Fats and oils

Tags:
Summary

- Dietary fat contains more than double the amount of kilojoules (energy) per gram than carbohydrate.
- Animal products and some processed foods, especially fried fast food, are generally high in saturated fats, which have been linked to increased blood cholesterol levels.
- Replacing foods high in saturated fats with alternatives higher in monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats tend to improve blood cholesterol levels.
- It is important to select lower saturated fat varieties of core foods such as dairy products and meats.

Foods and drinks contain nutrients such as carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins and minerals. Some foods or drinks contain a large amount of one nutrient such as soft drink, which contains a large amount of sugar, or fried food, which contains a large amount of fat. The term ‘fat’ and ‘oil’ are often used to mean the same thing.

Dietary fat (fat in foods and drinks) is important for many body processes. For example, it helps move some vitamins around the body and also helps with making hormones. There are different groups of dietary fat and each of the groups can have a different effect on your blood cholesterol level. For this reason, it is recommended that you replace foods and drinks high in saturated and trans fat with alternatives that contain more polyunsaturated or monounsaturated fats.

Each gram of fat contains twice the kilojoules (energy) of carbohydrate or protein. Because of this, if you have foods and drinks with too much dietary fat, it can be difficult to maintain a healthy weight.

Meals with a small amount of fat can enhance the taste and also help to keep you satisfied for longer. Throughout the day you should consume a wide range of everyday, healthy foods. By doing this, you will get a small total amount of dietary fat, particularly polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats to meet your daily requirements.

Groups of fats

Dietary fat can be classified into four groups. These are:

- saturated
- monounsaturated
- polyunsaturated
- trans.

Each type of fat behaves differently inside the body.

Saturated fats

Saturated fats contribute to the risk of cardiovascular diseases (such as heart disease and stroke), because they raise LDL blood cholesterol levels. These fats are commonly found in many discretionary foods and drinks (those to only have sometimes), such as takeaway (‘fast’) foods, and in commercial products such as biscuits and pastries.

Saturated fats are also found in some everyday, healthy foods such as dairy products and meats. Unlike discretionary foods, these products have other important nutrients such as protein, vitamins and minerals, and can be important foods to include in your diet.

It is recommended to select lower saturated fat options. For example, choose:

- reduced-fat milk, yogurt and cheese
- leaner cuts of meat or trim the fat off meat prior to cooking.

Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats

Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats both tend to lower LDL blood cholesterol when they replace saturated fats in the diet. Polyunsaturated fats have a slightly greater impact than monounsaturated fats.

Where possible, replace foods and drinks high in saturated fat with either monounsaturated or polyunsaturated alternatives. For example:

- replace butter with olive oil or margarine
- replace potato chips or chocolate with plain nuts as a healthier snack alternative
- replace fried fast food with a sandwich or wrap made with lean meat and salad.

Trans fats

Trans fats tend to behave like saturated fats in the body, as they raise LDL blood cholesterol levels and increase the risk of cardiovascular diseases (such as heart disease and stroke). Unlike saturated fats, they tend to also lower HDL cholesterol, so are likely to be even more damaging.

Trans fats are rare in nature – they are only created in the stomach of cows and sheep. Because of this, trans fats are naturally found in small amounts in milk, cheese, beef and lamb.

Trans fats are also created during the manufacture of some baked products such as pies, pastries, cakes, biscuits and buns. It is the trans fats that are produced during food manufacturing that you should be most concerned about, not the small amounts of trans fats naturally found in healthy foods like low-fat dairy products and lean meats.

Dietary fats and blood cholesterol

The two types of blood cholesterol are low density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol and high density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol.

LDL is considered the ‘bad’ cholesterol because it contributes to the narrowing of the arteries, which can lead to cardiovascular diseases (such as heart disease and stroke). HDL cholesterol is considered to be the ‘good’ cholesterol because it actually carries cholesterol from the blood back to the liver, where it is broken down, reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Fat-containing foods

Foods generally contain one main group of fat. For example:
**Fats and oils**

Things to remember

**Where to get help**

**The Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend that:**

- **Saturated fats** – sources include fatty cuts of meat, full-fat milk, cheese, butter, cream, most commercially baked products such as biscuits and pastries, most deep-fried fast foods, coconut and palm oil.
- **Monounsaturated fats** – sources include avocado, and nuts such as peanuts, hazelnuts, cashews and almonds (including peanut and other nut butters), margarine spreads such as canola or olive oil based choices, oils such as olive, canola and peanut.
- **Polyunsaturated fats** – sources include fish, seafood, polyunsaturated margarines, vegetable oils such as safflower, sunflower, corn or soy oils, nuts such as walnuts and Brazil nuts, and seeds.

