

# Nutrition guidelines for 5-10 years old children in Sri Lanka

Nutrition Society of Sri Lanka  
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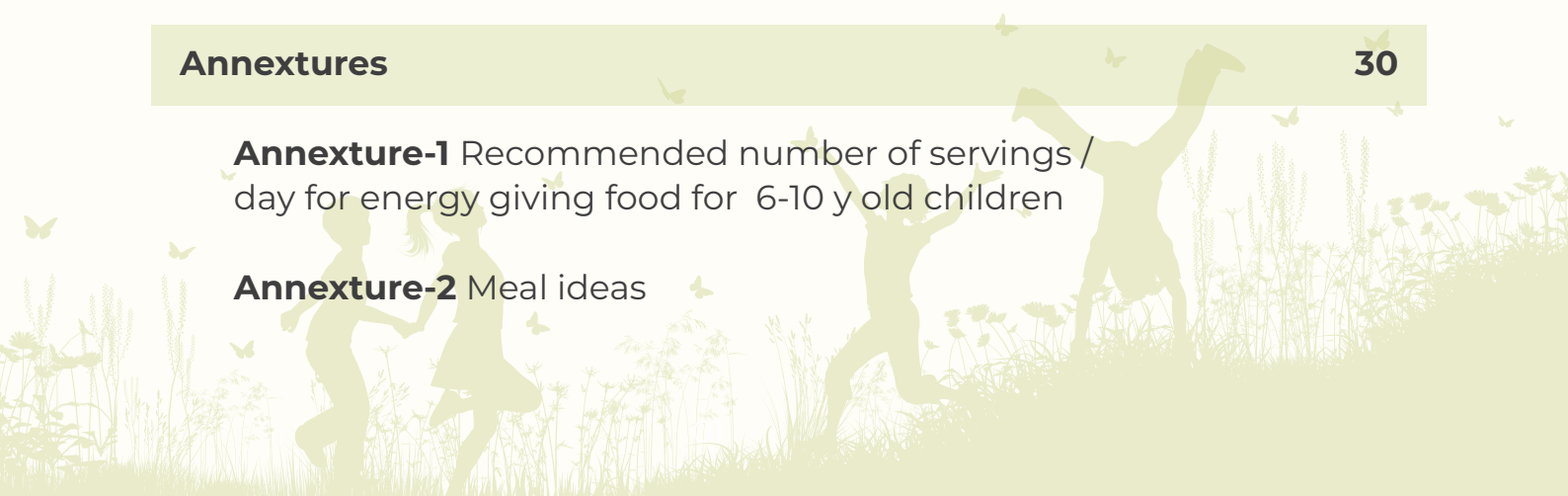
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# SECTION 1

## 1.1 Introduction

- Childhood is a critical period for development as well as laying foundation for good health at later adulthood. The middle childhood is comprised of children aged 5-10 years. This age group is characterized by continuous steady physical growth and cognitive, emotional, and social developments which are crucial during this period.
- Preparation for the physical and emotional demands of the adolescent growth spurt is to be fulfilled during this time. Eating habits, lifestyle and behavior patterns which are established during this period may persist throughout adulthood influencing nutritional status, health and wellbeing through the lifecycle. Therefore, children benefit greatly from practicing positive nutrition behaviors which lead to optimal growth, and development, and prevention of immediate health problems such as iron-deficiency anemia, vitamin A deficiency, undernutrition (stunting, wasting and underweight) obesity, eating disorders, and dental caries.
- Available data on nutritional status of Sri Lankan children aged 5-9 years indicated that the prevalence of stunting, thinness, overweight and obesity were 7.8, 25.8, 4.1 and 2.6 % respectively (Jayatissa et al., 2023). Micronutrient deficiencies had become critical than energy deficiencies. The prevalence of iron deficiency, iron deficiency anemia, vitamin D deficiency, vitamin B12 deficiency and zinc deficiency were 7.6, 0.6, 23.9, 1.7 and 17%, respectively among children aged 5-9 year (Jayatissa et al., 2023).
- Furthermore, majority of children showed unhealthy food habits such as low consumption of fruit and vegetables and high consumption of fast food and carbonated beverages (Jayatissa, et al., 2017). healthy dietary patterns established during this age lay the foundation for lifelong good health reducing the risk of non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes mellitus, hypertension, some forms of cancer, and osteoporosis among others.



