

Helping Children Adopt Healthy Eating Habits

by Amanda Clark

As childcare centre owners and operators, every day you are helping children eat foods supplied by parents and perhaps also providing snacks and lunches for children in your care.

To teach children healthy eating habits, it is important for parents and childcare providers to understand realistic portion sizes.

To guide carers and parents towards serving the right foods in the right amounts, Advanced Accredited Practising Dietitian, Amanda Clark has written a book called *Portion Perfection*.

"Evidence shows the larger the serving size, the more we eat, and the larger the plate, bowl or package, the more we eat," said Mrs Clark. "The same is true for children's lunch boxes – the more food we put in them, the more will usually be eaten."

While *Portion Perfection* is designed for all weight-conscious Australians over the age of five, Amanda recommends encouraging younger children to eat more low energy-dense foods like fruits, vegetables and breads, as well as foods with medium energy density like meats, milk, yoghurt, eggs and legumes.

"We need to know the correct serving sizes for children so we can make more informed decisions for their wellbeing. When working out how much food is right for your child, it is important to be aware that calorie needs vary greatly for children so it is wise to seek help from an Accredited Practising Dietitian," said Mrs Clark. (Find a dietitian near you at www.daa.asn.au)

Snack foods for children can be categorised into 'everyday' and 'occasional' choices, based on their nutritional value, glycemic index (GI), and levels of sugar and saturated fat.

The ideal lunch for children under the age of five would be the toddler equivalent of a wholegrain protein and salad sandwich, according to Mrs Clark. "That might be a meat or cheese sandwich which is easy for little hands with some finger-food salad, such as mushrooms, cherry tomatoes and celery.

"I'd recommend keeping the occasional food choices for at home or on outings. During childcare is the ideal time for healthy everyday snack choices so children can role model a range of healthy options. This is great for peer support." ■



Amanda Clark is available for presentations at childcare services and for consultations with parents and can be contacted at Great Ideas in Nutrition by phoning (07) 55 366 400 or emailing info@greatideas.net.au For more information, the *Portion Perfection* book and products are available at www.greatideas.net.au



Unlock the secret to guilt free eating...

Portion Perfection – a visual weight control plan by Advanced Accredited Practising Dietitian (AdvAPD), Amanda Clark opens the door to weight control.

When you know how much is right to eat, you can feel less guilty about eating higher calorie foods occasionally. You can also eat out regularly and still lose weight

Portion Perfection is your visual key to:

- Feeling invigorated
- Managing weight
- Banishing guilt

As seen on Brisbane Extra, Mornings with Kerri-Anne and Sunrise

www.portionperfection.com.au