

We rely on portion sizes to guide how much food and drink we should consume. However, many of us are unaware of what an ‘appropriate’ portion of food is, or how many serves are recommended.






The Australian Dietary Guidelines (the Guidelines) and the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating provide up-to-date advice about the amounts and kinds of foods that we need to eat for health and wellbeing. The recommendations are based on scientific evidence, developed after looking at quality research.

The Guidelines inform people of different ages, life stages and gender, the minimum number of serves from each of the five food group they need to eat each day, to make sure they get the full amount of nutrients their body needs.

Five food groups:

1. Grain foods (cereals) mostly wholegrain and/or high cereal fibre varieties
2. Vegetables and legumes/beans
3. Fruit
4. Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or their alternatives (mostly reduced fat)
5. Lean meat and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans.

Number of serves:

Food group	Recommended intake
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2½ serves a day for 2–3 year olds • 4½ serves a day in 4–8 year olds • 5–5½ serves a day for older children and adolescents • 5–6 serves a day for adults including pregnant women • more than 7 serves a day for breastfeeding women 
Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 serve a day for 2–3 year olds • 1½ serves a day for 4–8 year olds • at least 2 serves a day for older children, adolescents and adults 
Grains (cereal foods)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 serves a day for 2–8 year olds to • 7 serves a day for older adolescents • Women: from 3 serves a day for those over the age of 70; 6 serves a day for women less than 50 years of age; 8½ serves a day for pregnant and breastfeeding women • Men: ranges from 4½ serves a day for those over the age of 70; to 6 serves a day for younger men 
Lean meat and poultry, fish, eggs and alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 serves a day for 2–3 year olds • 1½ serves a day in 4–8 year olds. • 2½ serves a day for older children and adolescents • 2-3 serves a day for adults • a maximum of 455g of lean, cooked, red meat per week 
Include milk, yoghurt and cheese and alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1½-2 serves a day for children up to 8 years old • 2½-3½ serves a day for older children and adolescents • 2½ serves a day for younger adults, pregnant and breastfeeding women • 3½-4 serves a day for older adults, particularly women 

Discretionary choices

Discretionary foods are called that because they are not an essential or necessary part of healthy dietary patterns. They are high in energy, saturated fat, added sugars and/or salt or alcohol. For example deep fried food, sugar sweetened drinks, cakes, lollies and chocolate.

If chosen, discretionary choices should be eaten only sometimes and in small amounts.

In a school canteen setting these are referred to as 'red' items and should not be on the menu. Most Australians consume too many discretionary choices which may lead to an energy imbalance.

Energy balance

Energy in = Energy out



For a healthy body our energy intake needs to be balanced with our energy output

- Energy IN is from the food and drinks we consume
- Energy OUT refers to the amount of energy used by the body to maintain bodily functions and to perform physical activity
- Energy requirements differ greatly between people depending on activity levels, age, weight, gender, height, body composition and state of health
- Excess energy can contribute to weight gain. As portion sizes increase, so too does the amount of energy we are consuming
- Excess energy can contribute to weight gain
- Excess weight increases the likelihood of developing many major chronic diseases, disability and early death.

You can work out your recommended daily energy intake at www.eatforhealth.gov.au

Tips for healthy eating:

- Swap discretionary choices for foods from the five food groups
- Make breads or grains part of at least two meals most days
- Include vegetables at least twice a day and make vegetables at least one third of meals
- Include lean meat or meat alternative a part of at least one meal a day
- Add fruit to at least two meals or use as snacks or desserts
- Include a serve of reduced fat milk, yoghurt or cheese as a significant part of at least two meals or snacks.

Source

Western Australian School Canteen Association Inc (2016) *Inside scoop on food*

National Health and Medical Research Council (2015). Retrieved from www.eatforhealth.gov.au