

freshSNAP

Teen Nutrition Guide

An evidence-based guide to
navigate nutrition in everyday life
& online.



Government of Western Australia
Department of Health



NATIONAL
NUTRITION
FOUNDATION



GOVERNMENT OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Australian
HEALTH
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Association

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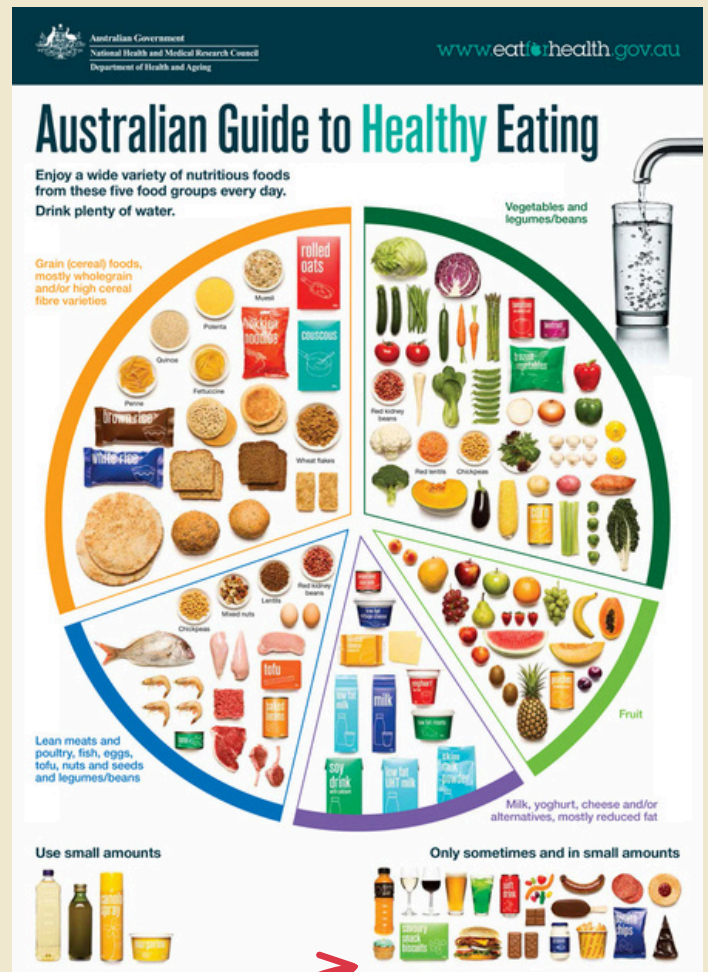
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Food Foundations: The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating

The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating focuses on five main food groups that are needed each day:

- Grains – like bread, rice, pasta, and cereals.
- Vegetables – all colours and types.
- Fruits – fresh, frozen or canned.
- Dairy or alternatives – such as milk, yoghurt, cheese or plant-based options.
- Meat or alternatives – like chicken, eggs, tofu, fish, or legumes.

A combination of these food groups provides you with the nutrients you need to grow, learn, and feel your best.



Tip!

Core foods are your everyday foods from the 5 food groups, whereas non-core foods are your “sometimes foods” to be enjoyed in moderation.

Whilst eating from the five groups, there's also room for non-core foods. However, these foods should be enjoyed in moderation, alongside the core food groups.

Comparing serving sizes to everyday food items

Serving sizes are a useful tool to show what typical amounts from the five food groups can look like. Eating a variety of foods from these groups helps keep your body fuelled, and provides the nutrients it needs to feel good & thrive!

The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating recommends the following serves from each of the five food groups for adolescents aged 12-18 years:

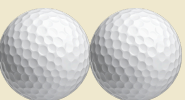
	Veg	Fruit	Grains	Meat & alternatives	Dairy & alternatives	Non-core foods
Boys						
12-13 yrs	5 ½	2	6	2 ½	3 ½	0-3
14-18 yrs	5 ½	2	7	2 ½	3 ½	0-5
Girls						
12-13 yrs	5	2	5	2 ½	3 ½	0-2 ½
14-18 yrs	5	2	7	2 ½	3 ½	0-2 ½

Note - serving sizes are just a guide, they are NOT a rule! We all have slightly different needs, and our needs can change. Think of serving sizes as a helpful tool to make food choices easier, not to limit you or take the joy out of eating!

freshhhh

Comparing serving sizes to everyday food items

A common barrier to making an informed food choice is being told what serving sizes are, without really knowing what that looks like in day-to-day meals. To make this easier here are some practical examples to help you visualise serving sizes from the five food groups using everyday items.