**Sources of omega-6 and omega-3 fats**

Polyunsaturated fats can be divided into two categories, which are:

- **Omega-3 fats** are found in both plant and marine foods, although it is the omega-3 fats from marine sources that have the strongest evidence for health benefits (including reducing the risk of heart disease). Plant food sources include canola and soy oils, and canola-based margarines. Marine sources include fish, especially oily fish such as Atlantic salmon, mackerel, Southern bluefin tuna, trevally and sardines.
- **Omega-6 fats** are found primarily in nuts, seeds and plant oils, such as corn, soy and safflower.

**Benefits of omega-3 fats**

Research is ongoing, but the benefits of omega-3 fats in the diet seem to include that they:

- lower triglyceride levels and reduce blood pressure, which are important risk factors in cardiovascular disease
- improve blood vessel elasticity
- keep the heart rhythm beating normally
- ‘thin’ the blood, which makes it less sticky and less likely to clot
- reduce inflammation and support the immune system
- may play a role in preventing and treating depression
- contribute to the normal development of the foetal brain.

**Plant sterols**

Plant sterols are present in all plants. Intakes of 2–3 g of plant sterols per day have been shown to reduce blood cholesterol levels by an average of 10 per cent. This is because they block the body’s ability to absorb cholesterol, which leads to a reduced level of cholesterol in the blood.

However, it is hard to eat this amount of plant sterols from natural sources, so there are now plant sterol-enriched margarines and dairy products on the market. Eating 1–1.5 tablespoons (4-6 teaspoons) of sterol-enriched margarine each day can help to lower blood cholesterol levels.

**Energy density of dietary fat**

Dietary fat has more than double the number of kilojoules per gram (37 kJ/g) than carbohydrate or protein (17 kJ/g), making it very ‘energy dense’. Foods high in fat are usually high in kilojoules. Carrying too much body fat is a risk factor in many diseases, including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and many cancers.

**The Mediterranean diet**

Researchers are investigating the possibility that a diet rich in monounsaturated fats, such as olive oil, may be protective against the development of coronary heart disease. People who have a high consumption of monounsaturated fats from olive oil (for example, in Greece and Italy) tend to have low rates of coronary heart disease, regardless of their body weight.

Studies have shown that olive oil consumption may have a protective role on breast, colon, lung, ovarian and skin cancer development. Compounds specific to olive oil, known as phenolics, seem to possess free radical-scavenging properties and so may be able to reduce oxidative damage to DNA.

A number of studies have also shown that olive oil may have additional beneficial effects on blood pressure, obesity, rheumatoid arthritis and immune function.

However, the Mediterranean diet contains much more than olive oil. It’s possible that the low rate of coronary heart disease in these countries relates to a high intake of vegetables, legumes, fruits and cereals, which are rich in antioxidants.

**Current recommendations on fats in your diet**

The Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend that:

- you limit intake of foods high in saturated fat such as many biscuits, cakes, pastries, pies, processed meats, commercial burgers, pizza, fried food, potato chips, crisps and other savoury snacks
- you replace high-fat foods that contain predominately saturated fats such as butter, cream, cooking margarine, coconut and palm oil, with foods that contain predominately polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats such as oils, spreads, nut butters and pastes, and avocado.
- low-fat diets are not suitable for children under the age of two years.

**Where to get help**

- Your doctor
- Dietitians Association of Australia Tel. 1800 812 942

**Things to remember**

- Dietary fat contains more than double the amount of kilojoules (energy) per gram than carbohydrate.
- Animal products and some processed foods, especially fried fast food, are generally high in saturated fats, which have been linked to increased blood cholesterol levels.
- Replacing foods high in saturated fats with alternatives higher in monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats tends to improve blood cholesterol levels.
- It is important to select lower saturated fat varieties of core foods such as dairy products and meats.
Fats can wreak havoc on our bodies and contribute to weight gain if we eat too much. Although we need fats in our diet, many of us are unaware of how to maintain a healthy weight because we’re not consuming the right amount and types of fat. Cutting down on fat is not as hard as we think, and it doesn’t necessarily mean we have to give up our favourite foods. Get started with these simple tips.

