

Help sheet 2:

The role of nutrition and the provision of food in group settings

For older people attending group sessions, for example, Planned Activity Groups, the meal and snack times are opportunities for social enjoyment of food and provision of food in support of the nutritional needs of participants. Also at these sessions, a participant's nutritional risk can be monitored and relevant nutrition information offered.

Policies are useful to focus a group around an issue of importance. A food and nutrition policy for a group should state the role of nutrition and the provision of food, including drinks, in the group's activities. This then becomes a standard against which the activities of the centre can be organised and potentially measured.



Under a policy, the centre then arranges the nutrition and food activities into objectives against which they can be measured. Setting yourself up to be measured sounds like creating extra work for yourself but it is useful for meeting quality assurance/improvement standards, giving the organisation a feeling of achievement ('yes we have done that or are achieving this'), and providing staff with a common purpose.

(See Nutrition resource manual, Section 6)

Objectives may include such things as:

- We will hold a good food message activity once a month.
- We will offer all participants a serve of fruit to eat each time they attend.
- Our menu will offer higher fibre breads and biscuits more often than white bread and biscuits.
- We will offer drinks other than just tea or coffee during the session.
- We have systems arranged for referring participants with nutrition or weight issues.
- We use the Nutrition Risk Screening Tool in our assessment to identify our older people who are at risk of poor nutrition.

Being physically active supports good nutrition. Therefore objectives regarding physical activity can also be included, such as:

- We will monitor people for signs of inadequate physical activity (see Help sheet 13 in this Resource Kit).
- We are aware of people's preferences regarding physical activity.
- We will provide people with an opportunity to be physically active in a safe way.

The *Victorian Home and Community Care (HACC) Program Manual* (Department of Human Services, 2003) lists the recommended serves of food groups (see Section 7.7.4, Table 2). This should be the starting point for the provision of meals and snacks in a group setting.

HACC Program delivered meals recommended servings

(Source: *Victorian Home and Community Care (HACC) program manual*, Department of Human Services, 2003)

* Weight in grams is for cooked food, except for rice and pasta item

Food Group	Portion Size*
1. One Serving: Meat/Alternative	
Meat/poultry/fish	75–90 grams
Peas/bean/lentils	1 cup
2. One Serving: Potato/Alternative	
Potato	90 grams
Rice or pasta occasionally	120–150 grams
3. One Serving: Green Vegetable	
Green vegetable	60 grams
4. One Serving: Yellow or Orange Vegetable	
Yellow or orange vegetable	90 grams
5. One Serving: Fruit	
Fruit (cooked/prepared)	120 grams
Whole fresh fruit	1 medium
6. One Serving: Bread/Cereal/Alternative	
Bread	1 slice
Bread Roll	1
Muffin	1
Dumpling	1
Pancake	1
Prepared breakfast cereal	1/2 cup
Oatmeal/barley/semolina	25 grams dry weight
Rice/pasta (This cannot be counted as a serve of potato)	120–150 grams
7. One Serving: Milk/Alternative	
Milk	200 ml
Cheese	30 grams
Yoghurt	150 grams
Skim Milk Powder	20 grams
Cottage Cheese	250 grams
8. One Vitamin C Supplement: Minimum Amount Daily	
Fresh Fruit:	
Orange, small 1	50 grams
Mandarin, large 1	90 grams
Tomato, medium 1	110 grams
Grapefruit	100 grams
Pineapple, 1 whole slice – 1.5 cm thick	110 grams
Paw Paw diced 1/3	50 grams
Cantaloupe diced cup	100 grams
Strawberries 10 medium	70 grams
Pure Fruit Juice	
Orange Juice	75 ml
Grapefruit Juice	100 ml
Tomato Juice	200 ml
Vegetable Juice	150 ml
Tropical Fruit Juice	150 ml
Orange and Mango Juice	75 ml
Apple Blackcurrant Juice	60 ml

Fruit juices may be supplied in one of these forms:

- chilled fruit juices delivered in cartons or plastic containers, which should be stored under refrigeration for not longer than one month and used within ten days after opening
- canned juices, which should be kept under refrigeration and used within two days after opening. Once opened the juice is to be dispensed into a clean food grade container with fitted lid
- fresh juices, which should be squeezed daily, kept refrigerated and consumed within two days.

For older people and their carers, the decision on the food provided in the group will allow them to organise the other two meals they will eat during the day. Some older people may rely on a delivered meal, so the group meal either complements this meal or replaces it, depending on whether the group offers a light or main meal respectively.

How can a dietitian help?

A dietitian can help by:

- drawing up a food and nutrition policy that is relevant to the service and the clients
- assisting with interpreting the HACCC recommended serves for your service
- assisting with menus and recipes
- assisting with evaluating objectives
- assisting in developing food and nutrition related activities.

If you do not yet have a dietitian, contact the relevant state branch of the Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) for advice on how to find an accredited practising dietitian who specialises in nutrition and older people and food services or consult your local community dietitian. See Help sheet 14 in this Resource Kit for dietitian contact information.

The same policy development process should occur with physical activity to form a combined policy with nutrition as these two aspects are complementary to the general wellbeing of any person. See Help sheet 14 in this Resource Kit for physiotherapist contact information.

For more information

The 'Go for your life' website contains information and practical tips on ways to be more active and improve nutrition. 'Go for your life' is a component of the Victorian Government's Healthy and Active Victoria Strategy that aims to improve the overall health and wellbeing of all Victorians by increasing levels of physical activity, improving eating habits, getting people involved with their community and acting as volunteers.

<http://www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au> or 1300 73 98 99

Good food, better health, more independence.