

# About FOODcents

## Philosophy

### The importance of eating a healthy diet

Eating and enjoying a wide variety of nutritious foods are important during childhood when growth and maturation are occurring, and future eating habits are being established. It is important that healthy eating is enjoyable for children. Childhood is a time when an appreciation of the pleasures of good nutritious foods can be developed.

Poor nutrition is an important health issue in Australia. Many of Australia's major diet-related diseases including heart disease, diabetes and some cancers, are preventable. Childhood dietary habits can lead to the development of many of these diseases. It is well recognised that these habits are carried into adulthood. Encouraging and enabling children to adopt healthy eating habits will go a long way towards preventing health problems in their future.

### Children as consumers

Children are exposed to a large amount of mass media advertising, often focussing on foods that are less nutritious and are higher in fat, sugar and salt. These foods should make up a small part of a child's diet (ie. eaten only sometimes and in small amounts). They belong in the 'eat least' part of the *Healthy Eating Pyramid*.

It is important to support children to make informed decisions about their food choices by offering interesting and appropriate education methods, and by providing supportive environments (eg. healthy school canteens).

Children are not only future consumers, they can influence their whole family's food choices. Even though they may not have direct control over the food purchased at home, they can influence through 'pester power'. Children can request healthier, less expensive foods.

To make healthy food choices in today's complex food supply, children need a number of skills including:

- How to identify good nutritional value for money **within** and **between** product groups
- An understanding of the additional costs of processing, packaging and advertising goods
- How to read and interpret food labels

### The real life classroom

An out-of classroom activity in a supermarket makes learning active and like 'real life'. You will find that students will use FOODcents skills to compare specific food products they eat at home.

## Experts or tour leaders hiding out within your school community

You may find there are people within the school community who are well placed to assist you with your supermarket tour. School health nurses or health coordinators may have a special interest in helping conduct the tour. You may find you have a nutritionist in your school community who is able to assist you.

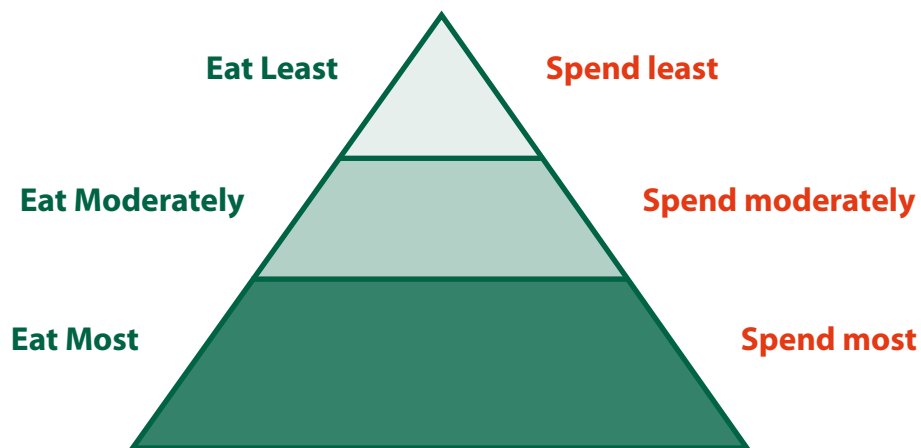
## FOODcents concepts

There are three main FOODcents concepts that you need to familiarise yourself with as they form the basis for the pre-tour activities and the supermarket tour:

- **10 Plan** guide to food purchasing using the *Healthy Eating Pyramid*
- **KILOcents Counter** - comparing foods on a cost per kilogram basis
- **Comparing labels** - cost per kilogram with sugar or fat content

## 10 Plan guide to food purchasing using the Healthy Eating Pyramid

The 10 Plan shows the value in spending food money in the same proportion as choosing foods for a healthy diet.