1. Fats we love

Unsaturated fats are great for our bodies—they lower our cholesterol levels and give us the fatty acids we need. These ‘good fats’ come in two forms—polyunsaturated and monounsaturated. Polyunsaturated fats can be found in fish (especially oily fish), nuts (walnuts and Brazil nuts), seeds (such as sesame—hummus and tahini are great!), polyunsaturated margarines and some oils (sunflower, safflower, soy, and corn.) Monounsaturated fats are found in avocados, nuts and nut spreads (peanuts, hazelnuts, cashews and almonds), margarine spreads (such as canola or olive oil based), and oils such as olive, canola and peanut oil.
3. **Beware of trans fats**

Trans fats (also known as trans fatty acids) are actually worse than saturated fats. They are variants of unsaturated fats that have been altered during the manufacturing process to make fats and oils harder. (imagine what they’re doing to our insides!) These fats alter our cholesterol levels for the worse and put us at higher risk of heart disease and stroke. That’s why it’s important to limit products where fats have been altered in some way, (such as deep-fried food, pies, pastries, cakes, donuts and some margarines and butter). Small amounts of trans fat occur naturally in milk, cheese, beef and lamb and are not dangerous.

Hint: read food labels carefully and if you see trans fat listed choose another product.

4. **Check those labels**

The ingredients on food labels are listed in order of quantity. That means if the label on the product lists fats first, it means it’s high in fat. Be on the lookout for other fats on labels too (such as oil, shortening, cocoa butter or cream). Go for ‘low’ or ‘reduced fat’ dairy products. And when selecting processed foods, choose those with less than 5 g per 100 g of total fat.

Hint: download a free app like FoodSwitch, which scans barcodes on food labels and gives their nutritional value. If you have kids get them to help you shop – it teaches them all about healthy eating.
5. Learn to love vegies and legumes

The best way to cut down on bad fats is to eat plenty of fresh vegetables and legumes (or pulses). Pack a punch by adding as many colours and varieties as you can. Learn to love legumes – they fill us up and are loaded with fibre, vitamins and antioxidants.

Hint: try adding legumes to your vegie intake – one serve of legumes is 75 g (about a half a cup) of cooked beans, peas, chickpeas or lentils. If you don’t have time to cook from dried, use canned instead. Try our hearty vegetable soup.

6. Get the good oil

When cooking, get into the habit of using a small amount of oil, margarine and butter. Grease pans with cooking spray, or use a pastry brush to apply oils and spreads directly to food instead of adding it to the pan. Use unsaturated oils and spreads, such as canola, olive, sunflower, safflower, corn or soy. Watch coconut oil and cream, they’re high in saturated fat.

Hint: when cooking with oil, or using unsaturated spreads (such as margarine on sandwiches), aim for one teaspoon per person. Measure it out too – or you may end up eating more than you bargained for!
Be a master chef

Be adventurous in the kitchen – try healthier methods and modify recipes. Steam, bake, grill, braise, boil or microwave meals rather than frying in loads of oil. For example, meat, fish and vegetables can be roasted in the oven – put meat on a rack with a dish underneath to collect oil and fat. Invest in some non-stick cookware to lessen the amount of oil required. Replace oil with liquids too (such as chicken or beef stock, red or white wine, lemon juice, fruit juice, vinegar or even tap water).

Hint: look for healthy alternatives to popular meals – give these potato wedges a go, they’re better than chips, quick to make and the dishes aren’t as greasy to clean!

Lean meat is best

If you’re a carnivore, watch how much saturated fat you’re eating. Buy lean meat, trim off any visible fat, remove skin from poultry and limit fatty processed meats, (such as sausages and salami). Processed meats are high in salt and higher in saturated fat than lean meat – so make them occasional foods and not part of your daily diet. Put less meat in dishes by increasing the amount of veggies and legumes you eat. One pot meals such as stews, curries and casseroles are ideal. Try to go meat-free at least one day a week. If you’re stuck for ideas, check out these healthy recipes.

