's age, height and activity level.¹⁸

Now this sounds no different to the recommendations a dietitian would give any other person. However, the fact remains that eating a variety of these foods contributes to a healthy balanced diet and this is the most important tip for the nutrition of a young person living with HIV.¹⁸

Some dietary areas that may need special attention include:

- **Energy**

Energy (kilojoule) needs are often higher in people living with HIV/AIDS due to difficulty maintaining weight and staying healthy.

- **Protein**

Protein needs are also often higher in people living with HIV/AIDS as protein is needed to build and repair body cells.

Tips that can help to increase the amount of energy and protein in the diet include:

- Eating small frequent meals and snacks to fit in more food throughout the day
- Having full-cream milk drinks between meals
- Adding more oil and margarine to food in cooking
- Snacking on cheese and crackers, nuts and dried fruit during the day.²⁰

Exercise is important to overall wellbeing, but what type and how much needs to be checked with a professional such as a doctor skilled in the area.

A note about medication

- A number of these suggestions become difficult when a young person experiences one or more HIV or medication related side effects.
- Side effects such as loss of appetite, nausea, bloating, taste changes and diarrhoea all contribute to a decreased intake of food and weight loss.

Information and referral

If you have any questions about young people and HIV/AIDS it is best to contact a professional in the area. At different times, nutritional needs will vary. It is important that nutritional requirements are continually reviewed and the young person's diet is modified accordingly. This is best done by a dietitian skilled in the area, who will be able to provide expert nutrition and dietary advice.²⁰

... **A baby on the way** **(pregnancy)**

A baby on the way (pregnancy)

This section:

- Describes nutritional needs of young pregnant women
- Recommends that young women get individual dietary advice.

Why is this relevant to young people?

Young pregnant women have high nutritional needs because they are still growing and in addition to this are supporting the growth of a baby. Pregnancy throughout adolescence is often not planned. The nutritional needs of young pregnant women are at risk, not just because of the increased growth but because of the difficult situation many young women may find themselves in.

Factors include:

- Poor financial security
- Low social support
- Low education level
- Feeling of isolation
- Poor eating habits
- Smoking, alcohol or other drugs.

Nutrients needed during pregnancy - Tips for youth workers

The high nutrition needs of a young person, together with the extra nutrition needed while pregnant, put young pregnant women at risk of poor nutritional status.

Some of the major nutrients needed while pregnant are:

- **Iron**
- **Calcium**
- **Folate**

Iron

- Iron requirements are already high for young women but when pregnant, the body needs twice as much iron.²¹ Extra iron is needed for increased blood volume, placenta development and growth of the baby.
- Good sources of iron
 - 1) Haem iron (easiest source of iron for the body to absorb): red meat, chicken, pork and fish.
 - 2) Non-haem iron (harder for the body to absorb): dark green vegetables, dried peas and beans, dried fruit, iron fortified cereal, nuts, seeds and wholegrain products.

Non haem sources of iron (plant sources) are best eaten with food high in vitamin C to help the body absorb the iron. Foods high in vitamin C include citrus fruit (oranges, grapefruit) juice, broccoli, tomatoes and strawberries.

... A baby on the way (pregnancy)

Calcium

- Because young pregnant women are still growing, extra calcium is required for their bone development and skeletal development of the baby.
- If a young pregnant woman does not consume enough calcium while she is pregnant, calcium is drawn out of the mother's bones to provide for the growing baby.
- Young women who are pregnant should aim to have 4 serves of high calcium food every day. Dairy based foods are the best source of calcium. These include milk, cheese, yoghurt and custard. Calcium fortified soy products are alternatives to dairy foods.

1 serve of calcium is equal to 1 glass of milk (250ml), 1 piece of cheese (40g) or a tub of yoghurt (200ml).

Folate

- Folate is an essential vitamin needed in the early stages of pregnancy to prevent neural tube defects.
- Often young women don't know they are pregnant when the need for folate is greatest, for this reason a healthy diet is recommended for all people planning to fall pregnant. This may be difficult for young women as often pregnancies are unplanned.
- Foods high in folate include raw green vegetables, freshly squeezed orange juice, kidney, liver, lentils, baked beans and broccoli. A supplement is also commonly prescribed to pregnant women.

Vegetarian concerns during pregnancy

Well-planned lacto-ovo vegetarian diets that include a wide variety of plant foods along with milk and eggs can meet the nutritional needs of pregnant women.

- Poorly planned vegetarian diets can be low in iron, zinc and vitamin B12.
- Strict vegan diets consist only of plant foods. They can be low in calories, iron, zinc, B12, B6 and calcium.
- Encourage young people to see a dietitian or community midwife if they have concerns about their vegetarian diet.²²

Weight gain

Is a normal part of pregnancy and essential for a healthy baby

- Dieting is NOT safe during pregnancy.
- Weight gain should be gradual and steady.
- Normal weight gain is about 10-13 kg but depends of body weight before pregnancy.²³

... A baby on the way (pregnancy)

Encourage a healthy lifestyle

Pregnancy is an ideal time for young people to assess their lifestyle and make a few changes - for the sake of themselves and the baby.

Smoking

- Decreases the amount of oxygen and nutrients passed onto the baby
- Is often the cause of low birth weight babies which are more susceptible to getting sick

Youth workers should encourage young people to quit smoking or at least cut down.

Alcohol

- There is no safe level of alcohol while pregnant.
- Young people should drink milk, juice or water instead of alcohol.

Caffeine

Very high intakes of caffeine may be harmful to a baby's development.

- Two to three cups per day of coffee or equivalent are considered safe.
- Limit caffeine to 1 or 2 drinks a day.
(for more information see chapter 5)

Herbal teas and herbs

- Many herbal teas and herbs can act like drugs.
- Young people should check with their doctor, community health nutritionist or a registered dietitian before using any other herbs.

Drugs and other medication

- Always encourage young people to check with a doctor or pharmacist before taking any drugs, medication or home remedies.
- Many drugs can seriously affect the health of the unborn baby if taken while pregnant.²²

Problems in pregnancy which may interfere with a healthy diet

Morning sickness/nausea

- Can happen any time of the day, not just in the morning.
- Often occurs in the first 12 weeks and improves after that.
- Young women can:
 - Eat dry crackers or toast before getting out of bed.
 - Change positions slowly.
 - Eat small amounts of food regularly- an empty stomach may cause nausea.
 - Avoid greasy or fried food.
 - Eat cold foods such as salads and sandwiches if the smell of food causes nausea.

... A baby on the way (pregnancy)

Heartburn

- Caused by food mixed with stomach acid backing up from the stomach
- Often occurs later in pregnancy
- Young women can:
 - Eat small amounts of food often.
 - Avoid spicy, fatty and fried food.
 - Limit coffee.
 - Check with a doctor before taking anything.

Constipation

- Caused by the digestive system slowing down.
- The baby may also be putting pressure on the bowel.
- Young women can:
 - Drink lots of fluids throughout the day (6-8 glasses).
 - Eat high fibre foods such as fruit and vegetables, wholegrain breads and cereals, nuts, seeds and legumes.
 - Take a walk each day.
 - Check with a doctor before taking anything.²²

Feeding a baby

This is another good time for young people to start thinking about their own diet.

A baby needs only breast milk or formula for the first 4-6 months. It is up to the parents to decide how they feed their baby. Make sure a young mum knows all the facts and understands the advantages of breastfeeding before she makes a decision.

Breast is best

- Easy for the baby to digest and provides nutrients in the amount the baby needs.
- The content of breast milk changes as the baby grows.
- Helps to protect against illness and infections.
- It is FREE.
- It is convenient- always on hand whenever you need it.
- Ready to go at the right temperature.

Although breastfeeding is recommended, youth workers should be aware that some young women are unable to breastfeed for various reasons. These young women should not face harassment and may need reminding that they are not bad mothers.

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chapter 3

Food and mood

- **How food affects mood**
- **How mood affects food**
- **Food, mood and being active**

Food and mood

Food and mood

Our eating patterns affect how we feel and the way we feel affects how we eat. This chapter looks at the relationship between mood and food, specifically:

- How food affects mood
- How mood affects food
- Food, mood and being active.

Often young people are not aware of the relationship between food and mood. Whether we are talking about stress, depression or inactivity, food and eating is an essential ingredient in influencing the way we feel from day to day.

How food affects mood

How food affects mood

While most people recognise that food can affect our health e.g. increase or decrease the risk of heart disease or cancer, what is sometimes less well recognized is that food affects our mood, thought processes and energy levels.

What we eat affects our memory, mood and vitality long before it affects our heart and bones. What we eat or don't eat today can have an immediate impact on how we feel here and now.

How does food affect mood?

Certain foods and eating habits can generate different moods.

When young people are feeling down, having something to eat often helps them feel better simply because of the energy boost their brain gets from the glucose in the food. Eating the food we enjoy often improves our mood just as doing things we enjoy cheers us up.

Let's look at the facts:

- The brain needs glucose to function. Carbohydrate foods such as bread, rice, cereal and pasta break down into glucose, which is why we generally feel better after having something to eat.
- A higher carbohydrate intake has been linked with feeling less depressed and more energetic (good sources of carbohydrate include bread, cereal, rice and pasta).
- Low levels of Folic acid (good sources found in green leafy vegetables) and omega 3 fats (good sources in fish such as salmon) have been linked to depressed moods.
- Iron deficiency is the most common deficiency in the world. Iron deficiency can cause people to feel lethargic and depressed and may also contribute to feelings of anxiety. Good sources of iron include red meat, chicken, fish, pork, dark green vegetables, dried peas and beans, dried fruit and iron fortified cereal.¹
- Food intake varies with menstrual cycle. It is common for women to have an increased appetite around menstruation time because the metabolic rate increases.¹

Things youth workers can do

- Encourage young people to eat regular meals – skipping meals can make people feel worse.
- Encourage a wide variety of different foods to make sure young people get all the important vitamins and minerals they need.

How mood affects food

How mood affects food

The way we feel every day affects what we eat and the amount we feel like eating. We may eat more when we are bored and eat less when we are busy. Every person has different habits.

Young people should know that **eating well makes you feel good** – it is as simple as that! Sometimes however, it is more than just the mood of the day that affects eating patterns.

When a young person feels:

- Stressed
- Anxious
- Depressed

or when a young person has a diagnosed mental illness such as:

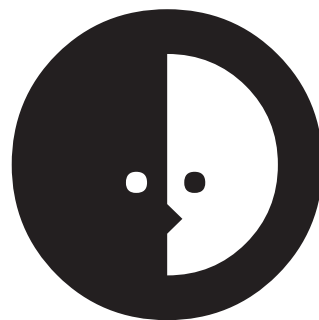
- Bipolar disorder
- Schizophrenia
- An eating disorder (see chapter 4)

it is likely that one or more of the following will be affected:

- Appetite (either increases or decreases)
- Choice of food type
- What they feel like eating, and
- When they eat.²

When a young person feels depressed, anxious or stressed, it is usually the condition itself that has an effect on their appetite.

In the case of diagnosed mental illness it is typically their prescribed medication that affects their eating pattern and food choices.²



How food affects mood

Tips for youth workers

Increased appetite and problem weight gain²

Encourage young people to eat a variety of healthy foods each day, including:

- Moderate amounts of low fat dairy food and lean meats
- Small amounts of foods high in fat, sugar and salt
- Lots of fruit, vegetables, wholegrain breads and cereals.
- Remind young people that comfort eating (e.g. eating chocolate when you are sad) can make you feel better in the short term but these effects don't usually last very long.
- Suggest to young people that eating their favourite food when they are upset is ok, but can become a problem if this is the only way they choose to comfort themselves when they are upset or stressed or bored. Suggest alternatives.

Decreased appetite and problem weight loss

Youth workers can encourage young people to:

- eat small amounts often to stimulate appetite
- try to eat a variety of healthy foods each day
- include extra nourishing food and drinks.²

It is important to keep in mind that a healthy diet, one that meets individual nutritional needs, will help gain and maintain a healthy weight and help manage nutritional concerns related to mental health conditions.²

Eating well may not be the answer to the young person's problems, but it will help them feel better.



Food and mood and being active

Food, mood and being active

Food, mood and exercise are all interconnected. Young people need to know that exercising has more benefits than fitness alone. Regular exercise provides young people with important physical, mental and social health benefits.³

Exercise can:

- Improve mood
- Improve appetite
- Help regulate weight
- Provide time-out from negative thoughts or experiences
- Help in the management of anxiety and depression
- Improve short-term and long-term health.³

Regular exercise alters brain chemistry and brings about improved mood and feelings of wellbeing.⁴

Physical activity includes anything from gardening to running a marathon. Exercise is a structured activity designed to maintain and improve physical fitness. At the very least, young people should be encouraged to include basic physical activity in their everyday lives.

Physical activity can build self confidence and feelings of achievement by providing young people with opportunities for self-expression, social interaction and integration. This can all work against negative thoughts and feelings associated with depression.³

Exercise is often overlooked or put in the “too hard basket”. Eating well and exercising may not be the only answer but are important components of working with young people to improve their emotional and physical wellbeing.

Like most of us, young people need to be motivated to action. This is particularly so when a young person is feeling depressed. So how can youth workers encourage young people to be more active?

Food and mood and being active

Tips for youth workers

- Remember, youth workers can always role model positive options.
- Talk to young people about what they enjoy doing and what the barriers are for them with physical activity.
- Start by raising awareness among young people of the benefits of physical activity – i.e. physical, emotional and social.
- Encourage young people to take ‘small steps’ towards creating a more active lifestyle
- Encourage young people to take exercise ‘regularly, not seriously’.
- Encourage walking or even cycling as a form of transport.
- Tie in food shopping and physical activity by walking to the shops instead of getting the bus.
- Encourage alternatives to sport by providing opportunities for young people to experience yoga, kick boxing or pilates for example. Some youth services offer tastes of these from time to time – so keep your eye out!
- Promote joining in with local council, youth services and holiday programs as they often include physical activities. The local PCYC can also be an inexpensive option for physical activity.
- Establish a whole-of-service approach to exercise where workers and young people go on a walk a few times a week together. Young people can join in if and when they feel like it. This can be done when there is more than one worker at a service.
- Incorporate going for a walk around the block as a good anger management or time out strategy.
- Keep physical activity on the agenda – it can benefit everyone.

For more information on Food and Mood go to Chapter 6 Food on the Run

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chapter 4

Promoting positive body image and eating habits

- **Body image**
- **Dieting**
- **Eating disorders**

Promoting positive body image and eating habits

Promoting positive body image and eating habits

Body image is how a person perceives, thinks and feels about their body. Often a person's perception does not match the reality.¹ Poor body image is a significant youth health issue. It has been linked with the adoption of unhealthy weight loss practices, poor nutrition, low self-esteem, depression and the development of eating disorders.

This chapter looks at:

- The importance of a healthy and realistic body image
- Dieting and slimming products
- An overview of eating disorders and how they present
- Things youth workers can do.



Body image

Body image

Adolescence is a time of major physical and emotional change. Although normal development includes some weight gain, this is often hard for young people to deal with. One of the reasons why extra weight is hard to deal with is because peers don't always reach puberty at the same time, so there is variation among young people of the same peer group.

Body image, self esteem and behaviour

Body image, self esteem and food behaviour play an important role in young people's development. In western society the ideal body image for girls is to be slim, while for boys it is to be strong and muscular. Many young people feel immense pressure to fit these body stereotypes. Dieting, body-building and abnormal eating patterns are all common among today's young people.

Young people often go to harmful extremes to achieve the 'ideal media' body image. Severe dieting and taking illicit drugs for weight loss have been identified as major health issues of concern particularly among disadvantaged young women. Steroid use and bulking supplements are common among young men.²

Socio-cultural values, the media, feedback from others and education about the body can all influence the way in which people view their bodies.²

Negative body image

Until recently, negative body image was a woman's issue but increasingly men are under pressure to achieve an 'ideal' body type.

Some of the factors contributing to negative body image are:

- Teasing during childhood and adolescence
- Widespread societal tendency to judge people on their appearance
- Advertising campaigns and media coverage featuring idealised female and male images.

In addition for young men there is also:

- Peer pressure to be tough and strong
- An emphasis on male sports players as role models
- Promotion by society that the ideal man is lean and muscular.¹

Body image

Gay men and athletes are particularly vulnerable to poor body image or feeling insecure about their bodies.¹

For **young women** there may be additional pressures:

- Peer and media pressure to be ultra slim, to compare with other women, and to diet to get the media promoted 'ideal' body.
- Growing up with parents who were always 'on a diet', or constantly unhappy with their body shape.¹

Dangers associated with a negative body image

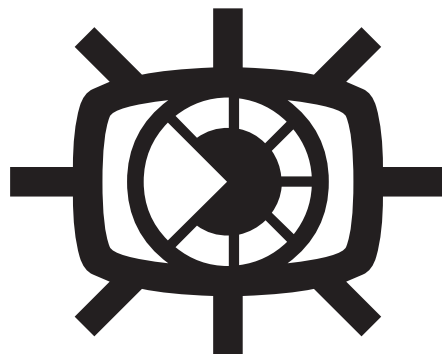
Young people who have a negative body image are:

- More at risk of developing an eating disorder
- More likely to suffer from feelings of depression and isolation
- More likely to have low self-esteem
- More likely to have obsessions with weight loss.

Negative body image is one of the many contributing factors that can lead to an eating disorder.

Promoting a positive body image

It is important that youth workers consciously work to promote positive and avoid reinforcing poor body images to their client group. Healthy attitudes, good role models, and positive environments all encourage and contribute to positive body images among young people. There are materials available to assist youth workers to do this. One place to start looking for appropriate resources is the following web address: <http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org>



Body image

Things youth workers can do:

- Remind young people that there is no one ideal body size, shape, or weight.
- Let young people know that no diet, weight or body size will automatically lead to happiness and fulfilment.
- Avoid categorising foods as “good and safe” versus “bad and dangerous.” We all need to eat a wide variety of foods.
- Be a good role model. Recognise that young people pay attention to and learn from the way you talk about and present yourself and your body.³
- Remind all young people that a person’s body weight says nothing about their character, personality or value as a person.
- Become a discriminating viewer of the media and its messages about self-esteem and body image. Challenge and discuss magazine and television ideals and images with young people.³
- Help young people discover what they like and value about themselves.
- Discourage young people from criticising each others’ appearance.
- Inform and reassure young people about the normal changes to the body at puberty. Let them know about the increase in appetite that comes as a normal part of puberty and the importance of a healthy, balanced diet for growth and development.²
- Encourage healthy eating and physical activity for all young people in the accommodation service, don’t single anyone out for ‘special attention’.⁴
- Ensure young people have access to healthy snacks such as a wide range of fruit and bread⁴ (e.g. crumpets, English muffins, bagels and Turkish bread).

Dieting

Dieting

Young people often feel pressured to have the 'perfect body'. As youth workers, it will be common to come across young people on all sorts of diets trying to achieve an unhealthy and unrealistic body size and shape. Knowing a few facts about diets and nutrition will enable youth workers to explain the effects of dieting to young people.

This section looks at:

- Dieting and young people
- The effects of dieting on the body
- A list of things youth workers can do.

Different eating patterns for medical reasons such as allergies or diabetes are fine, but dieting to lose weight can be dangerous.

Dieting and young people

- Young people commonly get nutrition and dieting information from magazines and a lot of that information is incorrect and can be detrimental to good health if maintained for any length of time.
- Fad diets, special drinks and supplements are seen and promoted as a quick and easy way to lose or gain weight, however there is no quick fix solution to losing weight.⁵
- On-off dieting can eventually lead to weight gain. 95% of people who go on weight loss diets regain everything they have lost plus more within two years.
- On a weight loss diet, the body will shed fluid and muscle tissue before shedding fat stores.⁶
- Some young people use slimming and diet products to help them lose weight. Like dieting, these only work because there is a restriction in the amount of calories being taken in to the body, not because they are magic.

Dieting

The effects of dieting on the body

The body undergoes many changes when the amount of food and nutrients are restricted.⁶ These changes can cause:

- Hunger
- Tiredness
- Headaches and muscle cramps
- Poor concentration
- Slower metabolism
- Constipation
- Vitamin & mineral deficiencies
- Loss of bone density
- Loss of lean muscle and fluid
- Bad breath.⁶

Did you know?

- If a woman had the same measurements as a mannequin she wouldn't have enough body fat to menstruate.⁷
- The chances of an active Australian woman (18 - 35 yrs) having the same weight, height, waist and hip measurements of a mannequin is 1.1%, and she has no chance at all of matching the measurements of Barbie.⁸
- If Barbie were life-size her measurements would be 39-23-33. She would stand seven feet, two inches tall and have a neck twice the length of a normal human's neck.⁹

Dieting

Things youth workers can do

- At every opportunity ensure young people know that dieting can be dangerous. It stops them getting the nutrients their body needs for normal growth and development, influences their mood and damages their health.
- Encourage young people to eat sensibly and they will achieve the desired healthy outcome, better than they would with dieting or slimming products.
- Encourage the consumption of real food over supplements.
- Let young people know that dieting may cause initial short-term weight loss but weight returns in the long run. This happens because dieting slows down the body's metabolic rate (the rate at which the body burns up energy) to compensate for the reduced food intake. Dieting means that body fat loss slows down and it actually becomes harder to lose weight. The body responds to dieting by conserving fat, therefore weight lost is mainly water and muscle. This reduced muscle mass further slows down the rate at which the body uses energy.²

Explain to young people that:

- Dieting is associated with many negative health effects, especially when episodes of dieting are followed by weight gain.
- Dieting can cause depression and is linked with poor self-image.¹
- Dieting deprives the body of essential nutrients and energy and the body responds by wanting to binge. Strict avoidance of particular foods can cause cravings for those foods.
- It is normal for women to have some fat on their hips and thighs. This is vital for healthy skin, eyes, hair and teeth, fertility, lactation, and prevention of osteoporosis.¹

Thin people are not always healthier or happier than overweight people. A thin person may have become thin by eating an inadequate diet or by smoking excessively.¹

For more information see Rosemary Stanton's *The Diet Dilemma*.¹¹ It gives an excellent overview of common fad diets and exposes whether or not they really work.

Eating disorders

Eating disorders

Eating disorders often develop as outward signs of inner emotional or psychological distress or problems. They are ways that people cope with difficulties in their lives. Eating, or not eating, is often used to help deal with painful feelings. Eating disorders can have life-threatening consequences for both females and males. Without appropriate help and treatment, eating problems may persist throughout life.¹²

This section looks at:

- Eating disorders in general
- Some of the factors that contribute to eating disorders
- An outline of the major types of eating disorders and their presentation
- Malnutrition – a major consequence of eating disorders.

Eating disorders

This section aims to give youth workers an idea about the causes of eating disorders and how eating disorders may present in general. Youth workers must not diagnose a young person as having an eating disorder. Rather, youth workers can build an environment that is positive for young people, provide support to young people with eating difficulties and also start to be able to recognise when a young person needs professional help.

Who gets an eating disorder?

Anyone can develop an eating disorder regardless of age, race, gender or background. Young women are most vulnerable, particularly between the ages of 15-25 years, however the male percentage is on the increase.¹²

Most often, people with eating disorders come from middle and upper income families, and are usually highly intelligent. They are often perfectionists, with unrealistically high expectations. They can be described as lacking in self-esteem, with feelings of ineffectiveness and a strong need for other people's approval.¹²

Poor eating habits are not always eating disorders

The term "eating disorder" gets thrown around very loosely these days. Youth workers need to be careful that every young person that is very thin or appears to have problems when it comes to food is not immediately labelled as having an eating disorder. Young people come to the attention of youth workers or youth services because of disadvantage and neglect of some kind. Poor eating habits may be a direct result of that environment of neglect as opposed to a diagnosable eating disorder.

Eating disorders

It is unlikely that a young person will be eating well if you think they may:

- Have come from a very unstable home
- Have little or no money or independent living skills
- Not be able to look after their physical health
- Not be attending school or be in any stable routine
- Be using alcohol or other drugs

What are some of the factors that cause eating disorders?

- While eating disorders may begin with preoccupations with food and weight, they are often more likely to be about much more than food.
- Often, eating disorders are complex conditions that stem from a combination of long-standing behavioural, emotional, psychological, interpersonal, and social factors.
- People with eating disorders often use food and the control of food in an attempt to deal with feelings and emotions that may otherwise seem overwhelming.
- Ultimately behaviours such as dieting, binge eating and purging can damage a person's physical and emotional health, self-esteem, and sense of competence and control.³

Eating disorders: Contributing factors

Psychological

- Low self-esteem
- Feelings of inadequacy or lack of control in life
- Depression, loneliness, anxiety or anger, loss or grief.³

Interpersonal

- History of physical, sexual or emotional abuse
- Troubled family and personal relationships
- Difficulty expressing emotions
- History of being bullied about size or weight.³

Social

- Cultural pressures that promote a thin body as the ideal
- Limited definitions of beauty that include only women and men of certain body weights and shapes
- Cultural norms that judge people on the basis of physical appearance and not inner qualities and strengths
- Peer influences.³

Eating disorders

The role of biochemical or biological causes of eating disorders is currently being investigated.³

Eating disorders: Type and presentation

Anorexia nervosa involves starvation and excessive weight loss.