1 serve of:	Can look like:	But can also look like:
Vegetables	 ½ cup cooked veg  1 cup salad veg  1 medium tomato	 ½ small takeaway container  1 cupped hand  A tennis ball
Fruit	 1 medium apple/orange  1 medium banana  2 small kiwi fruits	 A cricket ball  The length of your hand  2 golf balls

Comparing serving sizes to everyday food items

1 serve of:	Can look like:	But can also look like:
Grains	 1 slice bread  ½ cup cooked rice, pasta or noodles	 Size of an iPhone screen  A dog toy ball  1 cupped hand
Meat & alternatives	 65g cooked lean meat or 80g cooked poultry  100g cooked fish fillet  2 large eggs  1 cup legumes/beans	 A deck of cards  A computer mouse  A paddel ball  A closed fist
Dairy & alternatives	 1 cup milk  2 slices hard cheese, e.g., cheddar  ¾ cup yoghurt	 1 small takeaway coffee cup  An airpods case  A bar of soap

Fuel for your brain!

Just like cars need fuel, we need the right food to power our brains... especially during school and times of stress.

Nutritious foods =

- ✓ Better memory
- ✓ Improved focus
- ✓ Steady energy levels

Adequate sleep, proper hydration & physical activity can also support you during these busier times!



Top tips to fuel your brain:

Start the day strong!

- Eat a breakfast with slow-release carbohydrates (e.g., oats with fruit, wholegrain toast with eggs).
- If you're short on time, try some quick options such as a fruit smoothie you can drink on-the-go.
- Something to eat is better than nothing!



Enjoy your carbs!

- Carbohydrates are the brain's preferred energy source.
- Choose wholegrains, fruits & starchy vegetables.
- Slow-release energy = sustained energy, rather than spikes & drops.
- Fibre keeps you full & focused!



