

Healthy eating for healthy weight

What you need to know

The fat in your body has an essential role. However, too much stored fat increases the chance of developing diabetes, heart disease, some cancers and other health problems.

Food is an important part of our lives. As well as providing nourishment, eating is enjoyable and is a part of social occasions.

The body maintains a healthy weight when there is a balance between the energy eaten (as kilojoules or calories) and the energy used in daily activities.

The key to reducing weight lies in changing the body's energy balance by:

- 1) Increasing daily activity levels and
- 2) Reducing the amount of energy from food.

Avoid 'diets'. The truth is diets don't work – at least not in the long-term. There is no quick fix. Enjoy a balanced approach to food combined with regular physical activity.

What to do

1. Increase daily activity levels

- Explore ways to increase your regular daily activity - walk the last kilometer to work, taking the stairs instead of the lift, participating in regular recreational exercise.

- Aim for at least 30 minutes or more of moderate intensity physical activity on most, if not all, days of the week. This will help you in many ways, including helping protect your heart and preventing diabetes. And the more you do, the more helpful it will be.



2. Reduce the amount of energy from food

- 'Hunger' is the best guide – eat when you feel hungry and stop when you are full. Be aware of eating when you are bored or eating out of habit, rather than when you are hungry. Keep a food diary to find out when this may be happening.

- Choose a variety of foods including plenty of breads, cereals, fruit and vegetables; moderate amounts of low fat dairy foods and lean meats or alternatives; and small amounts of added fats and oils. See table.

- Reduce saturated fat in your diet by choosing lean cuts of meat, skinless poultry and low fat dairy foods (e.g. low or reduced fat milk, cheese, yoghurt).

- Use healthy cooking methods (e.g. grilling, baking and stir-frying instead of deep frying).

- Some foods should be eaten occasionally rather than everyday. These include many takeaway foods (especially those that are deep fried), pies, chocolate, sweets, pastries, biscuits, cakes and chips. It is OK to enjoy these foods once in a while.

Five food groups for weight management

		Serves/day	Sample serves
Bread and Cereals		4–6 (women) 5–7 (men)	2 slices bread, 1 medium bread roll, 1 cup cooked rice, pasta, or noodles, 1 cup porridge, 1 1/3 cup breakfast cereal flakes or 1/2 cup muesli
Vegetables, legumes		4–7 (women) 6–8 (men)	1/2 cup cooked vegetables, dried beans, peas or lentils, 1 cup salad vegetables or 1 potato
Fruit		2–3 (women) 3–4 (men)	1 medium piece e.g. apple, banana, orange, pear, 2 small pieces e.g. apricots, 1 cup diced pieces or canned fruit, 1/2 cup juice, 4 dried apricot halves or 1 1/2 tablespoons sultanas
Dairy foods or equivalent		2–3 (women) 3–4 (men)	1 cup (250 mL) milk or fortified soy beverage, 2 slices reduced fat cheese, 1 small carton (200g) low fat yoghurt, 1 cup almonds, 5 sardines or 1/2 cup salmon with edible bones
Meat, fish, poultry, eggs, nuts, legumes		1–1 1/2 (women) 1 1/2– 2 (men)	65 – 100g cooked lean meat, chicken e.g. 1/2 cup lean mince, 2 small chops or 2 slices lean roast meat, 1/2 cup cooked legumes, 80 – 120 g cooked fish fillet, 2 small eggs, 1/3 cup peanuts or almonds.

This is just a guide to the number of serves from each food group to eat each day. The upper end of the serve range is usually more applicable to those who are younger and those who are more active.

Practical tips

- Start with only a few changes. Once you can happily and easily build these into your daily meals, then think about a few more changes you can make.
- Gradual weight loss will provide health benefits and help you avoid weight gain over the long-term.
- Just because it is a low fat product doesn't mean that you can eat twice as much of it! Low fat foods still contain energy and may have as many kJ as the full fat alternative.
- Eat small meals regularly to keep your metabolism working well. Skipping meals causes hunger and can lead to overeating at the next meal, picking at foods or bingeing.
- Avoid shopping when you are hungry. Prepare a list to follow when grocery shopping.
- Drink plenty of water. Be aware of the energy in soft drinks, fruit juices and alcohol.

Your Goals

To maintain a healthier weight I will by/...../.....



The Dietitians Association of Australia endorses this nutrition guide and participated in its development as part of our work towards better food, better health and better living for all Australians. We are the largest professional nutrition-focused body in Australia. For general nutrition information, please visit www.daa.asn.au. For expert nutrition and dietary advice we recommend you contact an Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD). To find one near you, call our hotline 1800 812 942, visit www.daa.asn.au or look in the Yellow Pages under 'Dietitians'.