



# What do Generation 1 kids eat?

**When the Generation 1 children were aged 9-10 years we gave them a list of foods and asked them to tell us how frequently they ate each one. This information was examined to tell us how much of their daily energy was from core foods (such as cereal or fruit and vegetables) or discretionary foods (sometimes called “junk” food). We also looked at how many serves of each core food group were eaten, relative to the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating.**

We found that, at this age, almost half of children’s daily energy came from discretionary foods - that are high in fat, salt and/or sugar, so not very healthy!

Other key findings included:

- boys and girls consumed, on average, 155-160 grams of sugar per day (often embedded in food such as cereal or baked beans or in fruit juice);
- 91% of children had fewer than the recommended daily servings of vegetables;
- 99.8% of children had fewer than the recommended daily servings of meat or alternative sources of protein (such as eggs, nuts, beans, chickpeas or lentils);
- 83% of boys and 78% of girls consumed more than the recommended daily intake of salt (which is in most processed foods, not just crisps);
- dairy intake was inadequate in 83% of girls.

The eating patterns of children are important as we know that an unhealthy diet contributes to obesity and also paves the way for other health problems in later life, such as poor cardiovascular health.



Based on the results of our study, there is much to be done to encourage children aged 9-10 years and their families to make healthier food choices. For example, perhaps they could substitute at least one discretionary food item with a healthier food in their school lunchbox each day.

This study wasn't about blaming parents and families for poor eating habits. As a community we need to help parents more. We need to look at what's being advertised to children and how we can encourage children to try different foods. Providing healthy alternatives in lunchboxes (as above) and more vegetables at the dinner table would be a good start.

If you'd like to know more about healthy eating the Australian guidelines can be found here:

<https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines>

This study was conducted in collaboration with the University of Newcastle. It was published in 2016 in an academic journal called the Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics.