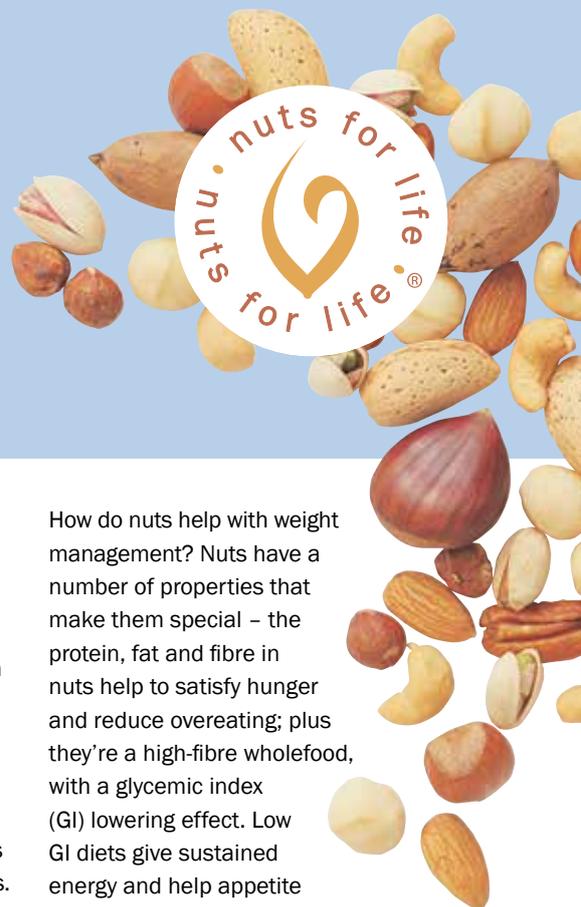


# Nuts and children

Good nutrition is important for everyone, but particularly for children who have extra nutritional needs for growth and development. Ensuring that your child eats a well balanced diet which provides all of the essential nutrients they need can help them develop healthy habits, now and for the future.



A healthy diet for your child should include foods from each of the main food groups:

- Breads and cereals, particularly wholegrain varieties.
- Vegetables, mushrooms and fruit.
- Lean meat, poultry, fish, seafood, eggs, tofu, legumes, nuts and seeds.
- Dairy products such as milk, yoghurt and cheese or calcium-fortified alternatives such as legume, seed, grain or nut milks.
- Healthy fats such as avocado, dressings, cooking oils and margarine spreads.

Variety is the key to optimising nutrition. Introduce your child to new foods regularly and if they don't like them the first time around, try them more than once. Kids need to try foods several times before their real preferences emerge and increased exposure to specific foods can also increase their likeness for it.<sup>1-4</sup>

## Including nuts in your child's diet

A handful of nuts each day is a valuable inclusion in your child's diet. Nuts are a particularly nutritious food – rich in healthy fats, high in dietary fibre, a source of protein and a wide variety of important vitamins, minerals and antioxidants.<sup>5</sup>

Nuts make a convenient, healthy and filling snack, particularly teamed with dried fruits, and are a good replacement for less nutritious snack foods such as chips, biscuits and lollies.

## Heading off weight problems

Childhood obesity is a major concern in Australia today. Nuts can play an important role in filling kids up with nutritious food, without expanding their waistlines. Research has shown that Australian adolescents that regularly eat nuts have a healthier BMI – a measure of overweight,<sup>6</sup> and other studies have shown child and adult nut eaters have healthier body weights.<sup>7</sup>

How do nuts help with weight management? Nuts have a number of properties that make them special – the protein, fat and fibre in nuts help to satisfy hunger and reduce overeating; plus they're a high-fibre wholefood, with a glycemic index (GI) lowering effect. Low GI diets give sustained energy and help appetite control. For more on the special weight management effects of nuts, see the *Nuts and weight management* factsheet.