A young person with anorexia nervosa may refuse to maintain their body weight at or above a minimally normal weight for their body type, age and activity level. There is an extreme concern with body weight and shape and a fear of being fat. The young person will often feel fat despite dramatic weight loss. Young women often cease menstruating.³

Bulimia nervosa is characterised by a secretive cycle of binge eating followed by purging. Bulimia involves eating large amounts of food, more than most people would eat in a meal, in short periods of time, then getting rid of the food through vomiting, diet pills, laxative abuse or over-exercising. Young people with bulimia also have an extreme concern with body weight and shape, diet frequently and feel out of control during a binge.³

Binge eating disorder (also known as **compulsive overeating**) is characterised primarily by periods of uncontrolled, impulsive, or continuous eating beyond the point of feeling comfortably full. While there is no purging, there may be sporadic fasts or repetitive diets and often feelings of shame or self-hatred after a binge. People who overeat compulsively may struggle with anxiety, depression and loneliness, which can contribute to their unhealthy episodes of binge eating. Body weight may vary from normal to mild, moderate or severe obesity.³

Other eating disorders can include some combination of the signs and symptoms of anorexia, bulimia, or binge eating disorder. While these behaviours may not be clinically considered a full syndrome eating disorder, they can still be physically dangerous and emotionally draining.³

All eating disorders require help from a professional such as a counsellor who is skilled in the area. The earlier an eating disorder is diagnosed, the better the chance of successfully treating it.

Eating disorders

Malnutrition – a major consequence of eating disorders

Malnutrition is a major consequence of eating disorders and also the result of poor eating habits.

Malnutrition causes:

- General tiredness, low energy, feeling cold unrelated to temperature or dress, delayed growth, delayed puberty and hunger
- Damage to different body organs and parts including the:

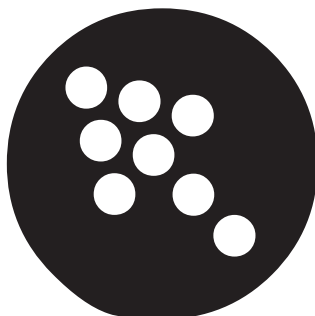
1. Brain	Shrinkage, poor concentration, mood changes, sleep disturbances, brain control of other organs is affected.
2. Skin, nails and hair	Dry skin and scalp, hair can fall out, fine body hair can grow, easy bruising, delayed wound healing.
3. Heart & circulation	Slow pulse rate, abnormal heart rhythms, decreased blood supply causing cold fingers.
4. Face and mouth	Sunken eyes, bad breath, mouth ulcers.
5. Kidneys	Permanent damage can occur.
6. Stomach and intestines	Movement of food through these organs slows down, bloating after eating, constipation and abdominal pain.
7. Reproductive organs	No periods, infertility.
8. Blood cells	Iron deficiency.
9. Immune system compromised	Body more susceptible to infection.
10. Bones	Decreased density and strength increasing the risk of future osteoporosis. ¹¹

Anorexia has one of the highest mortality rates of any mental illness. Many of these deaths are not attributed directly to an eating disorder itself, rather to an eating disorder complication such as oesophageal rupture, heart failure, stroke, or suicide.³

Eating disorders

When and where to refer for professional help

- **When to refer for professional help:** When all basic needs have been met and the young person is no longer in crisis, but they are still presenting with severe eating problems that you think may be an eating disorder, then referral for professional help is essential.
- **Where to refer for professional help:** Youth workers should refer young people with suspected eating difficulties on for professional assessment and advice. Appropriate professional services are included in the final chapter of this manual.



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chapter 5

What do tobacco, alcohol and other drugs have to do with nutrition?

What is a drug?

Tobacco, alcohol and caffeine up close

- Tobacco
- Alcohol
- Caffeine

Illicit drugs

What do tobacco, alcohol and other drugs have to do with nutrition?

What do tobacco, alcohol and other drugs have to do with nutrition?

The food and drink we consume affect how we operate and similarly any alcohol or other drugs have an effect on the body. Using drugs of any type, prescribed and illicit, affect how food is used by the body. During the growth period of adolescence the body needs extra nutrients and misusing drugs significantly impacts on digestion and absorption of nutrients. By misusing alcohol and other drugs, young people could be adversely affecting their nutritional status and thereby their normal growth and development.¹

This section:

- Looks in brief, at the issue of legal and illegal drugs among young people
- Outlines three classes of drugs (depressants, stimulants and hallucinogens) and their effect on the body
- Looks at the effects of tobacco, alcohol and caffeine on the body
- Lists things youth workers can do.

The emphasis in this chapter is on alcohol, tobacco and nutrition. However, we acknowledge that at risk young people use many other drugs in addition to alcohol and tobacco (*polydrug use*). The misuse of illicit drugs is touched on but only superficially and only from a nutritional aspect. The use of illicit drugs is not the focus of this work.

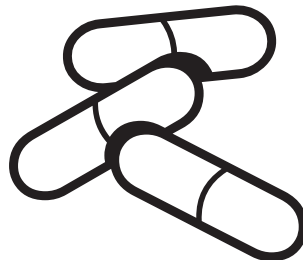
What is a drug?

What is a drug?

According to one definition, “A drug is any substance, solid, liquid or gas that brings about physical and psychological changes in the body.”²

We live in a drug taking society which includes both legal and illegal drugs. In Australia, there are far more health problems and drug-related deaths from ‘legal’ drugs, namely alcohol and tobacco, than there are from illegal drugs. All too often, smoking and drinking make up the “staple diet” of at risk young people. Unfortunately, young people are continuing to take up smoking, and alcohol is the most widely used drug in Australia, with young people at risk from binge drinking.²

In 1998, 19,000 Australians were estimated to have died from tobacco-related illnesses. An estimated 3,300 died from illnesses and injuries associated with excessive alcohol consumption, and 1,000 deaths were attributable to illicit drug use.³



What is a drug?

How do drugs affect the body?

There are different categories of drugs which affect the body in different ways according to their main action. This resource considers 3 main groups of drugs, classified according to the way they **affect the central nervous system (CNS)**. They are:

1. **CNS Depressants**
2. **CNS Stimulants**
3. **Hallucinogenic drugs**

1. Depressant drugs (such as alcohol)

- Slow down the functions of the CNS
- Cause feelings of relaxation and less inhibition in small doses
- In larger doses can cause vomiting, unconsciousness, and in some cases, death
- Affect concentration, coordination and slow down a person's ability to respond to unexpected situations.

2. Stimulant drugs (such as nicotine)

- Speed up the messages going to and from the brain by stimulating the CNS
- Can make the user feel more awake, alert or confident
- Can decrease appetite
- Increase heart rate, body temperature and blood pressure
- Can cause dilated pupils, talkativeness, agitation, and sleep disturbance
- In large quantities can "over-stimulate" the user, causing anxiety, panic, seizures, headaches, stomach cramps, aggression and paranoia.

Note: Prolonged or sustained use of stronger stimulants (such as ecstasy) can also cause the effects described above.

What is a drug?

3. Hallucinogenic drugs (such as LSD or “trips”)

- Alter perception i.e. people who have taken them may see or hear things that aren't really there, or what they see may be distorted in some way
- Cause loss of appetite
- Cause increased activity and a sense of emotional and psychological euphoria and wellbeing
- Cause the pupils to dilate, jaw clenching, sweating
- Can cause panic, paranoia, stomach cramps and nausea
- Can induce loss of contact with reality, irrational or bizarre behaviour.²

The effects of hallucinogens vary greatly. It is impossible to predict how they will affect a particular person at a particular time.

How drugs affect the body depends, not only on the type, quality, and quantity of the drug taken, but on individual differences. Every young person is different. How alcohol or other drugs affect a person will vary depending on:

- How much is taken
- How quickly the drug is consumed
- The method of administration
- Whether the drug is used with another drug, or on its own
- How pure the drug is
- The environment in which the drug is taken
- How long the person has been taking a particular drug
- The person's mood, age, weight, height, sex and general health status.⁴



Tobacco, alcohol and caffeine up close

Tobacco, alcohol and caffeine up close

Tobacco

Most young people are aware that smoking tobacco is bad for their health. However, the reality is, young people are still taking up smoking and becoming addicted. There is a common perception by young people that smoking helps you “chill out”. Smoking in fact has the opposite effect; stimulating the CNS and adversely affecting the body in a variety of ways.

Often young people, especially women, believe that smoking will help them lose weight, and is also associated with being thin and attractive. They fear quitting smoking because of weight gain. The reason weight gain accompanies quitting is because smokers have a slightly higher metabolic rate than non-smokers which means that smokers can eat slightly more without putting on weight. When they quit, this changes and if people who quit eat extra food to compensate for no cigarettes, then increased weight does happen, so sensible eating combined with exercise is important. ⁵

What is very important to communicate to young people are the health risks they face if they choose to smoke, including the fact that smoking for some young people means eating less and this leads to malnutrition.

Immediate and long term effects of smoking tobacco

Immediate effects: The effects of smoking vary from person to person.

However, specific tobacco effects include:

- An immediate increase in blood pressure and heart rate and a decrease in the blood flow to body extremities like the fingers and toes
- Brain and nervous system activity stimulated for a short time and then reduced
- Possible dizziness, nausea, watery eyes and increased acid in the stomach
- Diminished appetite
- Weakened sense of taste and smell.

In addition, smokers typically experience some or all of the following:

- Shortness of breath and persistent coughs
- Reduced fitness
- More colds and flu than non-smokers and find it harder to recover from minor illnesses
- Changes in appearance such as skin breakouts, stained teeth and fingers
- Bad breath.²

Tobacco, alcohol and caffeine up close

All smokers compromise their nutrition

- Smokers need twice as much vitamin C as non-smokers to deal with the damaging effects of nicotine, but many smokers don't eat enough nutritious foods because they smoke instead.
- Vitamin C reduces the damage nicotine causes to cells and blood vessels.
- It is best to encourage young people to get their vitamin and mineral requirements from the food they eat rather than from tablets.
- Encouraging a healthy varied diet will help ensure young people receive all their nutrient needs.⁵

Smoking is addictive

- Once a young person starts smoking, they are likely to find it difficult to give up. Many factors play a role in quitting including environment, peers, as well as the addictive nature of nicotine.

Long term effects

Smokers have an increased risk of developing:

- Respiratory infections
- Stomach ulcers
- Emphysema
- Heart attack and coronary disease
- Cancer of the lungs, throat, mouth, bladder, kidney, pancreas, cervix, and stomach
- Peripheral vascular disease.²

Young people and quitting

Young people need to know that smoking is a hard habit to break. Those who want to quit need to know that while it can be difficult, it can be done and the sooner the better, both for their health and their finances. Youth workers can't make young people stop smoking but they can encourage them to quit and can act as good role models by not smoking.

Reinforcing the benefits of being a non-smoker and creating a supportive environment will make quitting easier for the young person who wants to quit. Youth workers can also work to break down the myths associated with quitting.

Tobacco, alcohol and caffeine up close

Things youth workers can do

Emphasise the immediate benefits of quitting smoking such as:

- Fresh breath and clean smelling hair, fingers, clothes and whiter, brighter teeth.
- A heightened sense of smell and taste.
- More effective lungs within one week of stopping smoking, and also nicotine and carbon monoxide will be out of the system within one week of quitting.
- After 1 year the risk of cancer and disease drops dramatically.²
- Weight gain often associated with quitting only happens if cigarettes are replaced with fattening foods and little activity. Furthermore, where weight is gained immediately following quitting it is often only temporary.
- Snacking on healthy foods and keeping active prevents weight gain.
- Money not spent on cigarettes is money available for much more exciting stuff!
- The longer one smokes, the harder it is to quit – so quitting sooner rather than later is to be encouraged.
- People don't have to smoke a lot to be addicted. In fact, new evidence shows that young people can be addicted after one cigarette! So even if a young person doesn't smoke a lot, they still may be addicted.⁶

Refer to appropriate resources:

Youth workers should familiarise themselves with all the options available in their area to help young people quit smoking. All young people should know the options available to them including visual and written information resources, websites, counselling, group programs, nicotine patches and gum. If you are worried about a young person's smoking or they approach you for help, guide them to the appropriate options for assistance.