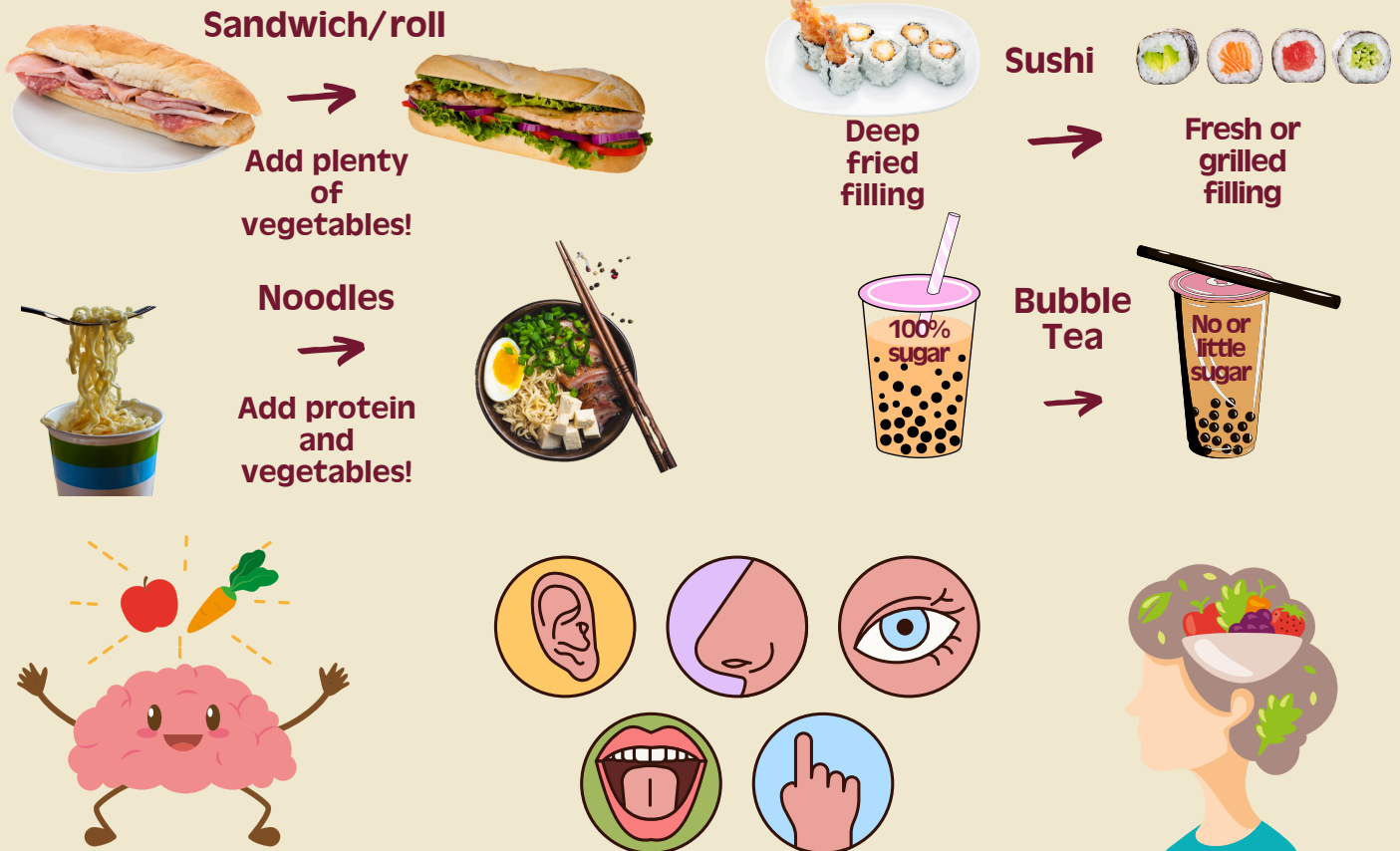
Include omega-3 fatty acids

- Helps our brain function and cognitive development.
- Boosts our mood!
- Some amazing sources include:
 - Salmon and oily fish.
 - Nuts and seeds.
 - Soy products.



Convenience without Compromise

In our busy lives, we all rely on quick options to fuel us at times. Dining out can be a great way to connect, share stories & celebrate the joy that food brings! Here are our top tips to eat out and feel great - body and mind.



Tips to nourish your body & mind when eating out:

- Having regular meals throughout the rest of the day helps you avoid extreme hunger and choose foods mindfully.
- It's all about what you can add! Add in foods that make you feel good, like protein & veggies.
- Mindful mouthfuls! Noticing what you see, smell, taste, hear & feel.
- Try grilled over deep-fried options to stay energised after your meal.
- Finding places with nourishing options like sushi, Mexican, or build-your-own bowl places.
- Tweak sugar & salt levels (when available) to keep your energy steady.

Pantry Staples 101

Thinking about moving out after high school, or just want to cook more at home? Here are some of our favourite pantry staples to get you started. They are budget-friendly, help you cook more consistently and can be used in a range of different meals! Check out pages 16-21 for our favourite recipes using some of these staples!



Grains

- Rice (white, brown, jasmine)
- Instant rice cups (single serve)
- Pasta
- All-purpose flour
- Oats
- Breadcrumbs or panko



Canned & preserved goods

- Tomato paste
- Pasta sauce
- Canned tuna
- Canned beans (chickpeas, black beans, kidney beans)
- Canned tomatoes (diced, crushed, whole)



Oils, vinegars & sauces

- Olive oil
- Soy sauce
- Vinegar (white or apple cider)
- Honey or maple syrup
- Other favourite condiments



Herbs & spices

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| • Salt | • Pepper |
| • Garlic powder | • Onion powder |
| • Paprika | • Italian seasoning |
| • Cumin | • Stock cubes |
| • Cinnamon | |



Baking basics

- Sugar (white or brown)
- Baking soda
- Baking powder
- Vanilla extract (optional)



Freezer friendly

Note: label items with dates & contents

- Frozen vegetables
- Frozen fruit
- Bread (to reduce food waste)
- Proteins (chicken breast/thigh, mince, tofu)

FOOD ITEMS

Pantry Staples 101



Preparation tools

- Chef's knife
- Chopping board
- Peeler
- Grater
- Scissors
- Colander/strainer



Cooking tools

- Wooden spoon
- Spatula
- Tongs
- Whisk
- Ladle



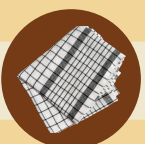
Measuring

- Measuring cup set
- Measuring spoon set
- Measuring jug



Eating

- Cutlery set (forks, knives, spoons)
- Bowls
- Plates



Cleaning

- Dish cloths
- Tea towels
- Paper towel
- Dishwashing liquid
- Cleaning spray (e.g., Spray N Wipe)

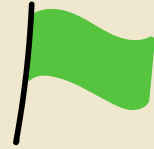
Food Safety Tips!

- Use clean cloths daily to avoid bacteria
- Don't reuse dirty tea towels
- Clean benches before & after cooking