- A desk review was conducted on the existing nutrition guidelines for middle childhood. Information was sourced from the Food Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDGs) repository of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). It was found that 21 out of 86 countries have addressed middle childhood nutrition through respective FBDGs in their countries (Bandara et al., 2022, 2023).
- Manual on school nutrition program (Ministry of Education, 2017) and Food-based dietary guidelines (Ministry of Health, 2021) addressed nutrition/dietary guidelines for children and adolescents of Sri Lanka together considering them as one group.

## **1.2 Purpose of CNG for 5-10 years old children in Sri Lanka**

- Nutrition Society of Sri Lanka (NSSL) as the learned society for nutrition in the country promote the science of nutrition and its application to improve the health of populations.
- The purpose of formulation of these guidelines is to help stakeholders and relevant institutions who provide nutrition for 5-10 years old children.

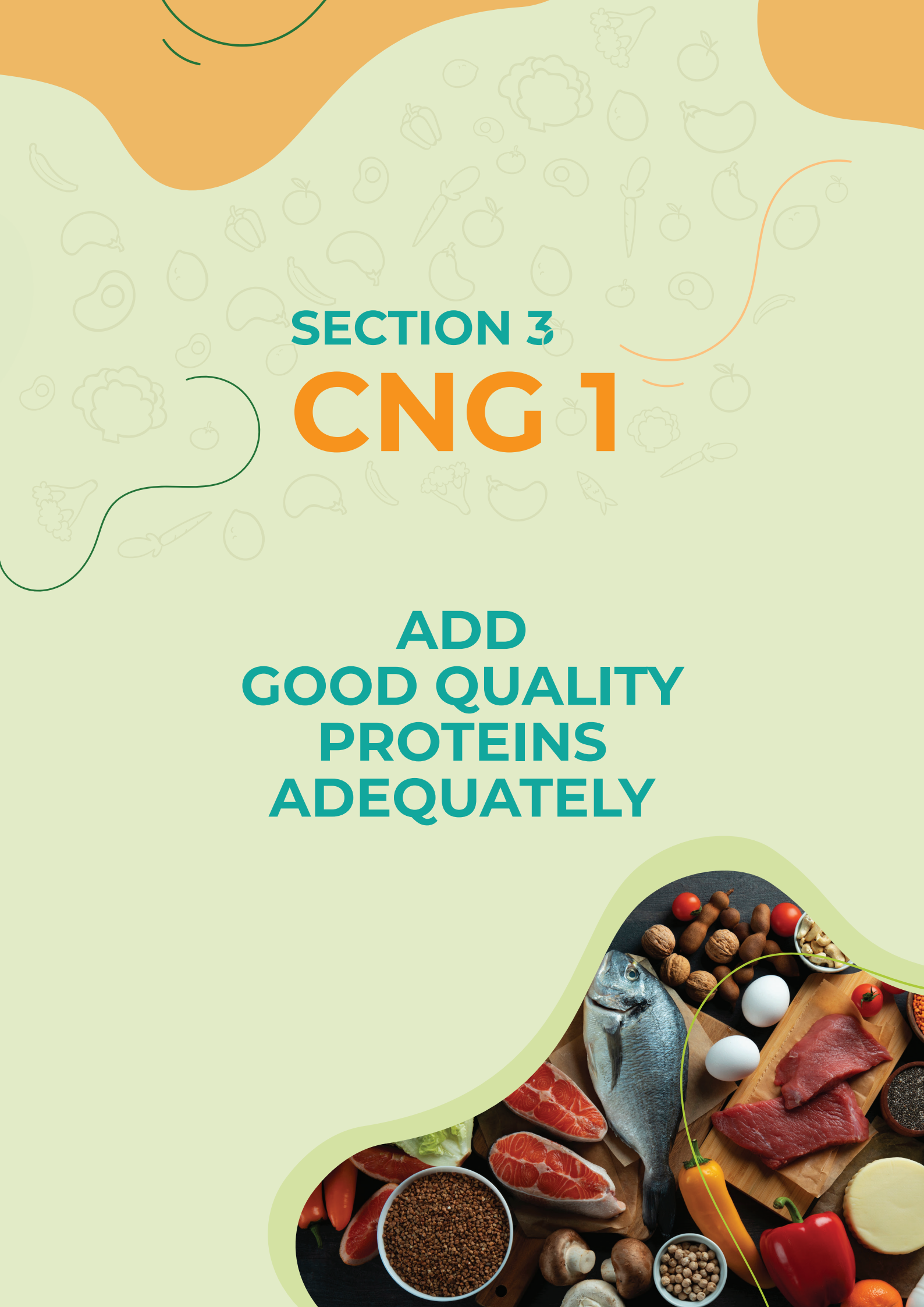


## SECTION 2

### Guiding principles

- The child nutrition guidelines (CNG) for children of 5-10 years old in Sri Lanka are in coherent with Food Based Dietary Guidelines for Sri Lankans (FBGDSL).
- To achieve optimal growth and development, 5-10 year aged children need a variety of healthy foods that provide sufficient energy, protein, carbohydrates, fat, vitamins, and minerals and their needs are to be met through three meals per day, plus healthy snacks. The energy requirement of this age group should be fulfilled by 45-60, 10-15 and 20-35% from carbohydrates, proteins, and fats, respectively.
- Each meal should provide with good quality protein adequately, in addition to pulses,
- A variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, healthy fat, are to be provided adequately at each meal.
- Provision of homemade healthy, nutrient- dense, culturally, and socially acceptable, creative snacks and desserts appropriately.
- Ensure safe food handling practices during preparing, storage and handling.
- Encourage children to drink more water during day (school) time.
- Emphasize minimally processed food to limit consumption of added sugar, salt, unhealthy fat through ready to serve processed and fast food.
- Promote eating a variety of food with a colorful plate which includes underutilized, seasonal food, those are available in the localities.