Tobacco, alcohol and caffeine up close

Alcohol

All alcoholic drinks contain the chemical ethyl alcohol which is a CNS depressant drug. In small quantities, depressants such as alcohol make people feel relaxed and can lower their inhibitions.⁴ However, alcohol can dull perceptions, co-ordination and response rates and can also affect a person's ability to think and act clearly.⁵

Alcohol is the most widely used psychoactive, or mood-changing, recreational drug in Australia.⁴

Empty calories: Contrary to popular belief there is not “a steak in every beer”, nor is alcohol packed full of B vitamins. It is packed full of energy or kilojoules (calories). It is higher in kilojoules than protein and carbohydrate based food but it doesn't provide the body with any other nutrients. This is why it is often referred to as ‘empty calories’. It is a very poor substitute for food. It also explains why a constant supply of alcohol, even when eating a well balanced diet soon contributes to weight gain. The exception is of course for chronic alcoholics who are often quite thin and wasted because their bodies natural defence mechanism uses a different pathway to metabolise alcohol.

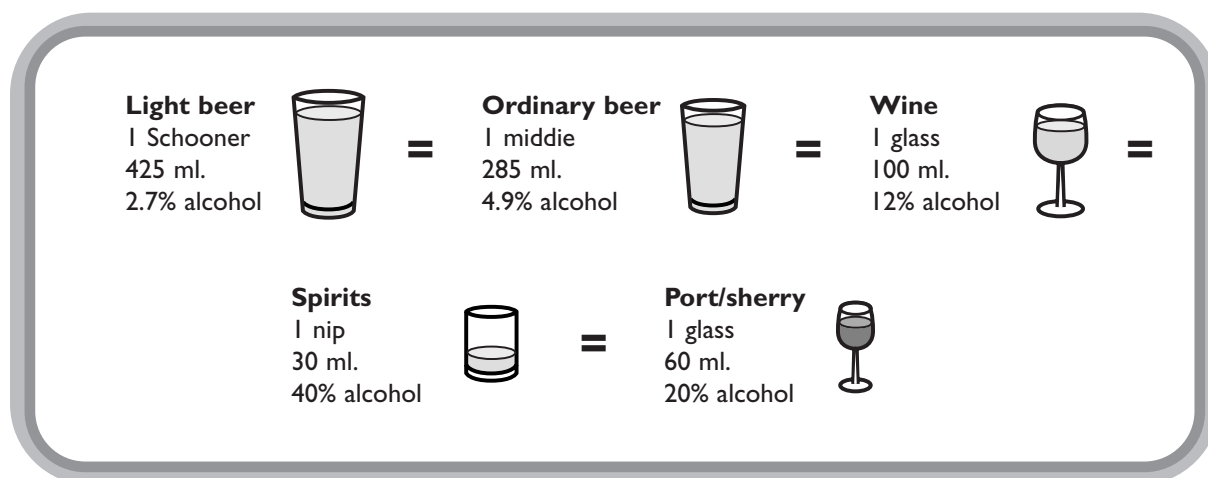
Facts about alcohol and the body

- Alcohol is absorbed directly into the bloodstream through the stomach and the small intestine.
- All alcohol consumed will reach the bloodstream, no matter how much food is in the stomach. Alcohol is distributed throughout the water in the body, but not into fatty tissue.
- Having food in the stomach only slows down the rate at which alcohol is absorbed.
It does NOT prevent you getting drunk!
- Blood alcohol concentration (**BAC**) = the amount of alcohol measured in the bloodstream. The liver metabolises alcohol at around one standard drink per hour [See table on page 88 for standard drink equivalents].
- A person's BAC level drops over time unless more alcohol is consumed.
- Women have less muscle than men so their bodies tend to break down alcohol more slowly. This is why they are advised to drink less than men.
- Sobering up takes some time. The liver breaks down about 91 per cent of alcohol, and a small amount leaves the body in urine, sweat and breath.
- The liver can only work at a fixed rate, getting rid of about one standard drink an hour.
- Cold showers, exercise, black coffee, fresh air or vomiting **do not speed up the process of metabolising or eliminating alcohol!**⁴

Tobacco, alcohol and caffeine up close

Standard Drinks

- A 'standard drink' is the measure of alcohol used to work out safe drinking levels.
- All of these drinks (common servings in NSW) are different sizes but each of them contains roughly 10 grams of alcohol.
- The drinks are different sizes because some of them are stronger (have more alcohol) than others. Each one is a standard drink.⁷



Adapted from: NSW Health Centre for Education and Information on Drugs and Alcohol (2002)

How much is too much?

We know that drinking too much alcohol can cause problems, but how much is too much? The following guiding principles are based on the National Health and Medical Research Council's guidelines, which provide average acceptable levels of drinking over time and levels for occasional 'heavy' drinking days.

Safe drinking levels (NH&MRC Guidelines for Men and Women)

MEN	WOMEN
An average of no more than 4 standard drinks a day, and no more than 28 standard drinks over a week	An average of no more than 2 standard drinks a day, and no more than 14 standard drinks over a week
Not more than 6 standard drinks during any one occasional heavy drinking day	Not more than 4 standard drinks during any one occasional heavy drinking day
One or two alcohol-free days per week	One or two alcohol-free days per week

Tobacco, alcohol and caffeine up close

Young people:

- Don't always drink in a bar
- Don't always know how much they are drinking (or even worry about it)
- May be drinking to get drunk or
- May binge drink*

* *What is binge drinking? Binge drinking is defined as drinking heavily over a short period of time or drinking continuously over a period of days and weeks.*⁸

It is important to explain the standard drinks table to young people who may be consuming alcohol from containers that make it difficult for them to monitor their alcohol consumption (e.g. straight from the bottle). It also helps to give information about safe drinking levels considering the prevalence of binge drinking among young people.

Effects of alcohol misuse on nutrition

In the short-term, drinking too much leads to hangovers and dehydration, increased violence and aggression as well as relationship and safety issues. In the long-term, high possibilities are memory loss, brain damage and liver disease.

For the young person, nutritional problems associated with alcohol may include

- Obesity
- Malnutrition
- Vitamin and mineral deficiency – most commonly thiamine, folate, vitamin C, magnesium and zinc
- Poor absorption of fat
- Loss of appetite
- Poor use of protein by the body
- Bleeding in the gut
- High blood pressure
- Fatty Liver
- Cancer and cirrhosis of the liver.^{1,9}

Things youth workers can do

Youth workers can explain:

- The importance of eating well before drinking. This means eating more than just chips or crisps!
- How alcohol takes the edge off a person's appetite making it difficult to know when you are hungry.
- That alcohol is high in energy, so too many drinks can quickly lead to weight gain. Encourage young people to mix their drink with nutritious mixers such as orange, pineapple or tomato juice, or even milk. At least that way they are getting something nutritious!
- How long-term use of alcohol depletes thiamine, an important B vitamin. Encourage young people who are known to be heavy drinkers to eat vegemite (or other similar spreads), regularly to help top up on their B vitamins.

Tobacco, alcohol and caffeine up close

Youth workers can also suggest:

- Sticking to one type of drink at any one drinking occasion
- Drinking slowly- don't compete
- Pacing by putting the glass down between sips
- Not buying or getting another drink before the one in hand is finished
- Carrying limited amounts of money when drinking so no more than what is budgeted for is spent
- Ordering small sized drinks such as middies not schooners
- Alternating alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks eg. drinking a schooner of water after every 2 beers.

Youth workers can also refer for appropriate help.

If you are concerned about a young person's alcohol use, contact a local youth health service, alcohol or other drug service or doctor skilled in treating and caring for young people for whom alcohol is a problem.



Tobacco, alcohol and caffeine up close

Caffeine

Many drinks and chocolate contain caffeine. It's something almost everyone consumes without thinking too much about and it can be easy to over do it. Many of the people who drink the new "high-energy" caffeine drinks are young and unaware of the quite high levels of caffeine they are consuming.¹⁰

Caffeine does not have the same life-threatening effects as other drugs discussed in this chapter and effects are generally temporary and reversible.¹¹ Caffeine however, is a drug and is often consumed with food, hence its inclusion in this chapter.

What is caffeine?

Caffeine is a habit-forming stimulant drug that affects the brain and nervous system.¹¹ It is a natural stimulant found in coffee, tea, cola drinks, cocoa and guarana.⁹

How does caffeine affect the body?

Caffeine:

- Stimulates the CNS
- Increases urine production (diuresis)
- Increases acid production by the digestive system
- Increases metabolism.⁷

Effects of excessive caffeine

People may experience some of the following:

- Mild to moderate withdrawal symptoms if they suddenly stop having caffeine
- Nervousness, irritability
- Upset stomach, headaches and difficulty sleeping.⁹

Fad drinks containing caffeine

Apart from coffee, tea, coca cola, and chocolate, caffeine is found in a variety of other drinks that many young people consume on a regular basis.⁹ Some recently developed energy drinks like "Red Bull" and "V" contain considerably more caffeine than normal cola drinks, which accounts for their stimulating effect.¹¹

Tobacco, alcohol and caffeine up close

What are energy drinks?

- They are sweetened soft drinks containing a variety of added nutrients, herbs and caffeine.
- They all contain sucrose or glucose, may contain B group vitamins, amino acids and they usually contain guarana.
- Guarana is a herb containing caffeine (1 gram dose of guarana = approx 1 medium strength cup of coffee).
- The “energy” component has a lot to do with the caffeine content which can be equivalent to a cup of strong coffee.¹⁰

● **Although high-caffeine energy drinks do provide some energy (in the form of sugar) and vitamins (some brands), they do not make suitable meal replacements. They contain very little protein or minerals, and no dietary fibre. They are ‘drinks’, not meal replacers.**

● **Unless a young person is exercising vigorously for more than one hour, WATER is always the best thirst quencher.**¹⁰

Young people sometimes mix energy drinks with alcohol. Alcohol and caffeine combined cause more severe dehydration than occurs with either caffeine or alcohol alone.

How much caffeine is ok?

- In general under 6 cups brewed coffee (600mg caffeine) per day is considered ok.
- If a young woman is pregnant, less than, or between 2 and 4 average strength cups of tea or instant coffee (200 mg caffeine) in a day.⁷

Tobacco, alcohol and caffeine up close

How much caffeine is in...?

What?	How much caffeine?	Comments
Instant coffee	60 - 100mg in each cup	The amount of caffeine depends on how much you put in the cup
Fresh coffee	80 - 350mg in each cup	The amount of caffeine depends on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the type of beans ● the way the coffee is made ● how strong the brew is
Decaffeinated coffee	2 - 4mg in each cup	The amount of caffeine is usually marked on the packet
Tea	8 - 90mg in each cup	Caffeine content depends on how strong the brew is
Cola drinks	35mg in each 250ml serve	Cola drinks often contain a lot of sugar too
Cocoa and hot chocolate	10 - 70mg in each cup	The amount of caffeine depends on strength of the brew and the other chemicals in the product
Chocolate bars	20 - 60mg in each 200g bar	Chocolate also contains a lot of sugar
Some prescription and over-the-counter medications	20 - 100mg in each dose	Some medicines (cough, headache and slimming products) contain caffeine
High-caffeine energy drinks	About 80 mg of caffeine in each can	Amount of caffeine can vary between brands

Adapted from: NSW Health Centre for Education and Information on Drugs and Alcohol (2002)

The caffeine content of tea and coffee varies depending on type, freshness, and strength of brew.¹¹

Long-term effects: Consuming more than 600 mg of caffeine a day for a long time may result in difficulty sleeping, excessive worrying and feeling depressed.

Illicit drugs

Illicit drugs

This section looks at:

- Effects illicit drug use can have on youth nutrition and overall health and wellbeing.
- Some things youth workers can do.

Many at risk young people use illicit drugs and use more than one drug. Young people often use prescription drugs in a way that is detrimental to their health as well. Young people that use drugs can experience a variety of psychological and physiological effects. As mentioned previously, there are individual differences. Using illicit drugs will have significant impacts on a young person's nutritional health and overall wellbeing.

No quality control: Illicit drugs are illegal drugs that have no quality or price controls. This means that you can never be sure of the drug's strength or what's actually in it. Different batches of an illegally manufactured drug may have different mixtures of the drug and other additives, such as talcum powder, sugar, and caffeine. Sometimes the additives are poisonous.²

Depressants, stimulants and hallucinogens:

As outlined previously, commonly used illicit and prescription drugs fall roughly into the 3 categories.

Depressant drugs include:

- Cannabis (also a hallucinogen).
- GHB (Gamma-hydroxybutyrate), or "GBH – Grievous Bodily Harm", "fantasy".
- Opiates and opioids, including heroin, or "smack" and morphine, codeine, methadone, and pethidine.
- Some solvents and inhalants, or glue. Many inhalants are common household products.
- Barbiturates, including Seconal, Tuinal and Amytal.
- Benzodiazepines (minor tranquillisers), or "benzos", "tranx", with brand names such as Rohypnol, Valium, Serepax, Mogadon, Normison.
- Ketamine, or "Special K" (also an hallucinogen).