## Set kids up with a healthy heart for life

Poor diets mean life-long heart problems start developing in childhood. Make sure your kids develop healthy eating habits that will benefit them for life. Nuts are packed with healthy, heart-smart monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats.<sup>5</sup> And children who eat healthy diets including nuts have a lower risk of heart disease.<sup>8</sup>

Kids over 8 years of age and adults need two serves of fruit, five of vegetables and a handful of nuts daily. So start them off the heart-healthy way: remember 2 + 5 + a handful – every day. For more on why nuts are great for heart health, see the *Nuts and heart health* factsheet.

## Tips for including nuts in your child's diet

It's easy to give your kids a handful of nuts each day – even if your child attends a school that reports being “nut free”. Nuts make excellent after-school snacks, plus use them in evening meals and desserts, and as fun foods during weekend activities. Remember to include two serves of fruit and five of vegetables, plus a handful of nuts every day. Here's a few tips to increase your child's nut intake:

- ➔ Make up small snack-size portions of mixed nuts and dried fruit for a nutritious alternative to snack foods like chips and lollies.
- ➔ Nut spreads make a great sandwich filling, combined with celery or grated carrot; or use it to fill celery sticks for a quick snack.
- ➔ Add walnuts or pecans to homemade cakes and muffins.
- ➔ Banana splits are a dessert that most kids enjoy – slice a banana down the middle, top with a scoop of vanilla ice-cream and sprinkle with chopped pistachio nuts.
- ➔ Combine home made popcorn with freshly roasted cashews and almonds for a healthy afternoon snack.
- ➔ Use chestnut meal to make gluten-free pancakes.
- ➔ Layer berries, yoghurt and crushed hazelnuts in a parfait glass for a healthy afternoon snack or dessert.
- ➔ Mix crushed macadamia or Brazil nuts with fresh breadcrumbs to make home made fish or chicken nuggets.

For further information on nuts and health refer to [www.nutsforlife.com.au](http://www.nutsforlife.com.au) follow us @nutsforlife or like us [www.facebook.com/nuts4life](https://www.facebook.com/nuts4life)

Nuts for Life has been funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited with co-investment from members of the Australian Tree Nut Industry and funds from the Australian Government.

©2016 Horticulture Innovation Australia Ltd and Nuts for Life

Go Nuts for Life.  
Go Nuts for Health.



# Nuts and children



## Introducing nuts to your young child

There are a few things to keep in mind when introducing nuts into your child's diet:

- It is often recommended that the introduction of nuts be delayed until 12 months of age to reduce the risk of allergies, but there is currently little evidence to suggest that this helps.<sup>9</sup>
- The 2013 Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend introducing nut butters and pastes from 6 months of age.<sup>10</sup>
- There is some evidence that delaying introduction of foods may actually increase (rather than decrease) allergy,

however at this stage this is not proven and further research is needed.<sup>9</sup>

- Whole nuts should not be given to children until after five years of age due to the risk of choking. Smooth nut pastes or ground nuts added to other foods are a great way to make sure even young children can benefit from a small handful of nuts each day.
- When giving children whole nuts (or any other food which could be a choking risk) ensure that they are sitting down to eat and supervise them closely. Encourage them to eat small amounts at a time and to chew their food well.

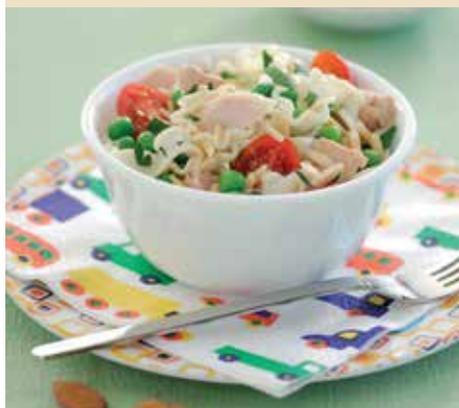
## Pasta with tuna, almonds and peas (SERVES 4)

350g gluten free or regular pasta  
1 cup frozen peas  
190g can tuna in springwater, drained  
125g or about 8 cherry tomatoes, halved  
1/3 cup toasted slivered almonds  
1/4 cup chopped flat leaf parsley  
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil  
1 medium carrot and 1 red and 1 green capsicum cut into sticks to serve

Cook pasta in a large saucepan of boiling water for 12 minutes or until al dente. Drain, reserving 2 tablespoons cooking liquid, then set aside and keep warm. Simmer the peas until cooked through. Drain. To serve, toss the pasta with the peas, tuna, cherry tomatoes, almonds, parsley and oil and serve immediately with vegetable sticks.