- Engage children in daily physical activities to meet their exercise need as well as to develop lifelong habit.
- Ensure receiving minimum sun exposure time.
- Encourage pleasant eating environment and lifelong positive food behaviour.
- Ensure good quality continuous sleep during night-time.

**ADD  
GOOD QUALITY  
PROTEINS  
ADEQUATELY**





## CNG 1

### Add good quality proteins adequately

- Proteins are needed for growth, maintenance of and repair of muscles and body tissues in children. Proteins requirements can be fulfilled through both animal and plant food sources. During sickness protein requirement is higher. Lean meat, chicken, eggs, sea foods, and fresh fish are good sources of animal protein which provide all essential amino acids. Furthermore, these foods provide iron, in a well absorbed form, as well as vitamin B12 and zinc which help to prevent anaemia.
- The iron in plant foods is not well absorbed compared to iron in meats. Eating fruit and vegetables which contain vitamin C, with plant sources of protein helps the iron to be absorbed. Animal foods are the only sources of vitamin B12..
- Liquid milk and dairy products are good source quality proteins. In addition, to fulfill calcium and vitamin D requirements milk and dairy products should be included daily.
- About 1/6 of the food plate should be from foods of protein sources in which 2/3 is composed of plant sources whereas 1/3 from animal sources.
- Small fish add good quality proteins, calcium as well as essential fatty acids needed for growth and development.



#### Sources of proteins

Animal protein sources: Meat, chicken, fresh fish, eggs, milk and dairy products,

Plant protein sources: Lentils/dhal, dried beans/cowpea, mung beans, chickpeas , soy meat/chunks, tofu and nuts



## Recommendations


Number of servings / days for food groups recommended for 6-10 y old children (1400-1900 kcal) (Source: FBDG, Sri Lanka, 2021)

Food	Servings per day	Serving size (one serving)
Fish, Chicken, Lean meat	2-3	30 g
Egg	1	1 egg
Liquid milk and fermented dairy products (curd, yoghurt)	1 - 1.5	1 cup (200 ml) Curd ½ cup (100g) Yoghurt 1 cup (100g) Cheese (15 g)
Pulses	2-3	½ cup boiled pulses (75g) 3 table spoons cooked dhal cowpea   chick pea   green gram as a curry
Nuts and oil seeds (pea nuts, cashew, gingerly)	1	Peanuts 1 tablespoon (15g) Cashew 7-8 nuts Gingerly 1 tablespoon (15g)