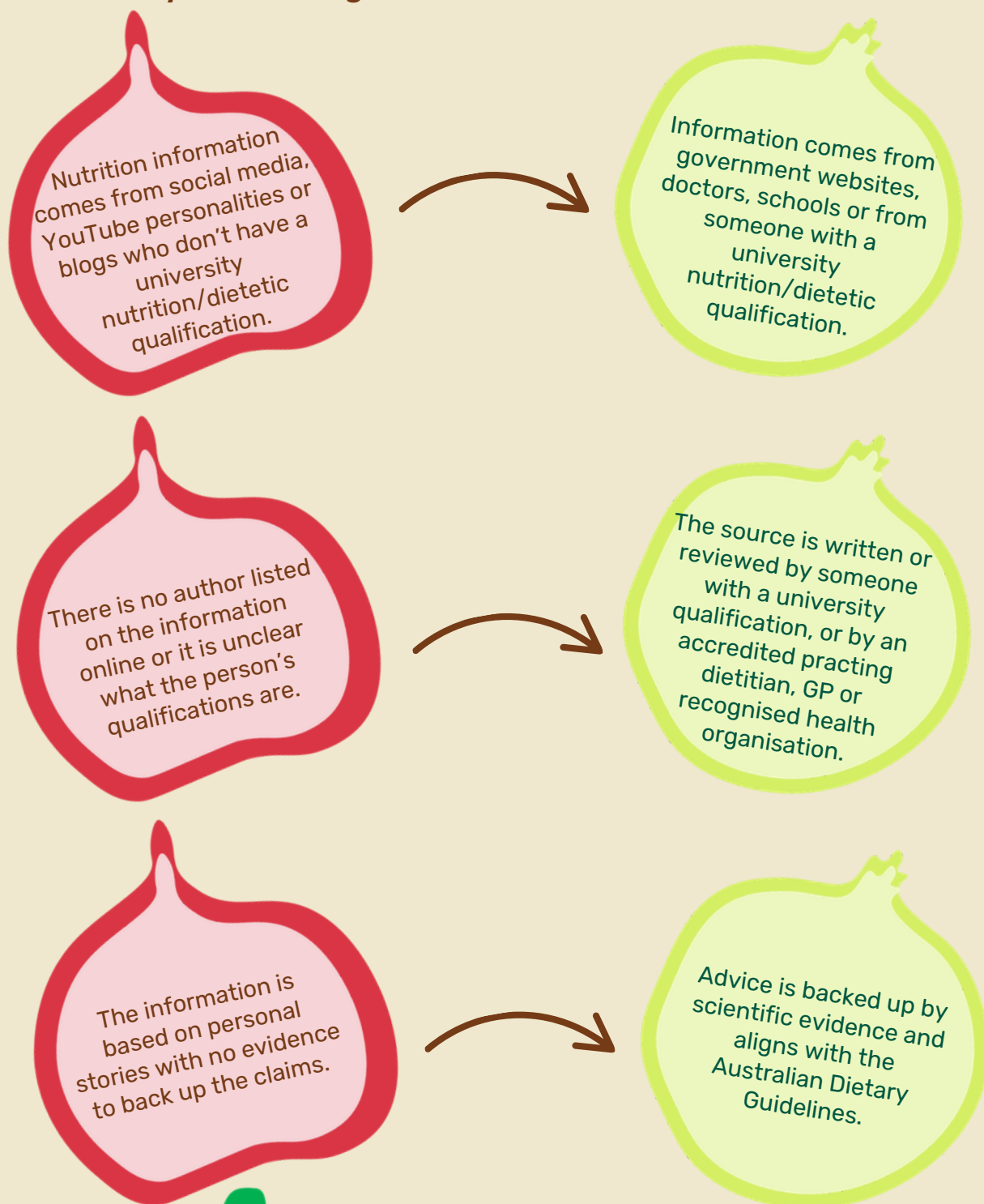
UTENSILS



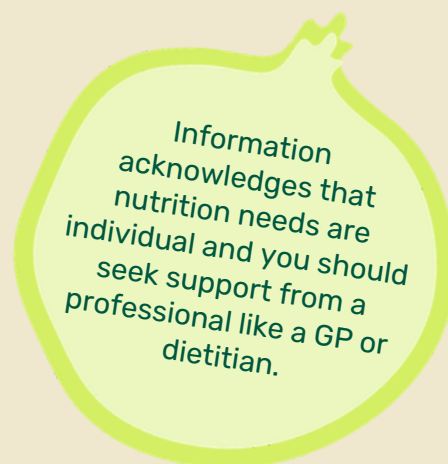
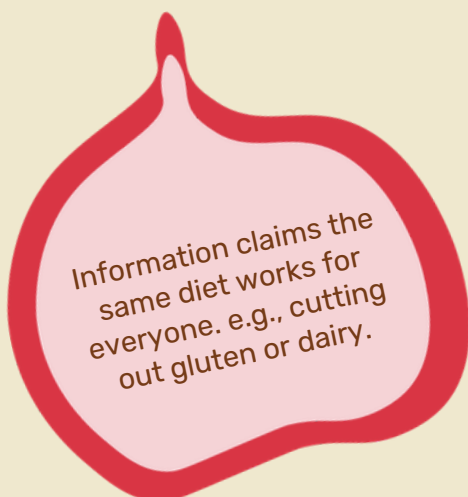
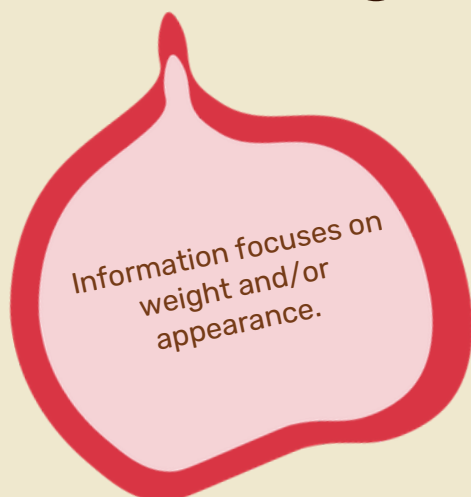
Hacks to sourcing nutrition information online



