
Men's nutrition needs

Summary

- Nutrition needs differ with gender and age.
 - Get to know your specific nutrition needs and design an eating pattern to suit you.
 - As a man, your healthy diet will need to meet your unique physical needs, fit with your lifestyle, and reduce your risk of disease.
 - Use the Australian Dietary Guidelines as the basis of your healthy diet, and seek professional advice, such as from an accredited practising dietitian, if you need it.
 - Know your serving sizes and how much you need to eat.
 - Chat to your doctor if you're concerned about possible dietary deficiencies.
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Nutrition needs differ with gender and age. A healthy diet for a man is different from a healthy diet for a woman. And what a middle aged male needs from his food for good health and growth differs from what a male baby, child, teenager or older person needs.

It's important to know your specific nutrition needs for your age, and to design an eating pattern that suits you. If you combine your food plan with some regular **physical activity**, you're on your way to good health.

What to put on your plate

Regardless of age, all men need good nutrition from a healthy diet. **Nutrition** is simply the process of getting from our food what we need for health and growth. And a healthy diet is the best selection of foods and drinks for that process to work well.

Without a healthy diet, you could be increasing your risk of chronic diseases, such as **cardiovascular disease**, **type 2 diabetes**, some **cancers**, and even mental health issues, such as **anxiety** and **depression**.

As a man, your healthy diet will need to meet your unique physical needs, fit with your lifestyle, and reduce your risk of **disease**.

The Australian Government publishes **dietary guidelines for Australians** based on the best available science about the types and amounts of foods and dietary patterns that may promote health and wellbeing, and reduce the risk of diet-related conditions and chronic disease.

In a nutshell, the Australian Dietary Guidelines say:

- Eat a wide variety of foods from the **five food groups**:
 - plenty of colourful vegetables, legumes/beans
 - fruit
 - grain (cereal) foods – mostly wholegrain and high fibre varieties
 - lean meats and **poultry**, fish, **eggs**, tofu, nuts and seeds
 - **milk, yoghurt, cheese or their alternatives**, mostly reduced fat.
 - Drink plenty of water.
 - Limit foods high in saturated fat, such as biscuits, cakes, pastries, pies, processed meats, commercial burgers, pizza, fried foods, potato chips, crisps and other savoury snacks.
 - Replace high fat foods containing mostly saturated fat with foods containing mostly polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats. Swap butter, cream, cooking margarine, coconut and palm oil with unsaturated fats from oils, spreads, nut butters and pastes, and avocado.
 - Limit foods and drinks containing added salt, and don't add salt to foods in cooking or at the table.
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- Limit foods and drinks containing added sugars, such as confectionery, sugar-sweetened soft drinks and cordials, fruit drinks, vitamin waters, energy and sports drinks.
- **Limit alcohol.** (Drink no more than two standard drinks a day, on average, and no more than four standard drinks on any single occasion.)
- Keep 'extras' or 'sometimes foods' to a minimum – they're not a regular part of a healthy diet. Extras are the high sugar, high fat, high salt foods listed above, such as commercial burgers, pizza, alcohol, lollies, cakes and biscuits, fried foods, and fruit juices and cordials.

You can use the dietary guidelines as the foundation of a healthy diet, but it's also important to factor in your specific needs depending on who you are: child, teen, or older person, and any health concerns they may have. If you do this, you've got the best chance of eating well for your age, gender and life stage.

This **summary guide** to the Australian Dietary Guidelines will help you, but if you'd like professional advice, ask an **accredited practising dietitian** for tailored advice and support.

How much to put on your plate

A ball-park figure for our energy needs is 8,700 kilojoules per day for an adult, however this varies depending, for example, on the amount of activity you do (kilojoules you burn) in the day.

Everyone is different, so use our easy **calculator** to find out how many kilojoules you need each day.

<insert weblink to our digital new kJ needs calculator tool page> or the existing NHMRC eat for health one>.

When it comes to how much to eat, the key is to know your serving sizes and eat for your age and physical activity levels.

Know your serving sizes

For the five food groups, aim for these amounts each day:

- **vegetables:** 5–6 serves. A standard serve is about 75 grams (100–350 kilojoules); for example, ½ cup cooked green or orange vegetables or ½ cup cooked dried or canned beans, peas or lentils or 1 cup of green leafy vegetables or salad
- **fruit:** 2 serves. A standard serve is 150 grams (350 kilojoules); for example, a medium apple or banana, or two kiwi fruits or plums. Try to eat whole fruit and limit fruit juice and dried fruit to only occasionally
- **grains foods:** 4.5 serves for those over the age of 70 years; 6 serves for younger men. A standard serve is 500 kilojoules; for example, one slice of bread or ½ cup cooked porridge or ½ cup of cooked rice or pasta. At least two-thirds of choices should be wholegrain varieties
- **lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds, and legumes/beans:** 2.5 to 3 serves, depending on age. A standard serve is 500–600 kilojoules; for example, 65 grams cooked lean red meats; two large eggs; 150 grams of cooked or canned lentils, chick peas or split peas (preferably with no added salt); or 170 grams of tofu
- **milk, yoghurt and cheese or alternatives:** 2.5 to 3.5 serves, depending on age. A standard serve is 500–600 kilojoules; for example, a cup of milk or ¾ cup yoghurt.

Exact servings and other examples can be found in this **healthy eating summary guide**.

Men's nutrition – eating for your age

19 to 50 years

Younger men in this age bracket generally need more energy than older men, but still need to eat in moderation, with a good variety and balance among the **five food groups**.

If you want to change your appearance or performance by building muscle, remember you don't need to overdo it: most men only need about 0.84 grams of **protein** per kilogram of body weight per day, which is about 60 grams a day for an 80 kilogram man.