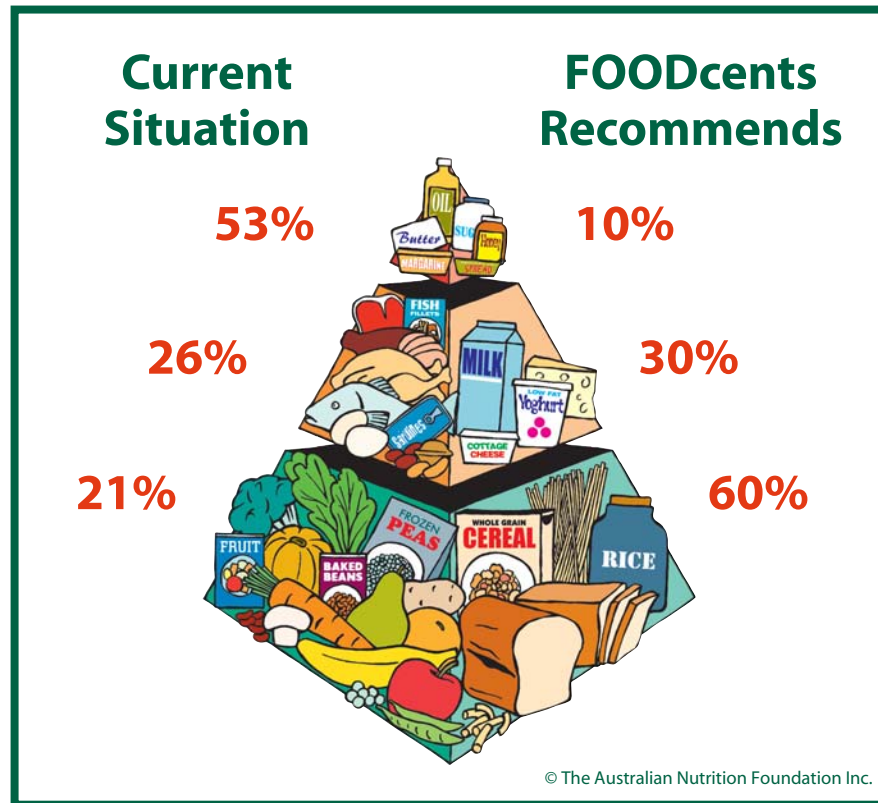


**Spend least** on 'eat least' foods. These foods do not provide many nutrients – even though you might like them, and they are often high in fat, sugar and salt. They include foods such as potato crisps, lollies, chocolates, cakes, soft drinks, cordials, coffee, oils, margarines and biscuits. 'Eat least' foods are usually over \$10 per kilogram.

**Spend moderately** on 'eat moderately' foods. These foods you need in moderate amounts for good health. They provide important essential vitamin and minerals. They include foods such as lean meat, eggs, chicken and fish, milk and dairy foods (yoghurts and cheese). 'Eat moderately' foods are usually between \$5 -10 per kilogram.

**Spend most** on 'eat most' foods. These foods you need to eat most of. They provide important vitamins, minerals, fibre and energy. They include foods such as bread and plain cereal foods (plain breakfast cereals, pasta, rice) and fruit, vegetables and legumes (like baked beans). 'Eat most' foods are usually between \$2 -4 per kilogram.

FOODcents recommends that 60% of the food budget be spent on 'eat most' foods (breads, cereal foods, fruit and vegetables) 30% on 'eat moderately' (meat and dairy) and only 10% on 'eat least' (those foods high in fat and sugar). Currently, most people do not spend according to the 10 Plan.



**Action:**

Familiarise yourself with the 10 Plan in FOODcents Curriculum Activities to confirm that foods belonging in the 'eat most' part of the *Healthy Eating Pyramid* are generally best value for money.

**KILOcents Counter - comparing foods on a cost per kilogram basis**

One of the factors we use when making our food purchasing decisions is 'value for money'. To compare value for money we need to compare like-to-like. The meat, fruit and vegetables and deli section foods in the supermarket allow us to compare foods on a cost per kilogram basis. Most other foods do not have a price per kilogram on display. In some countries around the world, a cost per kilogram or 100 grams is available on all shelf-tickets. This would be ideal to compare like-to-like. In Australia we do not have this information at our fingertips. If we took a calculator we could do the math at the supermarket.


The KILOcents Counter is a simple ready reckoner that assists us to calculate the cost per kilogram of foods. It is used extensively during the supermarket tour to identify good nutritional value for money **within** and **between** product groups.

Follow these simple instructions to familiarise yourself with the KILOcents Counter.


- Find out the price (dollars and cents) and weight (grams or millilitres) of the food you want to check
- Always round off only **one way** either up **or** down when comparing foods
- Round off the price to the nearest 50 cents
- Round off the weight to the nearest 50 grams

Use the KILOcents Counter to calculate the cost per kilogram of a **180 gram packet of dried apples that costs \$2.53**.

- Round off the price to the nearest 50 cents - **\$2.53 becomes \$2.50**
- Round off the weight to the nearest 50 grams - **180 grams becomes 200 grams**
- Run your finger down the **\$2.50** column until it hits the **200 gram** row - **the cost of the dried apples is \$12.50 per kilogram**.



Price g/mL	50¢	\$1.00	\$1.50	\$2.00	\$2.50	\$3.00
50	10.00	20.00	30.00	40.00	50.00	60.00
100	5.00	10.00	15.00	20.00	25.00	30.00
150	3.33	6.67	10.00	13.33	16.67	20.00
200	2.50	5.00	7.50	10.00	<b>12.50</b>	15.00
250	2.00	4.00	6.00	8.00	10.00	12.00
300	1.67	3.33	5.00	6.67	8.33	10.00
350	1.43	2.86	4.28	5.71	7.14	8.57
400	1.25	2.50	3.75	5.00	6.25	7.50



Comparing the cost of dried apples, **\$12.50 per kilogram**, with fresh apples in season, **\$2 per kilogram**, clearly demonstrates the effect on price of processing, packaging and advertising. Usually, the more work done by the manufacturer to process and promote the product, the greater the cost per kilogram of the food.

You can use this activity to compare value for money across food groups. For example the KILOcents Counter can be used to calculate how many grams of a particular food \$10 would buy. You could buy about 3 kilograms of seasonal fruit or bread compared to about 1/2 a kilogram of chocolate.

**Action:**

Familiarise yourself with the KILOcents Counter by calculating the cost per kilogram of the food illustrations in the FOODcents Curriculum Activities. Compare the prices of foods between and within food and *Healthy Eating Pyramid* groups.

## Comparing labels – cost per kilogram with sugar or fat content

Within a food category it is useful to compare the cost and the nutritional value. For example, breakfast cereals vary in terms of price per kilogram. They also have different amounts of fat, sugar, salt and fibre per 100 grams. This information is available on the label. Rank a variety of different types of cereals in order of cost per kilogram (from porridge oats through to highly advertised sugary breakfast cereals). Rank them according to their sugar content, fibre content and fat content. This is a good way to demonstrate the impact of processing, advertising and promotion on food costs.

