

# About the Australian Dietary Guidelines

The Australian Dietary Guidelines give advice on eating for health and wellbeing. They're called dietary guidelines because it's your usual diet that influences your health. Based on the latest scientific evidence, they describe the best approach to eating for a long and healthy life.

## What are the Australian Dietary Guidelines?

The *Australian Dietary Guidelines* have information about the types and amounts of foods, food groups and dietary patterns that aim to:

- promote health and wellbeing;
- reduce the risk of diet-related conditions, such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure and obesity; and
- reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some types of cancers.

The *Australian Dietary Guidelines* are for use by health professionals, policy makers, educators, food manufacturers, food retailers and researchers, so they can find ways to help Australians eat healthy diets.

The *Australian Dietary Guidelines* apply to all healthy Australians, as well as those with common health conditions such as being overweight. They do not apply to people who need special dietary advice for a medical condition, or to the frail elderly.

- [View the Australian Dietary Guidelines and Companion Resources here.](#)

## What is the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating?

The *Australian Guide to Healthy Eating* is a food selection guide which visually represents the proportion of the five food groups recommended for consumption each day.

## Why do we need Dietary Guidelines?

A healthy diet improves quality of life and wellbeing, and protects against chronic diseases. For infants and children, good nutrition is essential for normal growth.

Unfortunately, diet-related chronic diseases are currently a major cause of death and disability among Australians.

To ensure that Australians can make healthy food choices, we need dietary advice that is based on the best scientific evidence on food and health. The *Australian Dietary Guidelines* and the *Australian Guide to Healthy Eating* have been developed using the latest evidence and expert opinion. These guidelines will therefore help in the prevention of diet-related chronic diseases, and will improve the health and wellbeing of the Australian community.

## How do I make healthy food choices?

There are many things that affect food choices, for example, personal preferences, cultural backgrounds or philosophical choices such as vegetarian dietary patterns. NHMRC has taken this into consideration in developing practical and realistic advice. Keeping the *Australian Dietary Guidelines* in mind will help your choice of healthy foods.

There are many ways for you to have a diet that promotes health and the *Australian Dietary Guidelines* provide many options in their recommendations. The advice focuses on dietary patterns that promote health and wellbeing rather than recommending that you eat – or completely avoid – specific foods.

Many of the health problems due to poor diet in Australia stem from excessive intake of foods that are high in energy, saturated fat, added sugars and/or added salt but relatively low in nutrients. These include fried and fatty take-away foods, baked products like pastries, cakes and biscuits, savoury snacks like chips, and sugar-sweetened drinks. If these foods are consumed regularly they can increase the risk of excessive weight gain and other diet-related conditions and diseases.

Many diet-related health problems in Australia are also associated with inadequate intake of nutrient-dense foods, including vegetables, legumes/beans, fruit and wholegrain cereals. A wide variety of these nutritious foods should be consumed every day to promote health and wellbeing and help protect against chronic disease.

# Do the Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend that I only eat certain foods?

No. The *Australian Dietary Guidelines*, *Australian Guide to Healthy Eating* and consumer resources assist by helping you to choose foods for a healthy diet. They also provide advice on how many serves of these food groups you need to consume everyday depending upon your age, gender, body size and physical activity levels.

## **Evidence suggests Australians need to eat more:**

- vegetables and legumes/beans
- fruits
- wholegrain cereals
- reduced fat milk, yoghurt, cheese
- fish, seafood, poultry, eggs, legumes/beans (including soy), and nuts and seeds.
- red meat (young females only)

## **Evidence suggests Australians need to eat less:**

- starchy vegetables (i.e. there is a need to include a wider variety of different types and colours of vegetables)
- refined cereals
- high and medium fat dairy foods
- red meats (adult males only)
- food and drinks high in saturated fat, added sugar, added salt, or alcohol (e.g. fried foods, most take-away foods from quick service restaurants, cakes and biscuits, chocolate and confectionery, sweetened drinks).

# How have the Australian Dietary Guidelines changed since the last edition?

Key messages in the Guidelines are similar to the 2003 version, but the revised *Australian Dietary Guidelines* have been updated with recent scientific evidence about health outcomes. To make the information easier to understand and use, the revised Guidelines are based on foods and food groups, rather than nutrients as in the 2003 edition.

The evidence base has strengthened for:

- The association between the consumption of sugar sweetened drinks and the risk of excessive weight gain in both children and adults
- The health benefits of breastfeeding
- The association between the consumption of milk and decreased risk of heart disease and some cancers
- The association between the consumption of fruit and decreased risk of heart disease
- The association between the consumption of non-starchy vegetables and decreased risk of some cancers
- The association between the consumption of wholegrain cereals and decreased risk of heart disease and excessive weight gain.

# Australian Dietary Guidelines 1 - 5

There are five principal recommendations featured in the Australian Dietary Guidelines. Each Guideline is considered to be equally important in terms of public health outcomes.

## Guideline 1

To achieve and maintain a healthy weight, be physically active and choose amounts of nutritious food and drinks to meet your energy needs

- Children and adolescents should eat sufficient nutritious foods to grow and develop normally. They should be physically active every day and their growth should be checked regularly.
- Older people should eat nutritious foods and keep physically active to help maintain muscle strength and a healthy weight.

