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Guide for Calculating the Amount of Food Needed for Menu Planning

This guide will help you work out how much food to offer to meet the number of serves in the early childhood menu planning guidelines and checklist. It should also help with food ordering and reducing food waste.

This guide shows you how to calculate the amount of food (grams/kilograms/millilitres/litres) you need to offer each day, based on the number of children in your care. It includes examples for each of the five food groups.

The basic calculation can be done by following this simple step:

Number of children x serve size in grams (or ml)

Lean meat and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, *nuts and seeds and legumes/beans

How many serves?	What is a serve?
Offer ½ serve for each child	<p>½ serve is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 50 grams raw meat, pork, poultry• 60 grams raw or 50 grams tinned fish• 35 grams dry or 85 grams cooked or tinned legumes• 1 egg• 85 grams tofu• 60 grams hommus• 15 grams *nuts or seeds (including nut or seed pastes).

*check your childcare policy

How to calculate the amount needed each day for the number of children in care

For 65 children

- = 65 serves x 50 grams raw meat
- = 3 250 grams meat, divide by 1 000 to get the amount in kg
- = 3.25 kg meat needed to offer ½ serve for each child

Remember that you don't have to provide the ½ serve of meat or meat alternatives in one meal or snack; you may find it easier to split it across the day. You can then calculate this in the same way as shown above; all you need to do is change the serve size. For example:

Main meal offer ¼ serve = 25 grams meat for each child

- = 65 serves x 25 grams meat
- = 1 625 grams meat, divide by 1 000 to get amount in kg
- = 1.625 kg meat needed

Afternoon tea offer ¼ serve = 30 grams hommus for each child

- = 65 serves x 30 grams hommus
- = 1 950 grams hommus, divide by 1 000 to get amount in kg
- = 1.95 kg hommus needed to offer ¼ serve for each child

Fruit

How many serves?	What is a serve?
Offer at least ½ serve for each child	½ serve is: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 75 grams fresh/frozen/tinned/cooked fruit.

How to calculate the amount needed each day for the number of children in care

For 65 children

- = 65 serves x 75 grams fruit
- = 4 875 grams fruit, divide by 1 000 to get the amount in kg
- = at least 4.875 kg fruit needed to offer ½ serve for each child

Remember that you don't have to provide the ½ serve of fruit in one meal or snack. You may find it easier to split it across the day, especially if you are offering other food groups at the same time. For example, offer ¼ serve fruit with yoghurt at morning tea and ¼ serve of fruit on a platter at afternoon tea.

Vegetables and legumes/beans

How many serves?	What is a serve?
Offer at least 1-2 serves for each child	<p>One serve is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75 grams fresh/frozen/tinned/cooked vegetables. • 1 cup salad • 30 grams dry or 75 grams tinned/cooked legumes.

How to calculate the amount needed each day for the number of children in care

For 65 children

One serve for each child

$$= 65 \text{ serves} \times 75 \text{ grams vegetables}$$

$$= 4\,875 \text{ grams vegetables, divide by } 1\,000 \text{ to get the amount in kg}$$

$$= \text{at least } 4.875 \text{ kg vegetables needed to offer one serve for each child}$$

Two serves for each child (75 grams \times 2 = 150 grams)

$$= 65 \text{ serves} \times 150 \text{ grams}$$

$$= 9\,750 \text{ grams vegetables, divide by } 1\,000 \text{ to get the amount in kg}$$

$$= 9.75 \text{ kg vegetables needed to offer two serves for each child}$$

Remember that you don't have to provide the 1–2 serves of vegetables and legumes/beans at once; you may find it easier to split it across the day. For example, 1–1 ½ serves of vegetables and legumes/beans at lunch and then ½–1 serve at afternoon tea on a platter.

Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives

How many serves?	What is a serve?
Offer at least 1 serve for each child	<p>One serve is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 250 ml milk/soy drink• 200 grams yoghurt• 250 ml custard• 40 grams hard cheese• 120 grams ricotta cheese.

How to calculate the amount needed each day for the number of children in care

For 65 children

$$= 65 \text{ serves} \times 250 \text{ ml milk}$$

$$= 16\,250 \text{ ml milk, divide by } 1\,000 \text{ to get amount in litres}$$

$$= \text{at least } 16.25 \text{ L milk needed each day for } 65 \text{ children}$$

Remember that you don't have to provide the one serve of milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives at once; you may find it easier to split it across the day, especially if you are offering other food groups at the same time. For example offer $\frac{1}{2}$ serve milk at morning tea with fruit and $\frac{1}{2}$ serve cheese at afternoon tea with crackers and vegetable sticks. You can calculate this by doing the following:

Morning tea offer $\frac{1}{2}$ serve = 125 ml milk for each child

$$= 65 \text{ serves} \times 125 \text{ ml milk}$$

$$= 8\,125 \text{ ml, divide by } 1\,000 \text{ to get amount in kg}$$

$$= 8.125 \text{ L milk needed}$$

Afternoon tea offer $\frac{1}{2}$ serve = 20 grams hard cheese for each child

$$= 65 \text{ serves} \times 20 \text{ grams cheese}$$

$$= 1\,300 \text{ grams cheese, divide by } 1\,000 \text{ to get amount in kg}$$

$$= 1.3 \text{ kg cheese needed}$$

Grain (cereal) foods

How many serves?	What is a serve?
Offer at least 2 serves for each child	<p>One serve is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 slice bread• ½ roll• 30 grams dry rice/pasta/noodles/couscous• 30 grams flour• 35 grams crispbread.

How to calculate the amount needed each day for the number of children in care

For 65 children

*One serve for each child at different meal times

= 65 serves x 30 grams rice/pasta/noodles/couscous

= 1 950 grams rice/pasta/noodles/couscous, divide by 1 000 to get amount in kg

= 1.95 kg of rice/pasta/noodles/couscous needed to offer *one serve for each child

*Remember you need to offer two serves each day.

Two serves of the same food for each child at once

= 65 serves x 60 grams for two serves of rice/pasta/noodles/couscous

= 3 900 grams rice/pasta/noodles/couscous, divide by 1 000 to get amount in kg

= 3.9 kg of rice/pasta/noodles/couscous needed each day for 65 children

Remember that you don't have to provide two serves of grain (cereal) foods at once; you may find it easier to split it across the day, especially if you are offering other food groups at the same time. For example offer one serve of rice at lunch with chicken and vegetable stir fry, and one serve of crispbread at afternoon tea with cheese and fruit. You could also offer one serve at lunch and ½ serve each at morning and afternoon tea.

Where can I go for more help and support?

If you have any questions, please contact the dietitians at Public Health Services, Department of Health and Human Services Tasmania community.nutrition@dhhs.tas.gov.au or for queries about the Move Well Eat Well - Early Childhood Award Program requirements contact movewelleatwellEC@dhhs.tas.gov.au

References

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