Do you sometimes find online nutrition information confusing and filled with mixed messages? You're not alone! We know this can often be a difficult space to navigate. Here are our top **RED** and **GREEN** flags to watch out for next time you're looking for nutrition information online.



Hacks to sourcing nutrition information online



Being able to determine the **red** from the **green** flags will help you build your online literacy and use reliable sources of information. This makes it easier to choose nutrition advice that is relevant and supports positive wellbeing!

Love your food!

With so many external influences shaping our food choices (e.g., social media, peers, advertisements and the food options available), it's easy to feel pressure to keep up with the latest food trends. So how can we shift the focus to what you can control, rather than what you can't? Below are some simple ways to nourish your body to make you feel good, whilst still using what's available to you.

Food choices shaped by what's available

What can you take ownership of?

- Think about the parts of your food choices that you can control, for example:
 - Have you eaten regular meals today?
 - Have your meals included a source of protein, carbohydrates and fats?
 - Is your body craving something in particular?
- Learning to listen to your body and respond to what it needs can be a useful skill to master when it comes to food choice.

Hunger and Fullness scale

The ideal zone is within the central green rectangle.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Starving, feel weak/dizzy	Very hungry, irritable, all food looks good	Hungry, stomach starting to growl	Slightly hungry	Neutral, neither hungry nor full	Starting to get full	Full, feel satisfied	Very full, slightly uncomfortable	Stuffed and uncomfortable	So full you feel sick

Livelihood. (n.d). Mindful Eating. <https://livelighter.com.au/living-well/mindful-eating#:~:text=The%20hunger%20and%20fullness%20scale,to%20a%206%20or%207.>

How creative can you be with what you have?

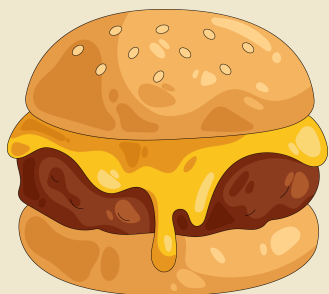
- Challenge yourself! Have a look at what you have in your pantry and see how many different types of meals you can make with similar ingredients. This is going to help make cooking more exciting, less expensive, whilst also continuing to add to your recipe bank!
- For example - chickpeas can be used in many different ways! You can make a chickpea curry, add them to a pasta, or even put them in brownies!



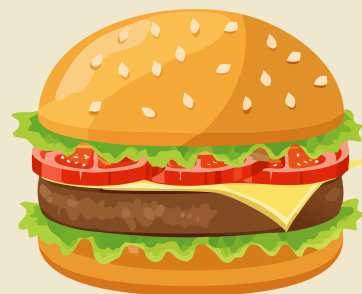
Love your food!

How can you add to the meals you have already?

- Look for simple ways to add something extra to your meals (e.g., different veggies, wholegrains or protein) to make it even more nourishing!
- For example, how many different coloured vegetables could you add to your favourite meal, like a burger? Each colour brings its own nutrients that help your body feel energised and strong.



➔
Add some
more colour!



+



=

Delicious

Don't be afraid to have more than one serve!

- Think of a serve as one 'building block' of your meal. If you require more serves to build your meal, then do so!
- Servings are simply a guide for your meals, not a rule.

Resources and support

We understand these topics can sometimes feel confronting or challenging to navigate. If you would like further support, we encourage you to reach out to services that can provide help and guidance.

Lifeline

24 hour crisis support & suicide prevention services.

13 11 14

lifeline.org.au

Butterfly Foundation

Body image & eating disorder support.

**1800 ED HOPE
(1800 33 4673)**

butterfly.org.au

Beyond Blue

Free 24/7 mental health support.

1300 22 4636

beyondblue.org.au

Headspace

Mental health & wellbeing support.

1800 650 890

headspace.org.au

The Embrace Collective

Body image support & resources.

theembracehub.com

Neami National

Mental health & wellbeing support.

neaminational.org.au

Local Government Youth Groups

Opportunities to connect with like-minded people, advocate for services and share experiences!

Kids Helpline

Youth-focus mental wellbeing support services.