## Guideline 2

Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods from these five groups every day:

- Plenty of vegetables, including different types and colours, and legumes/beans
- Fruit
- Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain and/or high cereal fibre varieties, such as breads, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles, polenta, couscous, oats, quinoa and barley
- Lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds, and legumes/beans
- Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or their alternatives, mostly reduced fat (reduced fat milks are not suitable for children under the age of 2 years)

And drink plenty of water.

## Guideline 3

Limit intake of foods containing saturated fat, added salt, added sugars and alcohol

a. Limit intake of foods high in saturated fat such as many biscuits, cakes, pastries, pies, processed meats, commercial burgers, pizza, fried foods, potato chips, crisps and other savoury snacks.

- Replace high fat foods which contain predominantly saturated fats such as butter, cream, cooking margarine, coconut and palm oil with foods which contain predominantly polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats such as oils, spreads, nut butters/pastes and avocado.
- Low fat diets are not suitable for children under the age of 2 years.

b. Limit intake of foods and drinks containing added salt.

- Read labels to choose lower sodium options among similar foods.
- Do not add salt to foods in cooking or at the table.

c. Limit intake of foods and drinks containing added sugars such as confectionary, sugar-sweetened soft drinks and cordials, fruit drinks, vitamin waters, energy and sports drinks.

d. If you choose to drink alcohol, limit intake. For women who are pregnant, planning a pregnancy or breastfeeding, not drinking alcohol is the safest option.

## Guideline 4

Encourage, support and promote breastfeeding

## Guideline 5

Care for your food; prepare and store it safely

# Australian Guide to Healthy Eating

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Australian Government  
National Health and Medical Research Council  
Department of Health and Ageing

[www.eatforhealth.gov.au](http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au)

## Australian Guide to Healthy Eating

Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods from these five food groups every day.  
Drink plenty of water.



Use small amounts



Only sometimes and in small amounts



# Guideline Development

## How were the Australian Dietary Guidelines developed?

NHMRC revised the Australian Dietary Guidelines with advice from experts on the [Dietary Guidelines Working Committee](#) and funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

NHMRC recognises the need for dietary advice to be based on the best available scientific evidence. Over 55,000 scientific journal articles were retrieved by a team of nutrition and medical experts. Their analysis of this material was added to some of the evidence that is still current in the 2003 version of the Dietary Guidelines. This research translation activity, where a variety of evidence is turned into dietary advice, reflects a commitment to best practice standards in health guideline development.

You can find more information about the evidence used in the revision of the Australian Dietary Guidelines below.

## Who did NHMRC talk to in developing the Australian Dietary Guidelines?

In doing this complex work NHMRC consulted with experts in food, nutrition and health around Australia and other parts of the world on the factors influencing dietary choice.

It was also important to involve members of the public in this work. NHMRC ensured that the advisory committee included representation of consumer issues and choices, and involved consumers through three separate consumer focus testing activities. There were also two public consultation periods which allowed for further consumer input and comment.

NHMRC was also interested in hearing from the food industry, government departments, and health professionals about their views on healthy eating and the *Australian Dietary Guidelines*.

### Public Consultation Submissions

- [Public consultation submissions can be viewed here.](#)

### Public Consultation Reports

- [Public Consultation Report : Australian Dietary Guidelines \(PDF, 947KB\)](#)
- [Public Consultation Report: Australian Dietary Guidelines Appendix G: Food, Nutrition and Environmental Sustainability \(PDF, 579KB\)](#)
- [Public Consultation Report: Infant Feeding Guidelines \(PDF, 721KB\)](#)

## What information was used for the Australian Dietary Guidelines?

The Guidelines were developed using the following sources of scientific information:

1. The previous 2003 Dietary Guidelines for Australians series;
2. The *Nutrient Reference Values for Australia and New Zealand 2006*, which identify daily nutrient requirements;
3. The report *Modelling System to Inform the Revision of the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating 2011*, which details the serve sizes and minimum number of serves required to meet nutritional needs;
4. The report *A Review of the Evidence to Address Targeted Questions to Inform the Revision of the Australian Dietary Guidelines 2011*, which is a review of the evidence on the links between foods/nutrients and health outcomes;
5. A review *Nutritional Requirements and Dietary Advice Targeted for Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women 2013*; and
6. Other key authoritative reports, such as the World Cancer Research Fund report.

### Where are these reports

- [2003 Dietary Guidelines for Australians](#)
- [The NRVs website – www.nrv.gov.au](#)

- A Modelling System to Inform the Revision of the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating (FMS) (PDF, 3.8MB)
- A Review of the Evidence to Address Targeted Questions to Inform the Revision of the Australian Dietary Guidelines (Evidence Report) (PDF, 6.8MB)
- Review: Nutritional requirements and dietary advice targeted for pregnant and breastfeeding women (2011) (PDF, 4.7MB)
- Literature Review: Infant Feeding Guidelines (2012) (PDF, 3.7MB)

Source: eatforhealth.gov.au <https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines/about-australian-dietary-guidelines>

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