



Australian Government

National Health and Medical Research Council

Australian Dietary Guidelines

Journalist Briefing

What are the Australian Dietary Guidelines?

The Australian Dietary Guidelines provide 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.

An electronic copy of the Guidelines is available at www.eatforhealth.gov.au.

Why have they been revised?

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 have been revised to reflect the latest body of scientific evidence on nutrition, diet and health. The Dietary Guidelines have been issued in 1982 (first edition), 1992 (second edition) and 2003 (third edition).

What is the evidence based on?

NHMRC has undertaken a rigorous and comprehensive process to ensure that the Guidelines reflect the best available scientific evidence around food and health.

The review process has been led by a committee of leading experts in the field of nutrition, public health, industry and consumer issues, and overseen by the Council of NHMRC.

The core of this process has included the modelling of about a hundred dietary patterns and Systematic Literature Reviews which have looked at over 55,000 pieces of peer reviewed published scientific research.

Key evidence documents can be accessed at www.eatforhealth.gov.au.

What has changed since the last edition?

Australians are looking for dietary advice that is clear and practical. This revision of the Australian Dietary Guidelines has focused on food choice recommendations rather than on how much of certain nutrients you should consume, which was the approach of the 2003 version of the Dietary Guidelines.

The dietary modelling used to inform the revision of the Australian Dietary Guidelines included infants from 6 months of age to adults over 70 years of age (previously this was limited to 2 years and over). The revision reflects Australian food supply and consumption patterns and allows for greater flexibility in dietary patterns than previous editions.

There is a greater articulation of dietary patterns across life stages, supporting family-focused dietary patterns. The dietary modelling has also strengthened the emphasis on the limited scope within energy requirements for the least active people in each age and gender population group to choose any discretionary foods.

Specifically, the evidence base has strengthened for:

- 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
- The association between the consumption of milk and decreased risk of heart disease and some cancers
- 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

What has changed since Public Consultation?

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, industry, government departments, and health professionals in this work.

The draft Australian Dietary Guidelines were released for public consultation from 13 December 2011 until 29 February 2012, with over 200 submissions carefully considered. Public consultation on a draft appendix to the Guidelines was undertaken from 3 October 2012 to 2 November 2012 with over 70 submissions considered.

In summary, public consultation indicated that more information and/or consideration were requested for:

- The impact of food choices and the environment (practical recommendations required for environmentally sustainable food choices)
- Practical issues relating to reducing fat and types of fats
- The recommendation on foods to limit with consideration for 'food-based' approach (rather than individual macronutrients)
- The approach to vegetarian and vegan diets
- The recommendation on added sugars
- The recommendation for mostly 'reduced fat' dairy
- The beneficial properties of fibre

On the basis of the feedback received, NHMRC added recent scientific articles, included an appendix on environmental sustainability, and included practical summaries in each chapter for issues such as highlighting and explaining the importance of replacing, where possible, foods containing predominately saturated fat (such as butter) with foods containing predominately unsaturated fat (such as margarine), and a more balanced approach to vegetarian and vegan diets including improved information on the nutritional adequacy of vegetarian and vegan dietary patterns.

How does this compare with Australian consumption patterns?

In comparison to current Australian consumption data, the evidence suggests that we need to eat more:

- Vegetables and legumes/beans - a variety of different coloured vegetables
- Fruits
- Whole grain (cereal) foods such as wholegrain breakfast cereals and wholemeal bread
- Milk, yoghurt, cheese - preferably reduced fat varieties (except for children under 2 years)
- Fish, seafood, poultry, eggs, nuts and seeds, and legumes/beans
- Red meat (young women only)

In comparison to current Australian consumption data, the evidence suggests that we need to eat less:

- Refined grain (cereal) foods such as white bread and low fibre cereals
- High and medium fat milk, yoghurt and cheese
- Red meats (adult males only)
- Energy-dense and/or nutrient-poor foods and drinks which are high in saturated fat, added sugars, added salt and/or alcohol, such as sugar sweetened drinks, fried foods, hot chips, many take-away foods, cakes and biscuits, chocolate and confectionery and crisps.

What are the Guideline recommendations?

Guideline 1	<p>To achieve and maintain a healthy weight, be physically active and choose amounts of nutritious food and drinks to meet your energy needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<p>Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods from these five groups every day:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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). <p>And drink plenty of water.</p>
Guideline 3	<p>Limit intake of foods containing saturated fat, added salt, added sugars and alcohol.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<p>Encourage, support and promote breastfeeding.</p>
Guideline 5	<p>Care for your food; prepare and store it safely.</p>

Background Nutrition Facts

Nutrition is an important determinant of health and wellbeing of the Australian population:

- Good nutrition contributes significantly to maintaining healthy weight, quality of life, good physical and mental health throughout life, resistance to infection, and to protection against chronic disease and premature death.
- 60% of Australian adults and 25% of our children are now overweight or obese.
- Diet-related chronic diseases, such as heart disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes and some forms of cancer are currently the major causes of premature death and disability among adults in Australia.
- More than one-third of all premature deaths in Australia are the result of chronic diseases that could have been prevented – many of these mediated by overweight and obesity.
- If current trends continue in Australia, it is estimated that by 2025, 83% of men and 75% of women aged over 20 years will be overweight or obese.
- The estimated cost of obesity alone was estimated to be over \$8 billion per year in 2008 – the current cost of poor nutrition is likely to greatly exceed this.
- Much of the excess burden due to poor diet in Australia is associated with obesity related to excessive intake of energy-dense, relatively nutrient-poor foods high in saturated fat, refined sugars or salt.
- However inadequate intake of nutrient-dense foods including vegetables, fruits and wholegrain cereals is also common in Australia and deficiency of some nutrients including iron, calcium, iodine, folate and vitamin D amongst some groups is also of concern.
- To reduce the burden and premature loss of life from diet-related disease in Australia it will be necessary to improve current food and nutrient intakes.
- Fortunately small changes in dietary behaviours at a population level can produce significant health improvements at the national level. *For example*, it is estimated that a weight loss of 5kg in all people who are overweight or obese would reduce the national prevalence of type 2 diabetes by 15%.
- Dietary recommendations can be effective in directing people to the types and amounts of foods they should consume.