1800 55 1800

Health Professionals

Seek wellbeing support from a trusted GP or health professional.

Emergency Relief & Food Access Service (ERFAS)

Assesses needs and connects you to local food relief support.

1800 979 777

13YARN

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander crisis support line.

13 92 76

ClearlyMe App

Free mental wellbeing app designed to support you through times of distress.



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healthway



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A decorative border made of stylized, colorful vegetable shapes surrounds the central text. The shapes include blue, orange, purple, yellow, green, and dark green, arranged in a circular pattern around the center.

Recipes

Banana Bread in a Mug

This sweet & satisfying snack supports energy levels!



Serves: 1



Time: 10 minutes

Tools



1 large mugs



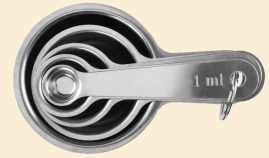
Fork



Spoon



Microwave



Measuring cups & spoons

Ingredients

1 ripe banana



¼ cup milk



1 tbsp margarine, melted



½ cup self-raising wholemeal flour



1 tbsp rolled oats



1 tbsp sultanas



1 tbsp brown sugar



1 tsp cinnamon, ground



Method

1. Peel and place the banana into one large, microwave-safe mug. Using a fork, mash the banana gently until smooth.
2. Add the milk and margarine into the mug and mix well. Add the remaining ingredients into the mug.
3. Place mug in the microwave. Cook on HIGH for 90 seconds, or until the mixture is cooked.
4. Let cool slightly and enjoy!



Allergen
Swap

Dairy: Swap the milk with other plant-based milk like oat.

Gluten: Replace flour with gluten free flour and swap oats for quinoa flakes.

Baked Oat & Cranberry Bites

Packed with
oats to keep
our hearts
happy &
healthy!

fresh
SNAP



Serves: 4



Time: 60 minutes

Tools



Oven



Bowl



Mixing
spoon



Baking tray (with
baking paper)



Measuring cups
& spoons

Ingredients

1 cup oats



$\frac{3}{4}$ cup flour



1 tsp baking powder



1 tsp cinnamon



$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp nutmeg



2 tbsp margarine,
melted and cooled



1 egg



1 tsp vanilla extract



$\frac{1}{2}$ cup maple syrup



$\frac{1}{4}$ cup pepitas



$\frac{1}{4}$ cup dried cranberries



Method

1. Preheat oven to 175°C and line a baking tray with baking paper.
2. Mix oats, flour, baking powder and spices in a large bowl until combined.
3. In a separate bowl, mix together margarine, egg and vanilla and whisk until smooth.
4. Add maple syrup and whisk until combined.
5. Add wet ingredients to dry and mix to combine.
6. Add cranberries and pepitas and mix again.
7. Place mixture in the fridge for 15 minutes to firm up.
8. Roll into 8 small balls and bake for 12 minutes or until golden.
9. Let the bites cool for 10 minutes before transferring to a cooling rack.



Storage
tip

Store bites in an air tight container for up to 3 days.

Cheesy Chicken Quesadilla

Packed with
protein to
support growth
& immune
function!

fresh
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Serves: 1

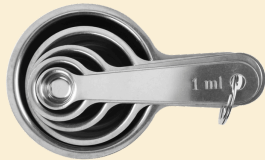


Time: 15 minutes

Tools



Sandwich press



Measuring cup
& spoons



Bowl



Microwave



Spoon

Ingredients

1 wholegrain tortilla

¼ cup cooked chicken, shredded

5 slices of red capsicum

5 slices of green capsicum

1 tbsp tomato, diced

¼ cup cheddar cheese, shredded



Mexican seasoning:

• 1 tsp smoked paprika



• 1 tsp onion powder



• 1 tsp garlic powder



• 1 tsp dried oregano



• 1 tsp cumin, ground



Method

1. In a bowl, combine the chicken, red capsicum, and green capsicum.
2. Season with fajita seasoning and microwave for 2 minutes.
3. To assemble the quesadilla, sprinkle tomato over one half of a tortilla. Layer with half of the cheese, followed by the seasoned chicken and vegetables, then top with the remaining cheese.
4. Fold the other half of the tortilla over to enclose the filling.
5. Place the assembled quesadilla in a sandwich press. Toast until it is golden brown and crispy.



Prep
ahead

Capsicum: Slice into strips.

Chicken: Pan-fry, roast or poach the chicken (or buy pre-cooked), and shred with two forks.

Allergen
Swap

Gluten: Replace tortilla with corn tortillas (made without wheat).

Dairy: Replace cheese with dairy-free cheese.

Swap
it

Vegetarian? Swap the chicken with chickpeas or black beans.