Hint: aim for 65 g of cooked lean red meat (no more than 455 g per week), or 80 g of cooked lean poultry per serve, (a serve is roughly the size of your palm). We only need around one to three serves of protein (e.g. lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts or seeds and legumes) each day. Remember, our dietary needs vary depending on our age and gender.
**Be dairy aware**

Go for low or reduced-fat dairy products when you can. Full fat milk, yoghurt, cheese and alternatives are an important source of calcium and nutrients in our diet, but can increase our kilojoule count if we’re not careful. Unless a recipe states otherwise, stick to reduced or low-fat varieties. Limit your intake of meals with creamy sauces and swap them for pesto, salsa, chutneys and tomato-based sauces – they’re much better on our waistlines! Use low-fat yoghurt or milk, evaporated skim milk or cornflower instead of cream in sauces or soups.

Note: reduced or low fat milk is not recommended for children under two.

Hint: read food labels carefully, some low-fat products contain hidden salt and sugars.

**Go easy on takeaway**

A whopping one third of our household budget goes on takeaway food and dining out. Because we can’t see how the meals are prepared we have no idea how much fat goes into them. Many takeaway outlets use saturated fats because they’re cheaper and can withstand cooking at high temperatures. Make takeaway an occasional treat and opt for meals lower in ‘bad fats’ such as – grilled burgers, souvlaki, pizzas with less meat and cheese, and grilled and skinless chicken.

Hint: try to steer clear of hot chips – a large serve contains around 50 g of saturated fat, (well above the recommended daily intake of 20 g).
Eating out

If you’re eating out, ditch the all you can eat buffet and select from the menu. It’s a good idea to ask for dressings and sauces on the side so that way you control how much you want to eat. Avoid fries as a side dish and opt for veggies or salad. Steer clear from fried food and choose grilled instead. Think about how much you’re eating – do you really need that entrée or starter? And if you have dessert, choose healthier alternatives such sorbet instead of ice-cream or fruit instead of cheesecake.

Hint: Check out Livellighter for ways to eat healthily when dining out.

Be snack savvy

Many snacks, especially the ones we buy are high in saturated fats. If you’re prone to snacking, you could be consuming the equivalent of a small meal – a handful of potato chips can contain up to three teaspoons of fat! If you need to snack, opt for low-fat – small tubs of yoghurt, fresh fruit, nuts or cut up vegie sticks with homemade dips or salsa are ideal. When at work or out and about, keep snacks handy in your desk or bag so you’re less likely to pig out on junk foods. This rule applies after exercise too, and don’t forget to drink lots of water.

Hint: although it can be tempting, don’t snack in front of the TV – we’re less likely to respond to our body signals when we zone out and end up eating far more than we need!
13. **Big is not better**

We should be eating no more than 20 g of saturated per day, which according to the Heart Foundation, is around seven per cent of our daily diet. Most of us however, are eating nearly double that limit. Over the years, the size of our meals has grown at an alarming rate. Take control of portions by following this simple rule – a half of our plate can be taken up with a variety of veggies, a quarter with cereals and grains, and a quarter with meat and alternatives (meat, fish, tofu, legumes). Be a mindful eater – are you really hungry or just eating for the sake of it? Do you take time to savour your food or wolf it down? If you find it difficult to cut back, do it slowly – even reducing in small amounts can make a difference.

Hint: use a smaller plate or go for an entrée size when eating out. And if you’re loading up or going in for seconds, it might be time to rethink about what and how much you’re eating!

14. **Be a fan of fish**

Fish is a wonder food – rich in good oils such as omega-3 fatty acids, which are linked to better heart and brain health. Although omega-3 can be found in other animal and plant sources, fish – especially oily fish is best. If your budget is tight, it doesn’t mean you need to forgo the health benefits – tinned fish (such as sardines, salmon and tuna) are higher in omega-3 than some fresh varieties. If you’re looking for fresh – salmon, trout, gemfish and flathead are ideal, but any variety is better than none. Check out the Australian Dietary Guidelines for more on recommended serves.

Hint: if you’re a meat eater, replace one meal with fish each week (even better if you can do more!) Try our quick and easy fish and tomato casserole.
Burning Fat

Here in Australia, we are lucky to live somewhere where food is plentiful. Unfortunately, many of us overeat and are consuming more energy than we burn, which leads to weight gain. Fat (37 kJ) is energy dense, it contains more kilojoules (or calories) than other components in foods such as protein (17 kJ) and carbohydrates (16 kJ). When we exercise, some fats break down (metabolise) faster than others, and saturated fats are the hardest to shift. Aim for at 30 minutes of moderate physical activity every day (kids need more – 60 minutes) and cut down on the amount you eat, especially high fat foods.

