
Food to have sometimes

Summary

- Takeaway foods, cakes and biscuits and soft drinks are examples of foods typically high in saturated fat, added salt or added sugars. They should be considered as extras to your usual diet.
 - 'Extra foods' should only be eaten very occasionally and in small amounts.
 - Spend your money wisely; spend less on 'extra foods' and more on lean meats, reduced fat dairy, fruit, vegetables and wholegrain cereals.
 - If you are eating out or grabbing something to eat on the run, check for kilojoules on the menu. Consider a smaller portion size or swapping to a healthier, lower kilojoule choice.
-

Some foods and drinks should only be eaten very occasionally and in small amounts. These 'extra foods' (sometimes called junk food) are food and drinks such as:

- potato chips and other savoury snack foods
- processed meats and sausages
- takeaway foods such as hot chips, hamburgers and pizza
- cakes and biscuits
- chocolate and other confectionary
- sugar-sweetened soft drinks and cordials
- alcoholic drinks

These foods are too high in saturated fat, added sugars, added salt or alcohol, and are low in fibre. These foods and drinks can also be too high in kilojoules (energy). Many are low in essential nutrients and so are not necessary for a **healthy diet**.

If these foods regularly replace more nutritious and healthier foods in your diet, you will increase your risk of obesity and chronic disease, such as heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and some forms of cancer.

Occasional foods

It's okay to have some of these foods now and then as an extra. How often you have them depends on your height, weight, age and how active you are. Aim to keep to small amounts.

If you are overweight and want to lose weight, try eating more **foods from the five food groups** (lean meats, reduced fat dairy, fruits, vegetables and wholegrain cereals) and limit your intake of 'extra foods'. You are more likely to lose weight if you eat fewer 'extra foods', because they are high in kilojoules but low in essential nutrients

If you are active and not overweight, you could probably have 'extra foods' sometimes and in small amounts – as long as you've had your daily requirements of meat, dairy, fruits, vegetables and cereals.

Foods prepared outside the home

Australians spend around one third of their weekly household food budget on foods prepared outside the home. These include restaurant meals and takeaway foods.

These foods are often high in saturated fat, added salt and added sugars. High consumption of these foods may contribute to **obesity** and chronic disease, such as **heart disease and stroke**, **type 2 diabetes**, and some forms of cancer.

Kilojoules on the menu

In Australia, we use kilojoules (kJ) to measure how much **energy people get from consuming a food or drink**.

Large Victorian fast food and supermarket chains are required to display the kilojoule content of ready-to-eat food and drinks on menus and food labels, along with the average adult daily energy intake (8,700kJ). These laws help you compare the kilojoule content of food and drinks on offer and make more informed decisions when eating out and taking food away to eat at home or on the go.

Find out more about **Kilojoules on the menu**.

Takeaway foods are often high in kilojoules

The foods sold by popular takeaway outlets, including fried chicken, hamburgers and hot chips (fries), are often high in saturated fat, added sugars, added salt and kilojoules.

One takeaway meal may have more than 100 per cent of your recommended daily saturated fat intake. The average adult should consume less than around 20 g per day.

However, Australians consume, on average, 28g of saturated fat per day.

Examples of takeaway meals that contain about 10 – 20 g saturated fat include:

- large battered fish and a large serve of chips
- four slices of pizza supreme
- hamburger and chips
- fried chicken and chips.

Fat is high in kilojoules

Fat is **energy dense**. It contains twice the amount of kilojoules per gram (38 kJ) as protein (17 kJ) or carbohydrates (17 kJ). Regularly **eating more kilojoules than your body needs** will lead to weight gain.

Substituting saturated fats (such as butter) with polyunsaturated fats and monounsaturated fats (such as olive oil or margarine) is associated with a reduced risk of heart disease.

Examples of foods that are high in saturated fats include:

- dairy foods such as full fat milk, cream and cheese
- coconut milk and cream
- fatty cuts of meat
- processed meats
- fatty snack foods such as potato crisps and crackers
- cakes, muffins and biscuits
- pastries and pies
- deep fried and high fat takeaway foods such as hot chips, pizza and hamburgers.

Foods that contain polyunsaturated fats include:

- fish, especially oily fish (omega-3 fats)
- safflower and soybean oil (omega-6 fats)
- brazil nuts (omega-6 fats).

Foods containing monounsaturated fats include:

- olive and canola oil
- avocados
- cashews
- almonds.

Read more about **fats and oils**.

High-salt foods

Takeaway foods usually contain high amounts of **salt**. Too much salt in the diet has been associated with an increased risk of high blood pressure, which is a known risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

Eating less than 5 g of salt per day (less than a teaspoon a day) is recommended for adults with normal blood pressure. Many Australians consume double this amount each day.

Seventy-five per cent of our salt intake comes from packaged and processed foods we eat every day, like bread, processed meats and soups. Cutting back on takeaway foods will help reduce your salt intake.

Read more about **how to cut down on salt**.

High-sugar foods

Foods and drinks like soft drinks, cordials, biscuits, cakes and confectionary are high in added sugars and high in kilojoules. **Sugar** itself does not lead to diabetes. However, being overweight increases a person's risk of type 2 diabetes and too much added sugars can cause weight gain.

In Australia, soft drinks have become among the most popular beverages. Soft drinks, along with other sugar-sweetened drinks, are the largest source of sugars in the diets of Australians. The size of containers has also increased. Ten years ago, soft drinks were available in 375 ml cans. Now they are commonly sold in 600 ml bottles, which provide at least 12–15 teaspoons of sugar.

There is strong evidence of an association between increasing consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks and the development of childhood obesity and tooth decay. That's why eating foods and **drinks with a high sugar content should be limited**.

Additives in food

Food additives are generally used to prolong shelf life or to enhance colour, flavour or texture. Adverse reactions to food additives occur in a small proportion of the population. Symptoms may include diarrhoea and skin rashes.

Healthier food choices

Market surveys indicate that Australians would like healthier takeaway foods.

Perhaps the easiest way to enjoy a takeaway meal, without consuming too much saturated fat, is not to have the hot chips or fries. A large serve of chips can contain around 18 g of total fat and 2,400 kJ.

Other suggestions for reducing saturated fat in takeaway food options include:

- Choose bread-based options like wraps, kebabs, souvlaki or hamburgers.
- Avoid deep fried and pastry options.
- Include extra vegetables and salad.
- Choose smaller portions or share with someone else and add a green salad to reduce the kilojoules of the meal.
- Limit high fat, high salt sauces and toppings like cheese, fatty meats and mayonnaise – remember, you can ask for less.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Don't upsize unless it's with a side salad.

Fast foods that have relatively low levels of saturated fat and added salt include:

- pizzas with less cheese and meat
- grilled chicken burger or wrap
- grilled, lean meat hamburgers, with no cheese or bacon additions
- grilled fish burgers.

For more information on healthier food choices, '[extra' foods and drinks](#) and the Australian Dietary Guidelines, visit [Eat for Health](#).

Suggested amounts of 'extra foods'

A healthy diet doesn't need extras. However, if you are over four years of age, eat a nutritious diet, and you are not overweight, you could include one serve (up to 600 kJ) of 'extra' foods or drinks per day.

Examples of single serves of extra foods include:

- 12 hot chips
- 1 ½ thick or 2 thinner sausages that are higher in fat or salt
- 50–60 g (about 2 slices) of processed meats such as salami
- 1 doughnut
- 2–3 plain sweet biscuits
- 1/2 small bar of chocolate
- 2 tablespoons of cream or mayonnaise
- 2 scoops of ice cream (75 g)
- 1 can of soft drink (375 ml).

Alcohol is also an 'extra'

For adults who choose to consume alcohol, one serve equals:

- 200 ml wine (2 standard drinks)
- 60 ml spirits (2 standard drinks)
- 600 ml light beer (1 1/2 standard drinks)
- 400 ml regular beer (1 1/2 standard drinks).

Where to get help

- Your **GP**
- Dietitian
- Nutritionist
- **[Dietitians Association of Australia](#)** – Find an accredited practising dietitian.

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:

Deakin University - School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences

Content on this website is provided for information purposes only. Information about a therapy, service, product or treatment does not in any way endorse or support such therapy, service, product or treatment and is not intended to replace advice from your doctor or other registered health professional. The information and materials contained on this website are not intended to constitute a comprehensive guide concerning all aspects of the therapy, product or treatment described on the website. All users are urged to always seek advice from a registered health care professional for diagnosis and answers to their medical questions and to ascertain whether the particular therapy, service, product or treatment described on the website is suitable in their circumstances. The State of Victoria and the Department of Health & Human Services shall not bear any liability for reliance by any user on the materials contained on this website.

For the latest updates and more information, visit www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Copyright © 1999/2019 State of Victoria. Reproduced from the Better Health Channel (www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au) at no cost with permission of the Victorian Minister for Health. Unauthorised reproduction and other uses comprised in the copyright are prohibited without permission.