So what does 60 grams of protein look like on your plate? There's about 60 grams of protein in 100 grams of rump steak and 12.4 grams of protein in 40 grams of reduced fat cheese. So it's not much – and it's easy to achieve if you're eating protein-rich foods like meat, poultry, fish, dairy, legumes and lentils, eggs and nuts.

To manage your weight, you'll need to limit high kilojoule drinks, such as soft drinks, energy drinks and alcohol.

50 to 71 years

By this age, your nutritional needs have changed from when you were younger. As men get older, the key is choosing foods that give you bang for your buck – that is, foods that are nutrient-rich, without excessive kilojoules.

You need slightly less of some food groups, such as lean meats and eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds.

You'll also need to watch your 'extras' or 'sometimes foods' – commercial burgers, pizza, alcohol, lollies, cakes and biscuits, fried foods, and fruit juices and cordials – for weight management.

71 + years

At this age, you need slightly fewer grain (cereal) foods and slightly more dairy foods and their alternatives, such as milk, cheese, yoghurt and calcium-enriched rice milk.

Keep an eye on your calcium and phosphorous intakes too by eating dairy, eggs, sardines or salmon, almonds, cashews, rice, wheat and oat bran, and peanut butter, for example.

Younger than 19 years

The Dietitians Association of Australia has specific information about the nutritional needs of **children** and **adolescents** (young men under 19 years of age).

Meal ideas for men

If you're stuck on how to put the dietary guidelines into practice on your plate, you may like to try these ideas:

- **breakfast** – two slices of wholemeal toast with ½ can baked beans and one medium grilled tomato; glass of reduced fat milk
- **morning tea** – one medium apple, and small to medium sized coffee with milk
- **lunch** – roast beef, salad and cheese sandwich (using two slices of wholemeal bread, 65 grams roast beef, one slice reduced fat cheese, one cup mixed salad)
- **afternoon tea** – small handful unsalted mixed nuts and small to medium sized coffee with milk
- **dinner** – 100 grams fish with one cup cooked rice, squeeze of lemon, a small boiled potato, 1/2 cup cooked zucchini and ½ cup cooked broccoli
- **evening snack** – one cup tinned or fresh fruit salad, 100 grams reduced fat yoghurt.

You'll find other good meal and snack ideas at [Eat for Health](#), the Dietitians Association of Australia's '[Smart eating recipes](#)', [Nutrition Australia](#), the [National Heart Foundation](#), and the [Queensland Government](#) 'Healthy recipes' page.

What may be missing from men's diets

A healthy diet is one that gives your body everything it needs for good health, including macronutrients (carbohydrate, fat and protein), micronutrients (vitamins and minerals), fibre and water.

It's common for men's diets to be lacking some essential elements, including:

- **vitamin D** – This powerhouse vitamin reduces inflammation in the arteries and strengthens the skeleton, but all people, not just men, can be deficient in it because they don't get **enough ultraviolet B rays from the sun**. Some foods that are rich sources of vitamin D include oily fish (like salmon), meat, eggs, dairy and mushrooms. Ask your doctor to test your vitamin D levels
- **magnesium** – This mineral is involved in more than 300 processes in your body. Low levels may increase your risk of heart disease. Studies say most men consume only about 80 per cent of the recommended daily magnesium. Navy beans and halibut are great sources of magnesium, but it can be hard to get all you need from food alone. Talk to your healthcare practitioner if you think you may be falling short
- **vitamin B12** – Good sources of vitamin B12 include meat, poultry, eggs, fish and shellfish, cheese, yoghurt and milk, and fortified cereals, but talk to your doctor about your levels
- **potassium** – This essential mineral helps your cells use glucose for energy. Many men don't consume enough. Potassium works to lower sodium in the blood, so if your diet is high in sodium, have a chat to your

doctor. Avocados, potatoes and bananas are all excellent sources

- **iodine** – Your thyroid glands need iodine to produce the hormones T3 and T4, both of which help control how you burn calories. Insufficient levels may make you gain weight and feel fatigued. Eggs, milk and yoghurt are good sources of iodine, but talk to your doctor about your levels and what to do about them.

Other health risks from your diet

Eating poorly is the biggest contributor to early death worldwide. The other big causes of premature death are smoking, high blood pressure and obesity.

Eating plenty of vegetables, along with fruit, wholegrains, lean meats, nuts and dairy foods (or dairy alternatives) will help improve your diet, as will cutting down on foods high in saturated fat, added salt, added sugar, and alcohol.

Staying active is always important for good health. Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity, such as walking, every day.

Tips for a healthy diet and weight for men

There's lots of nutrition advice out there, but these tips may help you get a handle on your health:

- Always eat breakfast (healthy choices).
- Eat slowly and mindfully.
- Listen to your body. Stop when, or even before, you're full.
- Shop after a meal or snack (rather than when you're hungry), and take a list so you're less tempted to make poor choices.
- Plan healthy, quick and easy meals for busy days.
- Enjoy meals with others, and not in front of the TV or other devices.
- Make healthy choices when eating out. Grilled or steamed foods are healthy, or try entrée sizes and if having dessert, share it with a friend.
- Make water your main drink.
- Fill up on fruit and vegetables when you're hungry.
- Stand up regularly. **Don't sit for too long**
- Move every day, as often as you can. Go for a walk, play active games, go for a ride, get in the garden.
- Find a buddy to help you stick to your healthy diet and physical activities.

Remember...

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- Know your serving sizes and how much you need to eat.
- Chat to your doctor if you're concerned about possible dietary deficiencies.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- **Dietitians Association of Australia**. Tel. 1800 812 942
- **Nutrition Australia**. Tel. (03) 8431 5800

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Dietitians Association of Australia

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