Cheesy Tuna Pasta

 **Serves: 2**

 **Time: 30 minutes**

Fish contains
omega-3 fatty
acids to
support brain
function

fresh
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Tools



Measuring cups & spoons



Pot



Colander



Grater



Tray



Oven

Ingredients

1 cup pasta, dried, uncooked 

Salt and pepper, to taste 

1/4 cup frozen green beans 

1/2 tsp garlic powder 

1/4 cup frozen corn kernels 

1/4 tsp onion powder 

95g can tuna, drained 

1/3 cup mozzarella cheese, grated 

1 cup milk 

2 tbsp parmesan cheese, grated 

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180C. Fill a pot 3/4 with water. Place on high heat and bring to the boil.
2. Once the water is boiling, add the pasta. Cook for 10 minutes or until al dente (slightly soft).
3. Drain water from the pasta.
4. Add the green beans, corn kernels and tuna, and stir until well combined. Add the mozzarella cheese, milk, garlic powder, onion powder and salt and pepper and mix well.
5. Spoon the pasta mixture into two small foil trays. Place 1 tbsp parmesan cheese on top of the pasta in each tray.
6. Bake in the oven for 5 minutes or until the cheese is melted and golden.



Allergen
Swap

Gluten: Replace pasta and bread with a gluten-free alternative.

Storage
tip

2 serves means one for dinner and one for lunch the next day!

Instant Noodle Jars



Serves: 1



Time: 15 minutes

Consider what
veggies you
can ADD for a
boost of
nutrients!

Tools



Heatproof jar
or bowl



Measuring cups
& spoons



Kettle



Grater

Ingredients

2 tsp miso paste

1 tsp sesame oil

½ clove garlic, minced

1 tsp beef stock powder, salt
reduced

2 cups boiling water



1 portion instant noodles or
rice vermicelli (~65g)

¼ carrot, grated

2 tsp mushrooms, chopped

2 tbsp canned corn kernels,
drained



Method

1. Prepare your ingredients by boiling the water and grating the carrots.
2. Place miso paste, sesame oil, minced garlic and beef stock powder in the jar. Mix well.
3. Add the instant noodles, grated carrot, mushrooms and corn kernels to the jar.
4. Carefully pour in the boiling water. Cover the jar with a heatproof lid.
5. Allow to sit for 4-5 minutes, or until noodles are soft.