### Nutrient content per serve

Energy 2130kJ (507kcal), Protein 26g, Total fat 13g, Saturated fat 2g (15% of total fat), Monounsaturated fat 7g, Polyunsaturated fat 2g, Carbohydrates 67g, Fibre 9g, Sodium 60mg



## Nut allergies in children

A 2015 research paper reviewing 36 studies has found challenge-confirmed IgE-mediated tree nut allergy prevalence is less than 2% (range 0.05–4.9%)<sup>11</sup> which is similar to peanut allergy.<sup>12</sup> Rates for tree nut allergies however were not measured. Around 20% of children will outgrow their nut allergy but for many this will persist into adulthood.<sup>12</sup>

For more information on nut allergies, including information on symptoms, diagnosis and helpful tips on avoiding nuts see the *Nuts and Allergy* factsheet.

## Should nuts be banned from schools?

Many schools claim to be “nut free” however a Nuts for Life commissioned Newpoll survey in 2012 found that 1 in 3 parents/guardians of school aged children (attending schools with nut free policies) reported either accidentally or intentionally sending their children to school with nuts and nut containing products. No school can guarantee to be nut free and it is unsafe to do so. It may create a false sense of security and as a result student vigilance for checking foods and labels is reduced. Allergy awareness policies are needed in schools where allergic students attend. State Government school allergy policies in general do not recommend nut bans in schools.

## References

1. Mennella JA, et al. Variety is the spice of life: Strategies for promoting fruit and vegetable acceptance in infants. *Physiology and Behavior* 2008; 94:29–38
2. Wardle J, et al. Increasing children's acceptance of vegetables; a randomized trial of parent-led exposure. *Appetite*. 2003; 40(2):155–62.
3. Wardle J, et al. Modifying children's food preferences: the effects of exposure and reward on acceptance of an unfamiliar vegetable. *Eur J Clin Nutr*. 2003; 57(2):341–8.
4. Cooke L. The importance of exposure for healthy eating in childhood: a review. *J Hum Nutr Diet*. 2007; 20(4):294–301.
5. Nuts for Life. 2016 Nutrient composition of tree nuts. Available from [www.nutsforlife.com.au](http://www.nutsforlife.com.au)
6. Grant R, et al. The relative impact of a vegetable-rich diet on key markers of health in a cohort of Australian adolescents. *Asia Pac J Clin Nutr*. 2008; 17(1):107–15.
7. Nuts for Life 2012 Nut report: Nuts and the Big Fat Myth role of nuts in weight management. Nuts for Life 2012 [www.nutsforlife.com.au](http://www.nutsforlife.com.au)
8. Mikkilä V, et al. Major dietary patterns and cardiovascular risk factors from childhood to adulthood. The Cardiovascular Risk in Young Finns Study. *Br J Nutr*. 2007; 98(1):218–25.
9. The Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA). ASCIA Infant Feeding Advice <http://www.allergy.org.au/health-professionals/papers/ascia-infant-feeding-advice>
10. National Health and Medical Research Council (2013) Australian Dietary Guidelines. Canberra: National Health and Medical Research Council [www.eatforhealth.gov.au](http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au).
11. McWilliam V et al. The Prevalence of Tree Nut Allergy: A Systematic Review. *Curr Allergy Asthma Rep*. 2015;15(9):54.
12. The Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA). Fact Sheet on Nut Allergy. Fact sheet on nut allergy. Available at: <http://www.allergy.org.au/health-professionals/hp-information/asthma-and-allergy/food-allergy-and-anaphylaxis-update-2013>