Stimulants include:

- Amphetamines, including illegal amphetamines, or "speed", "crystal meth", "ice", "shabu".
- Cocaine, or "crack".
- Ecstasy (can also have hallucinogenic qualities).
- Slimming tablets such as Duromine, Tenuate, Dospan and Ponderax.
- Ephedrine used in medicines for bronchitis, hay fever and asthma.

Illicit drugs

Hallucinogens include:

- Ketamine, or “Special K”
- LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), or “trips”, “acid”
- Magic mushrooms (psilocybin), or “gold tops”
- Mescaline (peyote cactus)
- PCP, or “angel dust”.²

Nutritional related effects of illicit drugs

Some effects of each class of drug are listed below.

Depressant drugs

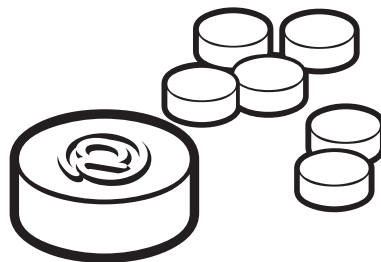
- Drugs in this category may stimulate the appetite or reduce it - depressants upset the natural balance of the appetite.
- Cannabis may cause extreme hunger “munchies” causing people to eat a lot of sweet food in one go.¹²
- Regular cannabis use may lead to loss of appetite leading to weight loss.
- Serious addiction to depressant drugs such as heroin can cause a young person to be malnourished. This is because the drug becomes the main focus in that person’s life.¹²

Stimulant drugs

- Drugs in this category suppress the appetite.
- Cocaine addiction can lead to becoming extremely underweight and malnourished.¹²
- Speed and cocaine use eats up the body’s store of vitamins.¹³
- Ecstasy was originally developed as an appetite suppressant, so among other things, it causes a person to lose their appetite while taking the drug and often as an after-effect as well.

Hallucinogens

- Drugs in this category can affect appetite as using them can lead to nausea and vomiting.⁷



Illicit drugs

What do youth workers need to be aware of?

Young people using illicit drugs may be depleting their bodies of essential nutrients. Many illicit drugs suppress the appetite, which means a young person may not be meeting their basic nutritional needs. Drugs that stimulate appetite do not guarantee good eating either, as young people using drugs may plough through food of little nutritional value e.g. junk food.⁵

Young people that misuse drugs are at risk of losing sight of other aspects of their lives. Looking after themselves physically (including eating well) can become their lowest priority. Young people who use drugs and don't eat well are at risk of weakening their immune systems and are therefore, more susceptible to illness.

In summary, a young person who is using illicit drugs may experience:

- Increased need for vitamins and minerals
- Loss of appetite and weight loss
- Use of drugs in place of meals
- Forgetting to eat
- Inability to afford food
- Malnourishment
- Unusual cravings for “munchies”
- Constipation or diarrhoea
- Nausea and vomiting.¹

Things youth workers can do:

- The important message to get across to young people who use illicit drugs is the importance of *eating well and eating regularly*.
- Providing simple, healthy eating messages, which build on what the young person does already is far more helpful and important than pointing out (for example) that cocaine depletes the body of vitamins.
- Focus on basic messages, information and support around good eating and the importance of personal hygiene and exercise.

If you believe you are working with a young person who is addicted to illicit drugs, it is important that you are not working alone. A team approach with different workers with a variety of skills and knowledge is essential.

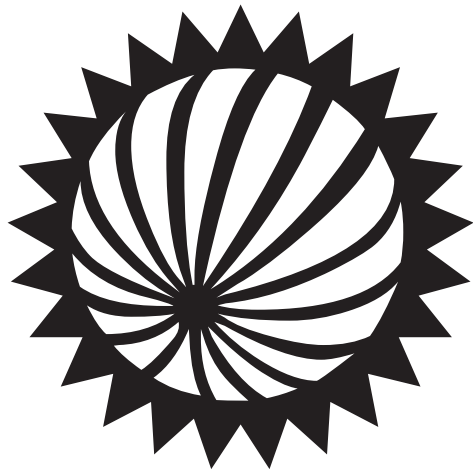
What to do when you are concerned about a young person

There are different levels of drug use. According to youth health workers in the field, these include recreational, bingeing, situational, intensive and dependent. Some young people will experiment relatively safely with alcohol and other drugs, but others have complex issues that go beyond just experimentation. For those young people who you believe are using alcohol or other drugs in a way that interferes with their daily functioning, and overall health and wellbeing contact your local Youth Health Service, Drug and Alcohol Service, GP or other experienced professional in your area.

For more information on resources available, please see the list of references at the end of this chapter.

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chapter 6

Food on the run

- **The importance of breakfast**
- **Eating on a budget**
- **Cooking skills**
- **Better fast food options**
- **Healthy snack options (Snack attack)**
- **Study food**
- **Comfort food**

The importance of breakfast

The importance of breakfast

This section:

- Explains the importance of breakfast
- Lists things youth workers can do.

Young people and breakfast?

Young people commonly skip breakfast. They often feel lethargic in the morning and are slow to get out of bed. As a result, they skip breakfast and by mid-morning they'll eat anything. This is a time when young people often eat large amounts of high fat snack foods and takeaway foods. This is not a good thing if it happens all the time.

Young people have high nutritional requirements. Breakfast is an important meal during which young people can get lots of iron, calcium, fibre, zinc and vitamins.

Breakfast – The most important meal of the day

The body needs food to function properly in the morning. Usually by the time young people wake they have been fasting for around 10-12 hours, so their bodies need plenty of fuel to help them through the day. Breakfast is so called because it 'breaks the fast', hence 'breakfast'!

So breakfast is an important meal because it breaks the overnight fasting period, replenishes the supply of glucose and provides other essential nutrients the body needs to keep energy levels up throughout the day.

Skipping breakfast

Skipping breakfast is common among young people, so it's common to find that by lunchtime, they are 'starving'. Here are some facts:

- Around 1 in 10 Australian children skip breakfast.¹
- 'Going without' becomes more common with advancing age - approximately 15 per cent of young people and one third of adults don't eat breakfast.¹
- One study found that people that don't eat breakfast have much lower levels of iron, zinc, dietary fibre, calcium and vitamin B12 than those that do take the time to have breakfast.² It appears that lunch, dinner and snacks aren't sufficient to make up the nutritional deficit.

The importance of breakfast

Reasons young people skip breakfast:

- Not enough time
- Too tired to bother
- Wanting to spend the extra time dozing in bed
- No readily available breakfast foods in the house
- Did not grow up eating breakfast.

Studies have shown that people who eat breakfast:

- Feel better in the morning
- Learn more
- Are more alert and attentive
- Have more energy
- Concentrate more
- Can think clearly
- Can control their appetite better so they aren't starving by morning tea or lunch
- Are less moody and irritable.³

DID YOU KNOW?

Many young people can eat 8 Weet Bix and milk for breakfast. If they finish with an orange they have met their nutritional needs for 5 out of 10 nutrients including iron, thiamine, vitamin C and riboflavin all in one meal.⁴

Ideas for a quick healthy breakfast

- Fruit (fresh, snack pack or dried)
- Tub of yoghurt
- Bagels - plain or fruit
- Crackers
- Cheese on toast
- Sandwiches - vegemite and peanut butter are quick
- Hard-boiled eggs
- English muffins
- Smoothies - use any fruit blended with milk
- Glass of milk
- Raisin or fruit toast
- Tinned baked beans and spaghetti on toast or straight from the tin
- Creamed corn on toast
- Toast with any spread
- Stewed tomato
- Porridge - great especially in the winter
- Bread rolls - plain or with a filling

The importance of breakfast

Three very good reasons for eating breakfast

1. The nutritional edge

Eating breakfast helps us meet our daily nutritional needs. Without eating breakfast, it's difficult to meet the recommendations for all the nutrients. Breakfast skippers have a hard time getting adequate fibre and some vitamins and minerals. Typical breakfast foods like cereal, fruit, juice, dairy products and breads are excellent low fat carbohydrates and protein.

2. More energy

Eating breakfast provides the energy we require to feel alert, alive and to cope with the day's activities. People who skip breakfast seem to always be tired and lack energy at least until mid-morning when they end up having something to eat. Without the extra energy that breakfast can offer, some breakfast skippers feel lethargic and turn to sugar or caffeine to get them through the morning. To help get through that mid-morning hunger, young people need to eat a nutritious snack - such as fresh fruit, yoghurt, a low fat muffin, or a wholemeal sandwich.

3. Weight control

Eating breakfast establishes a regular eating pattern, which is important for weight control. Set meal times help regulate appetite and discourage snacking and overeating. Breakfast also kick-starts the metabolism.

Many young women in particular skip breakfast as a way of controlling weight. By morning tea or lunch most are so hungry they could 'eat anything'. Most of the time they end up eating takeaway or high fat snack foods because it's quick but it's also full of fat and sugar and so defeats their rationale for skipping breakfast in the first place!⁵

Things youth workers can do:

- Encourage young people to get into the habit of regularly eating something in the morning - even if it's something small.
- Explain how a regular eating pattern can help control extreme hunger and helps reduce snacking on high fat food, high sugar foods and helps to control weight.
- Explain how breakfast breaks the overnight fast and kickstarts the metabolism.

Eating on a budget

Eating on a budget

This section looks at ways:

- Youth workers can assist young people to stretch their dollars further when eating out
- To help young people choose healthier, more satisfying options.

Most young people need to eat a lot but they often don't cook or shop themselves. This makes getting enough food and staying within a budget (often a very limited one), a tricky business. As well as the available charity and free meals, there are things young people can do to eat healthy food on a very limited budget.

Eating on a limited budget

Young people often stick to the same old cheap takeaway because they know what they're going to get and that way, the little money they do have is not wasted on trying new food they might not like.

Young people with limited money may benefit from some tips to make their dollar go further while ensuring access to quick easy nutritious foods that are cheap and tasty.

Things youth workers can do:

- Encourage young people to eat larger amounts of vegetable based dishes - they are usually cheaper and will help them eat the recommended daily amount of vegetables.
- Suggest that when young people do eat out, they do this with a friend because it is often more economical to buy and share a few dishes between a group of people.
- Suggest accompanying a meal with bread rolls to make the meals more filling.
- Suggest eating out for lunch and staying in for dinner because meals are often cheaper at lunch than in the evenings.
- Explain that choosing Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday nights to eat out is the better option because food places often have reduced prices on those nights as they are quieter than the weekends.
- Suggest keeping an eye out for special coupons in local papers because sometimes '2 for 1' coupons or discounts vouchers are advertised for local eateries.
- Suggest choosing smaller local restaurants because they are often the cheapest and most authentic.

Eating on a budget

Other ideas youth workers can suggest include:

- Boiling rice at home to accompany a takeaway dish instead of buying the more expensive high fat fried rice as an accompaniment.
- Where possible, buying in bulk because it is often cheaper. Of course this is only an option if the young people have somewhere to store the food in a suitable place and at an appropriate temperature.
- Shopping at larger supermarkets rather than the local garage or corner shops, because the larger supermarkets are usually cheaper and you get more for your money.
- Shopping close to closing time because often bread, meat and other items are reduced for quicker sale. Of course food purchased in this way needs to be eaten before the use by date, otherwise it is a waste of money.

Encourage young people to try new foods- that way they are more likely to try them again when they're out and about on their own.



Cooking skills

Cooking skills

This section looks at:

- The many nutritious and social benefits of assisting young people to acquire cooking skills.

Food and eating is a great social experience. For many young people, being able to cook can be a life saving skill as well as a boost to their ego and self-esteem. Young people can get a lot of satisfaction out of preparing a meal and then seeing others share and enjoy something that they have created.

Encouraging young people to learn to cook is great for their overall self-esteem. It's a great way to introduce nutritious foods and build nutrition knowledge without actually using the word 'nutrition'. It is also a pleasant and practical way of introducing new food experiences, tastes, and cooking methods, without appearing to be 'preaching nutrition'.⁶

Good reasons why young people benefit from learning to cook

- It's usually less expensive than eating out. If young people can cook they increase their choices.
- It's a good excuse to socialise with other people.
- Sharing home cooked meals helps people relax, encourages conversation and builds social skills.
- Cooking can boost self-esteem, especially when the meal is prepared for friends who really appreciate the effort as well as the yummy results.
- Cooking encourages young people to try new foods and become a bit more adventurous. A varied diet is more nutritious and increases the chances of meeting the dietary requirements for all nutrients.
- Young people will be able to pass on their skills to others in the house and provide valuable cooking tips to friends.