## Tips

- Make sure to add an animal source with pluses at every meal
- Diversify pulses in meals within a day
- Add one egg daily to an active child
- During sickness of child, make sure to provide recommended number of servings of proteins
- Add a serving of small fish to any of main meals daily to give other extra nutrients such as calcium and essential fatty acids





# **SECTION 4.** **CNG 2**

**EAT A VARIETY  
OF FRUITS  
AND  
VEGETABLES**



## CNG 2

### Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables

- Fruits and vegetables are rich sources of vitamins and minerals, dietary fiber, and non-nutrient phytochemicals with antioxidant properties which help to strengthen the body's immune system to resist illnesses and prevention of non-communicable diseases. A wide array of fruits and vegetables are good for health and should be washed and eaten as part of a healthy eating plan.
- Fruits and vegetables can be eaten as part of main meals and/or snacks.
- Fruits and vegetables are high in dietary fibre, which helps proper bowel functioning to prevent constipation. Fruits and vegetables also help to prevent certain types of cancer.
- Most fresh fruits and vegetables (Ex: oranges, mangoes, guavas, spinach, tomatoes) are rich in vitamin C. Vitamin C promotes the absorption of iron and calcium as well as the healing of wounds and increases the body's resistance to infections.
- Green leafy vegetables such as spinach / Gotukola / Kathurumurunga/, and orange/yellow vegetables such as carrots and pumpkins, are good sources of vitamin A. Vitamin A is especially important for good vision, protecting the body against infections and ensuring adequate growth and development. Green leafy vegetables are also a good source of vitamin K, folate, and magnesium.
- Green leafy vegetables contain calcium which is needed for growing bones and teeth.
- Vegetables and fruits are rich with phytochemicals possessing varied bioactivities which can help protect the body from damage associated with non-communicable diseases.
- Dried fruits are valuable additions when preserved in a healthy and safe way.





## Recommendations

Number of servings/day for fruits and vegetables recommended for 6-10 y old children (1400-1900 kcal) (Source FBDG, Sri Lanka, 2021)

Food	Servings per day	Serving size (one serving)
Vegetables and Green leaves	3	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup
Fruits	2 - 3	1 medium banana / mango

## Tips

- Add green leaf preparation at every meal.
- Avoid over cooking of vegetables.
- Add rainbow colours of fruit and vegetables in meals.
- Choose fresh fruits and vegetables which are available in the season.
- Promote locally available low cost, underutilized fruits, vegetables and greens
- Promote vegetable salads (bitter gourd, snake gourd, roots of Lasia, Dambele,) daily to make sure adequate intake of vegetable servings.
- Add two cups of fresh cut vegetables and greens to one cup of cereal base (cooked rice, noodles, macaroni, pasta, chopped roti or string hoppers) along with boiled pulses (chickpeas, mung beans, cowpea, green peas, yellow peas) and animal source of proteins (meat, chicken, fish, seafood, egg) in preparation of one dish meals.
- Avoid addition of sugar or salt to cut fruits.
- Avoid fruit juices added with salt and sugar.
- Test new recipes that will give different flavours, colours, textures and tastes combinations.



**SECTION 5**

# **CNG 3**

**ENCOURAGE  
HEALTHY  
SNACKS**





## CNG 3

### Encourage healthy snacks

- Snacks are needed for children to meet their required energy and nutrient needs which cannot be fulfilled through only main meals during the day.
- Snacks should not take the place of a meal; however it should provide energy, protein, vitamins and minerals.
- Choose nutrient dense snacks.
- Taking a snack regularly makes it possible to better balance the diet, reducing the intake of unhealthy fats and optimizing the intake of essential nutrients like calcium.
- Homemade nutritious, innovative, and creative diversified snacks should be encouraged considering cultural and budgetary considerations.

#### Recommendation

Daily 2-3 snacks can be selected for children from healthy options.

