

Promoting healthy eating in early childhood education and care services

Outside School Hours Care

Educators have an important role to play in promoting healthy eating to children in childcare.

Under the National Quality Framework, assessors may observe, sight, and discuss the activities and resources that a service has in place to promote healthy eating.

The video below shows you how to become a great health promoter by:

- making mealtimes relaxed and comfortable
- sitting and eating with the children
- talking in positive ways about the healthy foods the children are eating
- encouraging fussy eaters to try new foods
- being a good role model with the foods you eat, and
- teaching the children about healthy eating through discussions, questions, games and activities

You can also check out VegKIT to find lots of free resources and information to support your centre's management, cooks and educators to encourage children to eat more vegetables, including:

- [Best Practice Guidelines for Increasing Children's Vegetable Intake: Out-of-School Hours Care.](#)





You can access this video via the HEAS website: [click here](#)

Video transcript

Eating habits are instilled from a young age, and often these habits are carried through to adulthood.

Children who learn to eat well can develop and sustain a healthy lifestyle, which has many benefits such as healthy growth and development and preventing long term illness.

Children who eat healthy foods in their everyday lives can be more alert and interested in activities, which can improve their concentration and learning.

All Early childhood education and care service staff are in a unique position to support children's development and growth, and to promote good eating habits. You can become a great health promoter by making small changes to way you do things at your service.

As an educator, you have an important role to play in promoting healthy eating early to children in your care.

You can help provide a healthy eating environment by:

- making mealtimes relaxed and comfortable
- sitting and eating with the children
- being positive about the healthy foods the children are eating
- encouraging fussy eaters to try new foods
- being a positive role model with the foods you eat, and
- teaching the children about healthy eating through discussions, questions, games and activities.

There are things you can do when you're away from the children as well, like:

- working with other staff, the cook and management on how to improve mealtimes for children
- contributing to and supporting your organisation's healthy eating policy
- passing on information to parents about healthy eating, and
- building on your own skills and knowledge about health promotion through seminars, workshops and other training.

If you want to get a bit more creative, you can set up a veggie garden, growing simple vegetables like carrots and trying your hand at some herbs. You could then try some cooking activities with the children using the produce you've grown.

Having a compost bin or worm farm can get the children talking about leftovers and the importance of not wasting food.

For your health promotion activities to work most effectively, the whole early childhood service needs to be behind it.

The Victorian Government's Achievement Program encourages and supports a whole-service approach to healthy eating. For more information about the Achievement Program visit the website.

The Healthy Eating Advisory Service website has more tips and links to further training. Contact the service for telephone and email advice, recipes and healthy food ideas. Also ask about our free menu assessments.