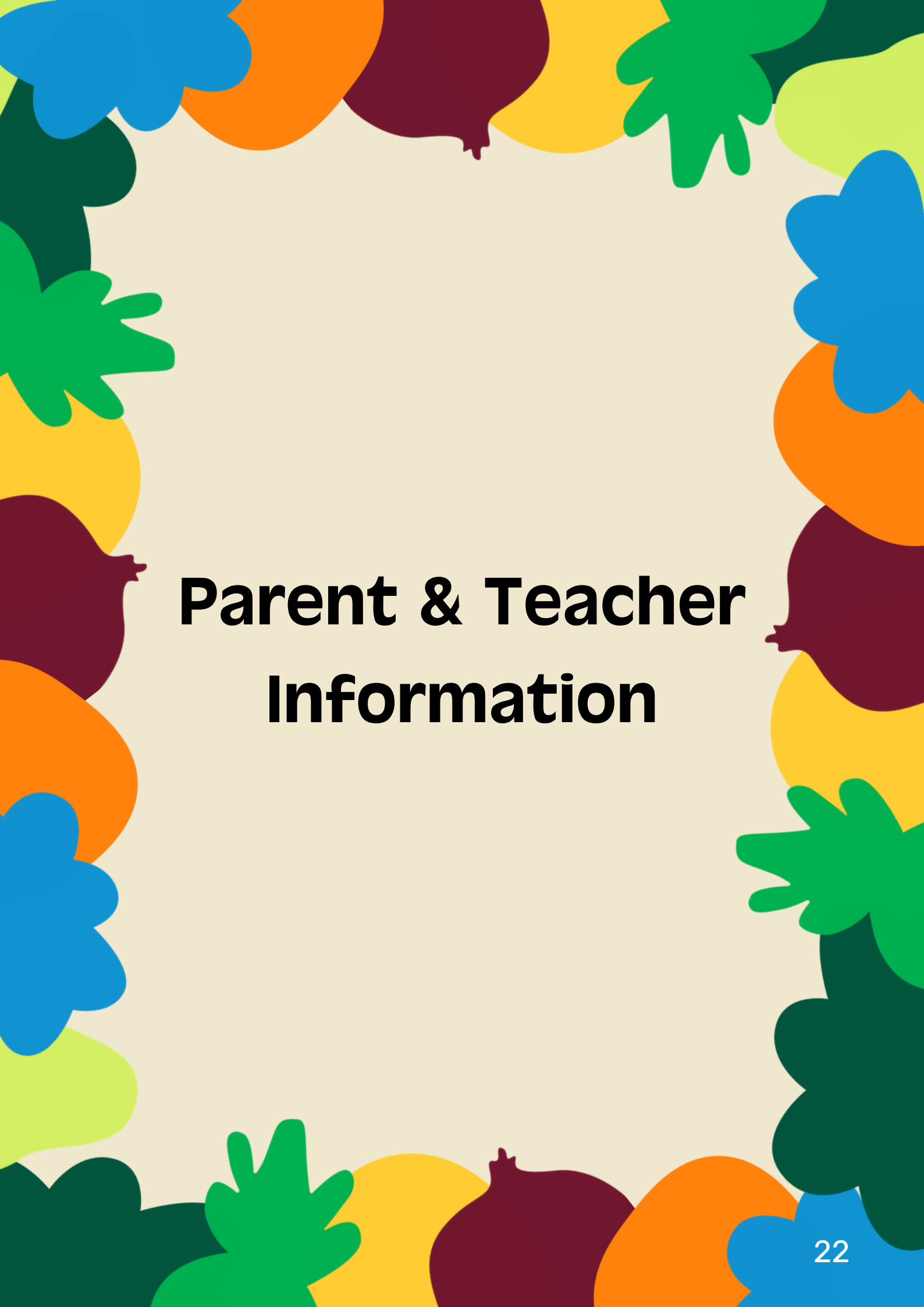


Prep
ahead

Garlic: Finely mince.
Mushrooms: Chop.

Allergen
Swap

Sesame: Replace the sesame oil
with low sodium soy sauce.



Parent & Teacher Information

About this guide



This guide has been designed to equip adolescents with practical, evidence-based skills they can add to their nutrition education toolkit. In today's fast-paced, ever-changing world, nutrition information can often come across as confusing and at times overwhelming... but we are here to help!

In collaboration with the Australian Health Promotion Association, Healthway and Curtin University, freshSNAP hosted an Australian Health Promotion Association scholarship recipient between 2024 and 2025 to undertake a research project exploring current nutrition trends and challenges faced by adolescents. As part of this project, twelve health promotion stakeholders from across Australia were interviewed to gain insights from professionals working directly and indirectly with this target group. Additionally, focus groups were conducted with adolescents in Years 7 to 12 to identify how they seek nutrition information and the level of nutrition education they receive in school. Over 100 expression of interest forms were received, with 30 students participating in online focus groups to share their experiences.

Following an extensive in-depth analysis of the consultations and drawing upon current research, a suite of resources have been developed to address the key challenges identified.



These resources aim to provide adolescents with practical, real-world skills to assist in making informed and confident food and drink choices in their everyday lives.



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Why nutrition & consistent messaging matters for teens

Young people are exposed to a wide range of influences each day. Whether it's from their home life, friendships, school environments or online spaces, there are many different factors that are influencing their day-to-day decisions. When it comes to nutrition, it is important that conversations and content have a positive message, focusing on how food supports wellbeing and how it makes them feel, rather than reinforcing weight-centric ideals or shame around food choices.

All foods can be enjoyed without guilt or restriction!

This guide reinforces these principles and is a practical reference for young people and those around them. When adolescents, families, schools, and other people of influence promote these values, the strategies become more effective. A consistent approach also helps young people recognise and navigate potentially harmful nutrition messaging they may encounter online.

When nutrition messaging is evidence-based & consistent, this can lead to:



Greater confidence in food choices - helping young people cut through the 'noise' surrounding nutrition and recognising when information is misleading or inaccurate.



Empowerment to try new recipes - building cooking knowledge and skills that encourage experimentation in the kitchen, without the fear of 'failure'.



Building lifelong habits - establishing practical skills that support positive behaviours and are sustained as young people transition into adulthood.



Improving mood and mental health - a balanced diet can support emotional health and overall wellbeing.

About freshSNAP

FreshSNAP is your Western Australian Fresh School Nutrition Advisory Program.

We provide a FREE, comprehensive state-wide advisory and implementation service to deliver nutrition education and support schools in creating healthy food and drink environments.

Our services are available to the whole school community - including leadership, educators, canteen and food service staff, students, parents and families, and professionals supporting the wellbeing of school-aged children.

Our passionate and experienced team offers free consultations, professional learning sessions, support for canteens, school incursions and ongoing support for your school to create a culture and environment that makes every day healthier for Western Australian kids.

FreshSNAP is delivered by National Nutrition Foundation and proudly funded by the Department of Health Western Australia.

About National Nutrition Foundation

National Nutrition Foundation is an independent, national not-for-profit organisation that enables Australians to enjoy nutritious foods and drinks.

We do this by collaborating with governments, business, public health and community organisations to deliver programs and services to make a collective impact.



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