Better fast food options

Better fast food

This section:

- Explains why young people are attracted to fast food
- Gives suggestions about how to choose better fast foods.

You can be fairly confident that young people are going to eat fast food and that they are going to eat it regularly. Rather than constantly focusing on the negatives of fast foods, time may be better spent encouraging young people to choose the more nutritious fast food options.

Why fast food?

Young people like takeaway because:

- It's often the cheaper alternative
- They know what they are getting
- It's easy
- They like the taste!

Eating out is something young people tend to do a lot for the following reasons:

- It is fun to go out with friends
- Often takeaway places and restaurants are good meeting places
- It is quick and easy
- Often cheap
- Saves cooking themselves
- No preparation or washing up.

The problem is, it's very difficult to know what's inside that takeaway or restaurant meal. Most of the time, takeaway tends to be high in fat (especially saturated fat - the fat that blocks the arteries and increases cholesterol), high in salt and sugar, and lower in fibre, vitamins and minerals. It's also not very filling. Eating this food regularly will contribute to weight gain.

**Takeaway foods often contain hidden fats.
Fatty foods can be replaced by fruits, vegetables, breads, grains and cereals.**

Eating out is enjoyable and relaxing and can be part of a healthy eating pattern. Most restaurants and cafes now serve low fat, nutritious foods. Young people just need to know how and what to choose.

Better fast food options

Better fast food choices

Use this guide to help young people make better takeaway choices.^{4,7}

Fast food	Better choices	Avoid
Sandwiches and rolls	Lean meat or cheese, tuna, salmon or egg with plenty of salad on wholemeal, multigrain or rye bread	Salami, schnitzel, mayonnaise
Chicken	BBQ chicken (remove skin), roast potatoes (rather than chips), corn cobs, peas	Deep fried chicken, chicken nuggets
Hamburgers	Meat patty with lots of salad	The lot – especially fried egg, bacon and onions
Pizza	Vegetable toppings	Double meat, extra cheese, salami and other sausage, bacon
Hotdogs, pies, pastry, fried food	Vegetable pastry, plain hot-dog with mustard and sauce, meat pie	Filled croissants, onion rings, sausage rolls, chiko and spring rolls, battered hot dogs
Chinese food	Steamed rice, stir fry dishes, vegetables, seafood, beef, chicken, steamed dim sims	Fried rice, deep fried battered dishes or fried dim sims, duck
Mediterranean and Middle Eastern food	Souvlaki, kebabs, cabbage rolls, salads, flat bread, humus, cucumber dip	Any fried food
Mexican food	Bean filled enchildas and burritos, salads, frijoles dip	Dishes with lots of cheese and sour cream
Potatoes	Baked potato with coleslaw, baked beans, minimum sour cream or cheese, salad	Sour cream and cheese together, potato cakes, chips
Fish	Plain grilled fish, if buying grilled fish, cooked without oil	Fried, battered or crumbed fish, crab sticks, calamari

Snack attack

Snack attack

This section:

- Discusses the importance of snacks
- Provides healthy snack suggestions for youth workers to recommend to young people.

Young people snack often to meet their huge energy requirements and most young people tend to like snacks rather than meals. They often end up eating large chunks of their food requirements each day as snacks, so it is important to encourage nutritious snacks.⁴

Nutritious snacks

Snacks are a good opportunity to get more vitamins, minerals and energy into a young person.⁴ Ideally, snacks should be quick and easy to prepare, tasty and easy to eat. Having regular meals and snacks is a better approach than skipping meals and “bingeing” when hungry.

Great day or night snack ideas for young people

- Fruit loaf, buns or scones
- Pancakes or pikelets (add mashed bananas to mixture for a change)
- Sandwiches, pita bread, lavash or Turkish bread with any filling
- Rice crackers or pretzels
- Crackers or rice cakes with low fat cheese, vegemite or peanut butter
- Toasted sandwiches – use baked beans with a slice of low fat cheese
- Bowl of cereal and milk
- Microwave popcorn
- Home made pita chips and salsa (cut pita bread into triangles, sprinkle with a little parmesan cheese and bake 180°C 15 - 20 minutes until crisp)
- Baked beans or spaghetti on toast
- Celery and carrot sticks
- Tub of yoghurt, fruche or custard (freeze the night before in warmer months)
- Fresh fruit - available in many varieties all year
- A handful of dried fruit and nuts
- A scoop low fat ice cream with canned fruit
- Banana smoothie (using milk or soy milk blend with ½ banana)
- Vegetable soup with pasta

Snack attack

Food to buy when eating out

- Small carton of flavoured milk
- Milk shakes and smoothies
- Bread rolls
- Piece of fresh fruit or one cup of fruit salad in a container, or canned fruit snack pack
- Small container of assorted salads (eg. tabouli, pasta, rice)
- Tub of normal or frozen yoghurt or low fat ice cream
- Pretzels
- Corn on the cob
- Sandwiches
- Baked potatoes
- Ready-to-eat breakfast bars

Snacking is sometimes blamed for making people gain weight. It's not the snacking itself that causes the weight gain but the type of snacks that are regularly chosen. Encourage young people to choose healthy snacks most of the time because snacks can be both nutritious and yummy.



Study food

Study food

This section:

- Acknowledges the importance of eating well throughout stressful times like exams
- Provides tips for youth workers.

Around study and exam time, young people tend to eat many quick meals such as fast food and high fat snacks.

When people are studying or concentrating on something besides eating, it is very easy to nibble away and then suddenly realise they have eaten a whole lot more than planned.

Quick tasty nutritious food doesn't have to be junk food.

Young people at school have tests, exams, assignments, homework, as well as a life to live on top of school and study. Exams together with the added pressure of all the other stuff that goes on in a young people's lives can be hugely stressful. It is no wonder that during this period thinking about what they can eat is often the last thing on their minds.

It is during these times that what we put in our mouths can make a difference! Food can help us to think clearly. This is why breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks are all important.

NOTE: This section also applies to young people not in the school system but those with other responsibilities such as TAFE, work or any other focus that requires concentration and hard work.

Eating well, that is, having regular meals with plenty of variety, is essential for wellbeing and a strong immune system; both required for dealing effectively and comfortably with stress.⁸

Things youth workers can do

- Explain the relationship between mood, food and coping and encourage young people to be prepared i.e. to have a variety of quick meals and snacks handy to grab and eat 'on the run' when time is limited and pressure is high.

Study food

Ideas for quick meals and snacks:

- Baked beans on toast
- Toasted sandwiches
- Hot potatoes with fillings (creamed corn, cheese, coleslaw, baked beans, tinned fish etc)
- Tinned soup and bread
- Fruit (fresh, snack pack, dried)
- Sushi
- Boiled egg on toast
- Cereal and milk
- Crackers and cheese
- Tinned spaghetti

Having plenty of quick meals and snacks on hand will help ensure young people eat regularly, think clearly and keep in shape mentally.⁸

- Explain the importance of drinking plenty of water: Water is essential for hydration and reduces fatigue. Often a headache is the first sign of dehydration, but this is often put down to stress. Drinking plenty of water will help keep headaches away.

- Explain the importance of exercise: Taking a break and getting outside and moving can be one of the best things a young person can do. No one can keep studying for hours on end. Exercise will clear the mind and help a young person to relax. It also helps people to feel good as exercise releases the feel good hormones-endorphins.

- Talk about the consequences of high caffeine use in stressful times: Often people, young and old, deal with stressful periods by drinking lots of coffee and other caffeine drinks.

- Caffeine use is commonly used to keep people awake at night or to wake up early in the morning when they have to study. Caffeine does stimulate the brain and increases alertness. But it is also addictive, causing headaches when people try to stop having as much caffeine after the stressful period has lessened.⁸

- Too much caffeine can cause a person to be irritable and anxious. It can also interfere with sleep, stressing young people out even more. For more information on caffeine see chapter 5.

- **Make suggestions about how to limit 'eating the lot' when nibbling high fat, high sugar snacks. Young people can:**

- Take a handful of whatever the snack is and put the rest away so the temptation to 'eat the lot' has been removed.

- Stop to eat a proper meal or nutritious snack so that nibbling the high fat alternative is not so attractive.

- Keep a bottle or glass of water close by to sip on.

- Choose nutritious foods to snack on such as sultanas, rice crackers, a few nuts, seeds, fruit, vegetable sticks, yoghurt, dry crackers, a slice of cheese.

Comfort food

Comfort food

This section looks at:

- The relationship between food and mood – comfort eating and loss of appetite
- Alternative suggestions to food as mood improvers
- Things youth workers can do.

People eat for more reasons than hunger and survival. Often people eat for comfort, to make themselves 'feel better'. Mood and eating often go hand in hand.

Young people, particularly those at risk, are likely to go through upheaval, which will affect their appetite. It is always important that young people eat well, but it is particularly important that they continue to do so when times are extra tough. Eating well through the tough times is really important. Food can help people to think clearly and to maintain a healthy mind. It is important that young people don't rely on food and particularly high fat food as their only form of comfort.

Comfort eating

Most people have really good feelings about certain foods - mainly because it brings back good memories - consciously or subconsciously.

If a young person eats certain foods when they are feeling down, it is only a problem if it's affecting their health. If high fat foods such as chocolate, cream buns or hot chips are the foods that a young person is constantly turning to, then having them all the time will contribute to weight gain. This might make a person feel worse. If it is only occasionally then it is not a problem.

Things youth workers can do

If young people are using food for comfort, work with them to try and find other things they might like to do to relax and help them feel better, rather than using food to 'sooth the soul'.

Suggestions for relaxing that may help:

- Walking with a friend or youth worker
- Listening to music
- Having a bath
- Talking to friends
- Strolling down to the shops
- Having a cold drink or coffee at a coffee shop
- Reading a book.

Comfort food

You can also encourage young people to be aware of what they are snacking on and how much they are actually having, then try to encourage healthy snacks. For ideas, refer to the section 'Snack Attack' earlier in this chapter. Planning ahead and having healthy options at hand can help overcome the temptations to turn to high fat foods for comfort.

When young people lose their appetite

Some young people turn off food when they are stressed or feeling anxious or low. This can also be pretty dangerous. It can worsen their mood and prevent them from being able to think clearly. If missed meals go on for too long, the valuable nutrients required for growth and development will be lost.

Things youth workers can do:

When young people appear to be losing their appetite encourage them to:

- Try small meals regularly
- Choose healthy snack options
- Prepare quick easy light meals
- Discuss their concerns with you and explain how nutritious eating and mood are interrelated.



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chapter 7

Would you like weevils with that? Shopping, budgeting, food safety and storage

- **Budgeting, planning and shopping**
- **Food safety and storage**

Would you like weevils with that? Shopping, budgeting, food safety and storage

Would you like weevils with that? Shopping, budgeting, food safety and storage

Shopping, budgeting, food safety and hygiene are important living skills that most people take for granted. However, these skills, how to budget, shop and clean properly, don't just come naturally to people, they have to be learned. If young people haven't been taught these skills in the home, youth workers will need to teach them these basic skills. When young people leave care and start to live independently, they will need these skills to prepare, store and cook food safely.

Research has shown that young people who leave care without basic life skills such as budgeting, shopping and cooking are more likely to return to refuge accommodation. ¹

This chapter:

- Discusses ways to get the best deals when shopping on a limited budget
- Discusses the importance of food hygiene, preparation and storage
- Provides information on food storage and hygiene that all young people need to know to ensure safe food consumption.

Budgeting, planning and shopping

Budgeting, planning and shopping

This section:

- Discusses the need for planning before shopping
- Provides tips for youth workers on helping young people shop and become smart shoppers
- Explains the importance of checking the 'use by' date and weight for price.

Budgeting, planning meals and shopping are essential life skills that many young people struggle with. Most young people are on a very strict budget, so it is important that they know how to shop to get the most for their money. Budgeting for food, planning meals and shopping regularly can save young people lots of money, they just have to know a few tips.

Budgeting, planning and shopping

Youth workers are in the perfect position to help young people develop these basic skills. Youth workers can help young people manage their food money and teach them how, where and when to shop to get the best deals.