Food	Servings per day	Serving size (one serving)
Cooked vegetables	1	½ cup
Raw vegetable salad	1	1 cup
Boiled pulses	1	½ cup
Roots and tubers	1	½ cup
Fresh Fruits	1	Medium size fruit



Fruit salad	1	1 cup
Dried fruits	1	4 tea spoons
Herbal porridges	1	1 cup
Liquid milk or fermented dairy products like yoghurt / curd	1	Milk 200 mL Curd 100g Yoghurt 100g
Nuts and oil seeds	1	15 g ( 1 tbsp)
Cheese	1	15 g

### Tips

- Avoid snacks immediately before and after main meals.
- Limit sugar sweetened, high fat (including deep fried) and salted options of snacks.
- Adopt the recommended serving of snack at one time/ Avoid giving multiple servings of snacks.
- Read labels before using ready to serve snacks and select snacks with green labels for sugar, salt and fat contents.
- Avoid iced pops and iced lollies with added sugar, artificial colours and flavours as snacks.
- Add homemade cereal based nutritious recipe modified snacks such as Kurakkan roti added with cut veges, egg hopper added with cut veges, low sugar Halepe added gingerly seeds/pea nuts, and Modagam.



The top half of the page features a light blue background with various food icons in a darker blue outline style, including fruits like apples and lemons, vegetables like carrots and bell peppers, and other items like eggs and fish. Large, abstract, wavy shapes in orange and teal are positioned at the top corners. A thin orange line curves across the right side of the food icons.

## SECTION 6

# CNG 4

**HYDRATE  
OFTEN**

The bottom half of the page features a light blue background with a large, dynamic splash of water at the bottom, showing bubbles and ripples. A large, abstract, wavy shape in teal and light blue is positioned behind the water splash.



## CNG 4

### Hydrate often

- Water is essential for life. The quality of water is important for maintaining proper nutrition and health. Contaminated food and water are the main causes of diarrhoea and other food and water borne diseases.
- Children need to drink safe boiled and/or filtered water to stay hydrated and replace water lost through normal body functions. More water is needed in hot weather or after sports | physical activities.
- Soft drinks, sugar added malted drinks and fruit flavored drinks are not recommended as they contain high amounts of added sugar, salt and preservatives. The acidic nature of drinks increases tooth decay of children.
- Children should not consume alcohol as it influences the brain development and health of children.
- Beverages such as coffee and cola, containing caffeine are not good for children. Children are more sensitive to caffeine and high levels of caffeine can cause stomach upset, difficult concentrating and headaches.

#### Recommendation

Drink 8-10 glasses (1.5 to 2.0 L) of water daily.



## Tips

- Water is the best drink for children and other drinks cannot substitute health benefits of water.
- Drink at least 3/4 glass of water every hour starting from 7 am in the morning to 7 pm.
- Make sure to add several hydration-breaks to school timetable to facilitate drinking water and use the toilet during school time.
- Limit drinking water after 7 pm in the evening to facilitate uninterrupted sleep.
- Drink more water in hot weather and after extra physical activities.
- Avoid fizzy drinks labeled as zero calories or added with artificial sweeteners.
- Avoid coffee, cola and other drinks with added caffeine.
- Add daily natural drinks like king coconut and tender coconut water.
- Avoid malted sugary dinks as a choice for hydration.
- Provide child with a water bottle to carry with him/her when leaving the house.

# SECTION 7 CNG 5

**BE ACTIVE  
DAILY**







## CNG 5

### Be active daily

- Physical activities are vital to promote growth and development of children and to maintain good health at later adulthood. Sedentary life with more screen time leads to poor control of body weight and lack of overall fitness.
- Engagement in physical activities in the form of organized sports improves the total wellbeing, of children while imparting psychological, and social, benefits.
- It helps accretion of bone mass and reduce risk of osteoporosis at later in life.

#### Recommendation

Children need to engage in an average of 60 minutes per day of moderate- to vigorous-intensity, mostly aerobic, physical activity to maintain a healthy body weight and to attain other health benefits.

Vigorous-intensity aerobic activities, such as running, jumping and skipping rope need to be done at least 3 days a week in addition to activities that build strong bones, stimulate the cardiovascular system, strengthen muscles, improve agility and maintain flexibility of body.





## Tips

- Control a sedentary lifestyle, preventing children from dedicating many hours to computer games or television.
- Encourage children to be active being a role model as climbing the stairs rather than taking elevator.
- Engage children in outdoor activities; cycling, playground, gardening, ball games, walk the dog.
- Enroll child in age-appropriate sporting activities such as swimming, netball, football, badminton, tennis, and gymnastics, conducted by the school.
- At school, engage children in out-door physical activities for at least 15 mins after the interval of morning break to ensure sun exposure.
- At school engage children routinely in indoor stretching activities with music at least for 5 minutes at the end of every subject period for relaxation.
- At home engage child in the family sports | physical activity sessions and games.