Plan before shopping

Planning is the key to saving money and getting the best deals. Planning sounds like a chore but planning what to buy before shopping saves time and money.²

- Step 1. Get young people to decide how much money there is to spend on food.**
- Step 2. Help young people plan nutritious meals they can make within that budget.**

Youth workers can help young people develop planning skills by encouraging them to:

- Look at catalogues and see what is on special, so meals can be planned around bargain items.
- Plan a variety of meals - not just the same old thing for two weeks. Variety means different shapes, colours, textures, temperatures and flavours. This way they won't get bored.
- Consider ways the leftovers can be used (have they got enough containers to freeze the left overs, are they going to be home the next night to eat left overs, can they add extra salad, vegetables, potatoes, rice and so on to make another meal the next day?). If young people don't start thinking of what they can do with left overs before they make the meal, often the left over food is wasted.
- Make a shopping list based on the meals they have planned. Check what they have in the cupboard, fridge and freezer first - saves doubling up on unwanted items.
- Keep an ongoing shopping list on their fridge or in a handy spot (that way they can jot down any essential items they run out of straight away before they forget).
- Plan meals for a week or two if possible - so they don't have to figure out what's for dinner each night. It will save them going to the shops each day and spending more money than they have. At the shop, stick to the shopping list and don't buy any additional items.
- Encourage the inclusion of some meatless meals. Remind young people that meat is usually expensive and doesn't have to be eaten at every meal. Encourage non meat meals a few times a week and get them to base meals on tinned beans (i.e. kidney beans, chickpeas, lentils), eggs or nuts. These tend to be fairly cheap.²

Budgeting, planning and shopping

Youth workers can also help young people be smart shoppers by helping them develop the following habits:

- Take the shopping list they have prepared with them and use it.
- Don't shop when hungry. Hungry shoppers buy more than they intend to buy.
- Beware of end-of-aisle displays. These are not always money-saving deals.
- Compare different forms, brands, sizes and types of food for the best deal.
- Look for no name brand items – they are usually the cheapest and often the same quality.
- Buy fruit and vegetables that are in season. Although a lot of fruit and vegetables are available all year round, it is cheaper to buy them when they are naturally in season.
- Compare the cost of meat per serve rather than per kilo. Meat with lots of bones and lots of fat is often cheaper but you need a lot more of it to make a meal. Lean meat with little or no wastage is often more economical.
- Be aware of store tactics used to encourage shoppers to buy more. The more costly items are usually placed at eye level to catch shoppers' attention.²

Young people also need to know the significance of the following:

● The use by date

The 'use by date' is the date when the product should be totally used. Remind young people to look at the 'use by date' on the foods they buy, especially perishable foods like meat, dairy products and bread. There is no point buying cheap food if it is going to go off before they have a chance to use it all.

● Weight for price comparisons

Look at the weight on the front of the label. This tells you how much food you get in the package. For example, if you were looking for noodles and saw two different packages, you could look at the weight to find out which package contained more noodles.

● How to store foods correctly

Go over some simple storage ideas with young people so all the food they've just bought doesn't get wasted.

- Get them to store dry goods, such as flour, cornmeal, rice and oatmeal, in air-tight packages or containers to prolong shelf life.
- Put all the cold things in the fridge or freezer straight away.
- Divide and package meat into meal-sized portions so not all of it has to be defrosted at once.

For recipe ideas and more on this topic, see the YHUNGER Cookbook.

Food safety and storage

Food safety and storage

This section:

- Lists common food safety mistakes
- Discusses the importance of food safety, preparation and storage
- Provides tips on purchasing, storing, preparing and serving food, as well as what to do with leftovers and reheating safely.

There are about 2 million cases of food poisoning in Australia each year.³ Many people think they are most likely to get food poisoning from a takeaway shop or restaurant, however, one in five cases occur in the home.

Sorting the facts from the myths

There are plenty of myths around that make food hygiene very confusing. One such myth is that you thaw frozen food on the bench, another is let food cool before you put it in the fridge. Both myths, both wrong. Most food hygiene practices are learnt in the home, but some young people do not have this opportunity so never see or learn the basics of safe food storage and preparation. It may be up to the youth worker to teach these things.

Food hygiene – preparation and storage

If young people are experiencing physiological or emotional issues and aren't eating well, their risk of being affected by food poisoning is increased because their immune system is not in peak condition. Passing on some basic food hygiene hints to young people will greatly reduce this risk.

Things youth workers can do

Spending time in the kitchen cooking may be a foreign experience for many young people and may make them feel really uncomfortable. But like anything-the more you do something the easier it becomes. Getting young people to follow a few basic food hygiene tips will make their time in the kitchen less risky and hopefully keep them healthy and most importantly, free from food poisoning.

YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW THAT THERE ARE 4 MAIN STEPS TO A FOOD SAFE KITCHEN

1. Good personal hygiene is the best protective measure (e.g. always wash and dry hands thoroughly before, during and after preparing food)
2. Cleaning, or the removal of visible dirt or food from all food preparation surfaces
3. Clean cleaning equipment (such as tea towels, cloths and sponges)
4. Correct storage of perishable food.

Food safety and storage

Common food safety mistakes - things all young people should know

- ❖ Thawing frozen food on the counter top instead of in the fridge
- ❖ Leftovers left on the counter instead of putting in a container in the fridge.
- ❖ Unclean cutting board (cross contamination)
- ❖ Marinating at room temperature instead of marinating in the fridge
- ❖ Leaving refrigerated and frozen food at room temperature for too long allowing food to go warm
- ❖ Using the same plate for raw and cooked meats (cross contamination)
- ❖ Using the same spoon to stir and taste (cross contamination)
- ❖ Using the same knife for raw meat and then to prepare salad vegetables (cross contamination).²

Purchasing food – things all young people should know

- Canned foods should be free of dents, rust or bulging lids.
- Refrigerated foods need to be checked to make sure they feel cold and frozen foods need to be checked to ensure they are solid with no signs of thawing. The packaging should be free of holes or tears.
- Read the 'use by' dates of perishable foods.
- At the check out line, it is best if all cold foods are packed together. This way they will remain chilled longer. Also, putting them away when you get home will be easier and faster.
- Take the groceries straight home to the refrigerator and store them immediately. It is best not to buy cold food if it is not going to be refrigerated immediately after purchase.²

Storing food - things all young people should know

- Store foods quickly. No perishable food should be left at room temperature for more than two hours. Use these perishable foods while they are still at their peak of freshness.
 - Raw meats and chicken that might drip need to be placed in the bottom of the refrigerator on a plate or in a plastic bag.
- Store frozen foods in their original packaging because it is usually airtight.
- Label left overs with date of cooking and store where you can see them. If stored in the fridge, use the next day.²

If in doubt, throw it out.

Food safety and storage

Preparing food safely - things all young people should know

- Proper hand washing cannot be overemphasised – wash and dry hands before, during and after preparing food.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables in cool, running water.
- Keep juices from raw meat, chicken or seafood from coming in contact with other foods. Cross contamination can occur through contact with contaminated utensils, equipment, human hands and other foods.
- Marinate foods in the refrigerator. If marinades have been in contact with raw food, do not use with the cooked food.
- Use a separate tasting spoon when stirring food. Never taste and then put that spoon back into the food that you are tasting.
- Thaw food in the refrigerator, or thaw in the microwave, but cook the product immediately, do not refreeze.²

Serving food safely - things all young people should know

- Always wash hands with soap and water before serving food.
- Don't use fingers to pick food up.
- Always use clean plates and utensils. Use a clean plate for cooked foods. Never use the same plate that contained the raw food before cooking.
- Never leave foods, raw or cooked, at room temperature longer than two hours.²

Storing and re-heating leftovers - things all young people should know

- Quickly cool leftovers by dividing into small amounts and storing in the refrigerator in shallow containers. Refrigerate within two hours after cooking.
- When re-heating leftovers, re-heat them thoroughly until they are hot and steamy. Soups, sauces and gravies should be brought to boiling point (bubbling) to make sure they are safe to eat.
- Most food poisoning bacteria will grow at temperatures between 5°C and 60°C - known as the "Temperature Danger Zone". Keeping food out of the Temperature Danger Zone will slow down or prevent their growth.
- Heating foods until really hot (above 75°C) will kill most food borne bacteria and viruses that can cause illness. Special care should be taken to make sure rolled or stuffed meats, mince, sausages and whole poultry are all cooked through properly because bacteria easily gets into these foods. Steaks, chops and whole roasts however can be cooked to preference.
- When cooking a large batch of food for storage and later consumption, subdivide into shallow containers and refrigerate or freeze immediately.
- Don't allow cooked food to cool down before putting it in the fridge or freezer.^{2,3}

Remember: If in doubt, throw it out!

Food safety and storage

Youth workers need to remind young people that they should ALWAYS:

- Wash their hands thoroughly before food preparation, after going to the toilet, after handling pets and raw food. Use soap and warm water, rubbing for 30 seconds and drying hands thoroughly on a clean cloth, or paper towel.
- Wash utensils such as tongs, knives and chopping boards with hot soapy water in between handling raw and cooked foods.
- Use separate chopping boards for cooked and raw foods.
- Refrigerate or freeze cooked food straight away.

Remember 1 in 5 (20%) cases of food poisoning occur in the home.

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chapter 8

Where to go for more information

Nutrition related services in the central Sydney area

- Nutrition Health Promotion
- Clinical Nutrition Services and Advice

Useful websites

Cheap food for young people in the central Sydney area

Where to go for more information

Where to go for more information

One of the main reasons for developing this resource was that information and services focusing on youth nutrition are limited.

This chapter contains some relevant organizations and websites we have found useful during the development of this resource. This chapter contains:

- Nutrition related services in the central Sydney area
- Useful books and websites
- Cheap food for young people in the central Sydney area

Nutrition related services in the central Sydney area

NUTRITION HEALTH PROMOTION	
Community Health Nutrition Central Sydney Area Health Service	(02) 9515 3270
Cellblock Youth Health Service Health Promotion Central Sydney Area Health Service	(02) 9516 2233
CLINICAL NUTRITION SERVICES AND ADVICE	
Eating disorders -	
The New Children's Hospital (Westmead) <i>(Requires a referral from a doctor who has referring rights to Westmead Hospital)</i>	(02) 9845 2225
Sydney Children's Hospital (Randwick) <i>(Requires a GP referral)</i>	(02) 9382 1021
Rivendell (part of CSAHS at Concord) <i>(Requires a GP referral)</i>	(02) 9736 2288
Overweight and obesity -	
Child and Family Weight Management Clinic <i>(via the Obesity clinic) (Requires a GP referral)</i>	(02) 9515 3820
Food allergy and food intolerance -	
Allergy Unit RPAH Medical Centre <i>(Requires a GP referral)</i>	(02) 95651464

Where to go for more information

HIV/AIDS services -	
Albion St Clinic	(02) 93329720
HIV/AIDS Allied Health Team Dietitian	(02) 95158053
Community HIV/AIDS Team Dietitian	(02) 93950444
Redfern Community Health Centre	
Hepatitis C -	
RPA Clinical Nurse Consultant	(02) 9515 6003
Hepatitis Clinics:	
RPA	(02) 9515 7611
REPIDU Redfern	(02) 9699 6188
Livingstone Rd Sexual Health Clinic Marrickville	(02) 9560 3057
Canterbury Hospital, Community Health Centre	(02) 9787 0534
Other general nutrition enquiries	
Royal Prince Alfred Hospital (RPAH) Nutrition Department	(02) 9515 5053
Concord Hospital Nutrition Department	(02) 9767 6328
Canterbury Hospital Nutrition Department (available for brief phone consultation)	(02) 9787 0000

Where to go for more information

Useful Websites

Organisation	Web site	What it's good for...
Better Health Channel	www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au	Good for general nutrition information
Child and Youth Health (South Australia)	www.cyh.com.au	Good for youth friendly health information
Foodwatch	www.foodwatch.com.au	The website of Catherine Saxelby, one of Australia's leading nutritionists and food commentators.
The Dietitians Association of Australia	www.daa.asn.au	You are able to find out how to get in contact with a dietitian in your area. Also has good health information.
Nutrition Australia	www.nutritionaustralia.org	Has some food facts and provides general information about healthy eating.
The National Eating Disorders Association	www.nationaleatingdisorders.org	An excellent website for anything to do with body image.
REACHOUT	www.reachout.asn.au	Has good youth friendly fact sheets.
YOUTHSOURCE Northern Sydney Health – Youth Website	www.youthsource.org	Youth friendly nutrition information.

Other useful resources

“Facing Food” A booklet about healthy eating for young people with a dieting disorder. Dr Melissa Kang, Dietitian Felicity North and Dr Vera Schlumbom, Dept of Adolescent Medicine, The New Children's Hospital.

Real Gorgeous. The Truth about Body and Beauty, Kaz Cooke. Allen and Unwin, 1997.

The Diet Dilemma-Explained: Whether to lose, how much to lose, how to lose, how not to lose. 2nd Ed. Rosemary Stanton. Allen & Unwin, 2000.

Where to go for more information

Cheap food for young people in the central Sydney area

The following is a list of services in the central Sydney area for free or cheap meals:

- Food Distribution Network
9 Ogden Lane, Redfern
9699 1614
Provides boxes of fruit and vegetables at cost price to people who have difficulty shopping e.g. frail, disabled, people living with HIV/Aids, and people with a mental illness. People who volunteer to help run this service are also able to purchase cost price food. Volunteering happens Tuesdays and Thursdays 9.15 - 11.30am. Volunteers are expected to help out once a fortnight.
- Food-share
Fellowship of Congregational Churches
cnr Elswick & Allen Streets, Leichhardt
9560-4803
<http://www.foodshare.com.au>
Each month participants do two hours volunteer community service of their choice, for which they get a \$30 - \$35 package of food and groceries for \$15. Additional food may be purchased on the same basis.
- Alfalfa house
113 Enmore Rd, Enmore
9519 3374 11-6pm
<http://www.thirdangel.com/alfalfa/>
After you pay your \$20 membership fee, you will then receive 10% off all food at all times. If you volunteer at the co-op you will receive 25% off all food each time you volunteer. Buy in bulk and save a further 5%
- Greek Orthodox Church
378 King St. Newtown
9519 7868
Provides free lunch Monday to Friday from 12pm.
- Smith Family
16 Larkin St., Camperdown
9550 4422
Will provide cash for food and food parcels. Must ring first to make an appointment.
- St. Vincent De Paul
317 Cleveland St., Redfern
9698 3711
Will provide food vouchers after a home visit assessment.



Fact sheets for young people

In this section:

7 youth friendly fact sheets on a selection of topics

- Be kind to your body
- Why diets don't work
- No more dodgy food - Food safety
- Making your money stretch further - Budgeting tips
- Feel your best... Eat well, move more
- Need a quickie? Quick easy meal ideas
- What to put in your pantry

How can the fact sheets be used?

- Photocopied and given to young people after discussing the topic with them.
- Used as a visual aid when explaining a specific area of nutrition to a young person.
- Laminated and put up in the kitchen.

be kind to your body

We only have one body and we are going to be in it for the rest of our lives so it's a good idea to treat it well.

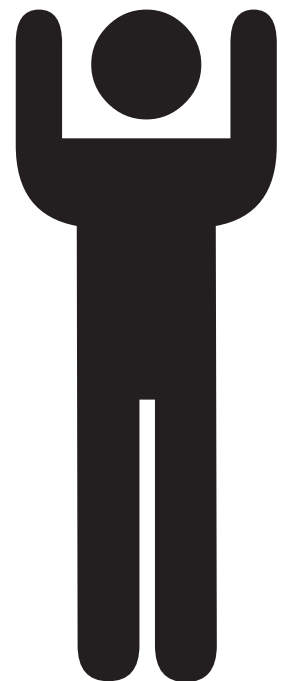


Here are some ways you can be kind to yourself and your body:

- Remember to eat regularly as this can help clear your head and improve your mood
- Remember not eating can actually puts you in a bad mood
- Listen to your body and eat when you feel hungry, stop when you feel content
- Fuel your body with a variety of foods
- Eating 5 small meals a day is often better than 3 big meals
- Keep a regular sleep pattern
- Exercise regularly
- Make time for relaxation each week

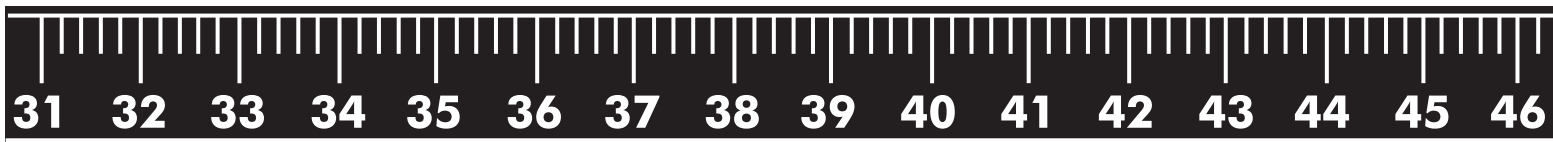
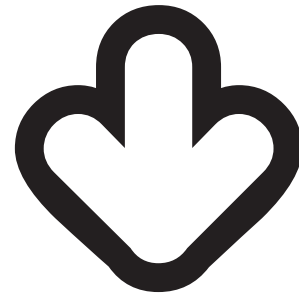
Some things you can do to relax:

- Go for a walk by yourself or with a friend
- Go outside to a park or beach and chill out
- Listen to some good music
- Eat some, yummy, nutritious food
- Call or hang out with a friend
- Watch a movie or video
- Play your favourite sport
- Learn yoga or meditation



why diets don't work!

- Dieting may cause you to lose weight in the short-term BUT often the weight returns.
- The reason weight comes back is because when a person diets, the body slows down its metabolic rate to make up for the reduced food intake (metabolic rate is the rate at which the body burns up energy).
- Dieting means that body fat loss slows down and it actually becomes *harder* to lose weight.



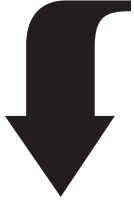
- The body responds to dieting by conserving (holding on to) fat. The weight lost is mainly water and muscle. A reduction in muscle mass slows down the rate at which the body uses energy.



- Dieting deprives the body of essential nutrients and energy and the body responds by wanting to binge. When you strictly avoid certain food, this can cause cravings for these foods.
- Dieting can be dangerous because it can stop you from getting the nutrients your body needs to stay healthy, especially at a time when extra nutrients are needed for normal growth and development.
- Eating real food and having a sensible eating and exercise pattern can help maintain healthy weight and it is much better for you than dieting or using slimming products.

There is no quick fix solution to losing weight.

No more dodgy food - Food SAFETY



There are about 2 million cases of food poisoning in Australia each year. The most common place to get food poisoning is in your own kitchen. Take a quick quiz to see how food safe your house is.

1) If you use a chopping board to cut raw meat, chicken or fish and it is going to be used to chop other food, do you:

- a) use the board as is?
- b) wipe it with a damp cloth?
- c) wash it with hot soapy water first?

2) If you have left-overs do you:

- a) let them cool to room temperature, then put them in the fridge?
- b) leave them at room temperature overnight or longer?
- c) put them in the fridge immediately after the food is served?

3) Do you defrost meat:

- a) on the kitchen bench?
- b) under hot running water?
- c) in the fridge?



UNLESS YOU ANSWERED C TO ALL THESE QUESTIONS, YOU MAY NEED TO BRUSH UP ON SOME SIMPLE TIPS TO KEEP YOUR FOOD SAFE AT HOME.

Wash hands with soap and warm water

- Before and after preparing food
- After handling raw meat or poultry
- Before handling ready-to-eat food, such as salads or sandwiches
- After going to the toilet and blowing your nose.

Prevent cross-contamination of foods with raw foods

- Thaw foods on a plate in the refrigerator on the lowest shelf. Don't allow their juices to drip on other foods.
- Clean chopping boards and kitchen surfaces with hot soapy water before and after preparing food.

Cook food thoroughly

- Meals need to be cooked until they are steaming hot in the centre.
- Cook chicken, pork and minced meat thoroughly until the meat is not pink in the centre.

Store foods properly

- Refrigerate and freeze perishable foods such as milk, cheese, meat and seafood right away.
- Thaw frozen food in the fridge or microwave, not on the kitchen bench or sink.
- Do not leave perishable food at room temperature for longer than two hours.
- Refrigerate or freeze left overs in shallow containers or tightly wrapped bags.

Making your money

STRETCH further

Budgeting tips

- Work out the total amount of money you have for the week (or 2 weeks).
- Allocate your money to different items such as rent, food, bus fares etc.
- Put the money for each separate expense into different envelopes so you know it is already allocated to something - try hard not to spend money you need for something else.

With the money you have allocated for food

- Don't go to the supermarket when you are hungry- you will buy more than you need.
- Plan a quick menu for a week or two.
- Check the pantry to see what you need.
- Write a shopping list.
- Buy larger sizes if you have somewhere to store the left overs. If you don't have any containers to store food in, only buy what you need.
- Base meals on pasta, rice, bread, potatoes or lentils - then add veggies. These foods are cheap and will fill you up.
- Buy veggies in season, they are often cheaper.
- Compare prices when you buy something - plain labelled items are normally the cheapest and still taste good.

What is NOT good value for money?

- * If you buy too much and waste it, then it's not good value
- * If it costs too much, it's not good value
- * If it's cheaper, but tastes horrible, it's not good value.

Feel your best... Eat well and MOVE MORE



Eat well...

- Eating well is about everything you eat, not just one meal or snack.
- Eating well means being able to enjoy a wide variety of foods while feeling good about yourself in mind, body and spirit.
- The amount and type of food we eat affects our ability to think, our mood, energy level, skin and hair, concentration, sleep pattern, immune system and long-term health.
- Try to concentrate on enjoying all food in moderation.

Move more...

- Exercising regularly...
- Builds lean muscles
- Helps with weight control
- Reduces body fat
- Helps to build and maintain healthy bones and muscles
- Helps decrease stress levels
- Makes you feel better about yourself

When you eat well and exercise regularly you have more energy, are in a better mood, think clearly and live a long healthy life.

Tips for eating well and moving more

- Eat lots of different types of food
(Try to eat a variety of food from each of the food groups, every day)
 - Breads, cereals, rice, pasta and noodles
 - Lean meat, fish, eggs, nuts and legumes
 - Milk, yoghurt, cheese and dairy alternatives
 - Vegetables
 - Fruit
- Try not to skip meals
- Snack on fruit and vegetables rather than high fat, high sugar snacks like chips, lollies, chocolate and takeaway foods
- Drink plenty of water
- Try to exercise every day. Simple things like going for a walk with friends, dancing, skateboarding, playing basketball, yoga or walking to the shops are all good.



Need a Quickie?

Quick easy meal ideas



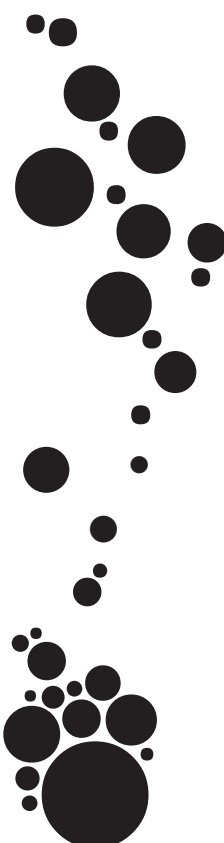
- Tinned spaghetti or baked beans on toast
- Creamed corn on toast
- Kidney or refried beans, taco seasoning and a bit of salad in a taco shell or roll up in lavash bread
- Baked potatoes (*in the oven or microwave*) with creamed corn, salsa, tinned fish, baked beans or salad on top
- Jaffles with anything inside
- Eggs- boiled, scrambled, poached or fried on toast
- Tinned tuna on a roll
- Boil up some pasta and add a jar of pasta sauce and sprinkle with cheese
- Tinned soup with a bread roll
- Bowl of cereal with milk
- Muffins, toast, foccacia or Turkish bread with melted cheese and tomato
- Minute steak with salad on a bread roll
- Tinned fruit and custard

Prepare a cheap and easy meal in about 5 minutes tops.

What to put in your pantry

Having a few essential ingredients at your fingertips makes preparing a quick and tasty meal easy.

PANTRY ITEM	WHAT YOU CAN MAKE WITH IT?
Dried pasta	Spaghetti bolognaise Tuna pasta Macaroni cheese
Rice	Home-made fried rice Risotto Boiled rice (serve with meals)
Dried noodles	Stir fry noodles Add to soups Eat as a snack
Legumes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tinned lentils ● Tinned kidney beans ● Tinned chick peas 	Can add these to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Soups & curries ● Soups, curries & Mexican dishes ● Soups & curries
Bread	Burger Use lavash bread and make a wrap Garlic bread Serve with soup Jaffles
Tinned tomatoes	Pasta sauce Curry
Tinned tuna	Tuna mornay Tuna on toast
Spreads <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vegemite ● Peanut butter ● Jam 	Can use on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sandwiches, toast & biscuits combined with cheese ● Sandwiches, toast, on celery or apples ● Sandwiches & toast
Bottled sauces <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tomato, BBQ ● Sweet chilli 	Can use for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Burgers ● Burgers, stir-fries
Breakfast cereal	Breakfast Lunch Dinner Snack



Fact sheet references

Some of the content of the fact sheets was adapted from the following sources:

1. Nutrition Project Team (1994), West Moreton Regional Health Authority. *A Youth Worker's Guide to Nutrition. Everything you never wanted to know about food and young people.*

2. <http://www.pressurepoint.com.au/nutrition.asp>

3. <http://www.reachout.asn.au>