**SECTION 8**

# **CNG 6**

**GET QUALITY  
SLEEP AT  
NIGHT-TIME**





## CNG 6

### Get quality sleep at night-time

- Sleep is essential to children for a healthy physical and mental development. Good quality sleep helps to improve attention, memory, learning capacity, emotional regulation mental and physical health of children.

#### Recommendation

Children of 5-12 years old need continuous 9 to 11 hours nighttime sleep per 24 hours on a regular basis to promote optimal health. During daytime only short naps to be allowed to avoid fatigue.

#### Tips

- Maintain a calm, consistent bedtime routine and wake up time daily including weekends.
- Avoid any TV or other electronic devices or bright lights in the sleeping area.
- Promote independent sleep of child.
- Avoid drinking tea, coffee or caffeine containing beverages before sleep.





# SECTION 9

# CNG 7

## PROMOTE SAFE FOODS AND HEALTHY FOOD BEHAVIOUR





## CNG 7

### Promote safe foods and healthy food behaviour

- Foods should not make any harm to children when food is prepared and/or eaten as intended. To avoid food poisoning clean, separate, cook, keep food at safe temperatures and use safe water and raw food.
- Children should be encouraged to follow to select and make a healthy dietary pattern to achieve optimum growth and development and health.

#### Tips to promote safe foods

Wash hands with soap before handling food and often during food preparation.

Wash and sanitize all surfaces and equipment used for food preparation including the kitchen benches before, during and after food preparation.

Keep food covered all the time.

Protect kitchen areas and food from insects, pests, and other animals.

Prevent cross-contamination of raw and cooked food.

Use separate equipment and utensils such as knives and cutting boards for handling raw foods and ready to eat foods such as breads.

Store food in covered containers to avoid contact between raw and prepared foods.

Cook food thoroughly, especially meat, poultry, eggs and seafood.







Keep food at appropriate safe temperatures.

Use safe water and raw materials for food preparations.

Maintain personal hygiene in the kitchen.

### Tips to promote healthy food behaviour

- Cook and eat together as a family as often as possible.
- Involve child for menu planning and table setting.
- Ensure the mealtime atmosphere is pleasant and encourage conversations.
- Minimize distractions such as screens, and games during mealtime.
- Do not use food as a means of reward or as a punishment.
- Limit added sugar, salt and saturated fats in foods.
- Include a variety of whole grains/whole grain flour as part of family meals.
- Limit processed and ultra processed food.
- Engage children for food purchasing, cleaning, storage, and preparation.
- Make sure to know about child food allergies especially during sharing.





## SECTION 10

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## Annexture 1

**Recommended number of servings/day for energy giving food for 6-10 y old children** (1400-1900 kcal) (Source FBDG, Sri Lanka, 2021)

Food	Servings per day	Serving size (one serving)
Cereals (wholegrains are encouraged) and starchy food	6 - 8	Cooked rice ½ cup (65g) Rice flour string hoppers 2 medium (20g) Bread 1 slice (30g) 1 Hopper (25g) 1 medium boiled potato (100g) 1 Dosai (25g) Boiled sweet potato   manioc   yams   jackfruit   bread fruit ½ cup
Fish, chicken, lean meat	2 - 3	30g
Egg	1	1 egg
Liquid milk and fermented dairy products (curd, yoghurt)	1 - 1.5	1 cup (200 ml) Curd ½ cup (100g) Yoghurt 1 cup (100g) Cheese (15 g)
Pulses	2 - 3	½ cup boiled pulses (75g) 3 table spoons cooked dhal / cowpea / chick pea / green gram as a curry
Nuts and oil seeds (pea nuts, cashew, gingerly)	2 - 3	Peanuts 1 tablespoon (15g) Cashew 7-8 nuts Gingerly 1 tablespoon (15g)

## Annixture 2

### Main meal Ideas

#### Tempered chickpea mix

- 1 cup of boiled chickpea
- 1 tbsp of beans
- 1 tbsp of leeks
- 1 tbsp of carrots
- 1 fried Egg

(Use ½ tsp of coconut oil/ butter)



#### Rice and curry

- 1 cup of unpolished Rice
- 1 spinach omelet ( egg mix with 1 tbsp of spinach)
- ½ cup of vegetable curry (carrot, beans, pumpkin, beetroot, long beans etc.)
- ¼ cup of gram dhal curry

(Use ½ tsp oil, 2 tbsps coconut milk)



#### Vegetarian Rice and curry

- 1 cup of Rice
- ½ cup of vegetable curry (carrot, beans, pumpkin, beetroot, long beans etc.)
- 1-2 tbsp green salad
- 2 tbsps of tempered soy meat
- 2 tbsps of gram dhal curry

(Use ½ tsp oil, 2 tbsps coconut milk)





## Yellow rice

- 1 cup of Yellow Rice and Dhal (cooked with 15g of dhal and 35g of raw rice)
- 1 Kathurumurunga Omelet - Mixed with 1 tbsp of green leaves (Drumstick leaves/ Kathurumurunga/ Spinach/ Gotukola...etc)
- Cucumber and carrot salad - Mixed with  $\frac{1}{2}$  of yoghurt and 10 g of gingerly seeds

(Use  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp of coconut oil/ butter)



## Mixed Rice/ Noodles/ Pasta

- 1 cup of Samba rice/ boiled noodles/ pasta with;
  - 1 tbsp of carrot/ beetroot
  - 1 tbsp of leeks/ onion leaves
  - 1 tbsp of Kathurumurunga leaves/ Spinach/ Gotukola
  - 10 g of gingerly seeds/ peanuts/ cashew, green peas)
- 2 tbsp of dhal curry
- 1 fried egg/ 1 piece of chicken/ fish

(Use  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp of coconut oil/ butter)





## Jackfruit Kottu

- 1 cup of Fried Jackfruit
- 1 tbsp of carrot
- 1 tbsp of leeks
- 1 tbsp of tomato
- 1 tbsp of drumstick leaves
- 1 egg / 30g of chicken

(Use 1 tsp of coconut oil/ butter)



## Poshana Roti

- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of Rice flour/ Millet flour (kurakkan etc)/ Ata flour (unrefined) or Any other multigrain flour + mix with 1 egg
- 1 tbsp of coconut scrapes
- 1 tbsp of carrots
- 1 tbsp of leeks or onion leaves
- 1 tbsp of drumstick leaves

(Use 1 tsp of coconut oil/ butter)







## Healthy snack Ideas

### Jack seeds and ash plant cutlet

- 2-3 Jack seeds
- ½ Ash plant
- 1 tsp Grated carrot
- 1 tsp Onion
- 10 g of fish



### Pancake wrap

- 2 tbsp of Rice flour + 2 tbsps of wheat flour
- 1 Egg/ 30g Chicken
- ½ tbsp of grated carrots
- ½ tbsp of grated beets
- ½ tbsp of Spinach leaves
- 1 tbsp of Coconut Oil
- 5 mL Coconut milk/ fresh milk



### Banana pancake

- 2 tbsp of Rice flour + 2 tbsps of wheat flour
- ¼ egg
- ½ Banana
- 1 tbsp Coconut Oil
- 5 mL Coconut milk/ fresh milk
- ½ tbsp Peanut paste





## Mixed Fruit Smoothie

- 50g of Mango
- 100g of Papaw
- ½ of Banana
- 100 mL of Milk
- ½ tsp of vanilla



## Vegetable Salad

- ¼ cucumber
- 1 tomato
- ¼ avocado
- ¼ red onion
- 1 tsp of gingerly seeds
- ¼ lime, to taste salt and pepper



## Triple layer sandwich

- 2 slices bread
- ¼ ripe avocado mashed
- 1 tbsp cooked carrot mashed
- 1 tbsp cooked beetroot mashed
- Salt and pepper to taste



**\*Tbsp – Table spoon**

**\*Tsp – Tea spoon**

- Each main meal contains approximately 450kcal of energy and approximately 10-15g of proteins.
- Each snack contains approximately 120kcal of energy and approximately 2-3g proteins.
- It is better to consume whole grain rice instead of refined rice