Hint: embrace technology; it’s a great way to track your way to a healthy lifestyle. There are plenty of reputable apps out there and many of them are free!

References

- Dietary fats, MedlinePlus, National Library of Medicine and National Institutes of Health, Department of Health and Human Services, USA. More information here.
- Fats and cholesterol, Heart Foundation. More information here.

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Healthy eating basics

- Balancing energy in and energy out
  A kilojoule is a unit of measure of energy, in the same way that kilometres measure distance.
- Body mass index (BMI)
  Body mass index or BMI is an approximate measure of your total body fat.
- Children's diet - fruit and vegetables
  If you eat and enjoy fruit and vegetables every day, your child may eventually follow your lead.
- Dairy and dairy alternatives
  Dairy products (and dairy alternatives) are packed with calcium, protein and lots of other essential nutrients. Calcium is vital for healthy teeth and bones. It is also important for your muscles.
- Eggs
  The humble egg is a powerhouse of nutritional goodness. Eggs are full of things your body needs. They are a great source of protein, antioxidants, vitamins and minerals (such as vitamin A, vitamin D).
- Energy in food (kilojoules and calories)
  A kilojoule is a unit of measure of energy, in the same way that kilometres measure distance.
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ)
  FSANZ's role is to protect the health and safety of people in Australia and New Zealand by maintaining a safe food supply.
• Getting enough protein

Protein is an important nutrient that helps your body grow and repair cells. Most Australians eat more than enough protein, but if you are vegetarian or vegan you may not be getting enough protein or...

• Healthy eating tips

A good balance between exercise and food intake is important to maintain a healthy body weight...

• How to cut down on salt (slideshow)

Even if you are careful about the salt you consume, you may be surprised that some of the food you eat contains hidden salt that you’re not even aware of. Learn how to cut down on salt...

• Kids and energy needs

It’s important for kids to eat a wide variety of foods for a healthy, well-balanced diet and to be physically active. Creating healthy habits during childhood helps to ensure lifelong healthy...

• Look after your health at harvest time (slideshow)

Farmers health, wellbeing and safety are often neglected when facing the pressures of harvest. Simple safety measures can dramatically reduce the risk of injury and illness...

Food types

• Alcohol explained

The size of a standard drink can vary according to the type of alcohol..

• Cereals and wholegrain foods

Common cereal foods include bread, breakfast cereals and pasta..

• Dairy and dairy alternatives

Dairy products (and dairy alternatives) are packed with calcium, protein and lots of other essential nutrients. Calcium is vital for healthy teeth and bones. It is also important for your muscles..

• Fats and oils

Animal products and processed foods like fried fast food are generally high in saturated fats..

• Fish

Eating two or more serves of fish per week can reduce the risk of a range of diseases including dementia, depression and cardiovascular disease..

• Fruit and vegetables

Eating fruit and vegetables can help protect against some diseases including diabetes and some cancers..

• Getting enough protein

Protein is an important nutrient that helps your body grow and repair cells. Most Australians eat more than enough protein, but if you are vegetarian or vegan you may not be getting enough protein or..

• Herbs

Use herbs to enhance the flavour of virtually any dish, including desserts..

• Lunch at work

Did you know lunch is just as important as breakfast? In other words, don’t skip lunch: you need it every day! A nutritious lunch will give you the energy to get through an afternoon of work..

• Meat and poultry

Meat and poultry are a great source of protein and lots of other nutrients your body needs. Check your recommended intake of meat and poultry and try to stick with it..

• Nutrition – Summer fruit and vegetables (video)

Salads are a great way for you achieve your 5 serves of vegies every day..

• Nuts and seeds

Nuts are a healthy food and a good source of protein and healthy fats..

• Organic food

Organic foods are farmed in a more environmentally sustainable way than conventional foods..

• Simple ways to cut down on fat (slideshow)

Cutting down on fat is not as hard as you think. Here’s how to maintain a healthy weight by consuming the right amount and types of fat..

• Soft drinks, juice and sweet drinks - children

Encourage children to drink and enjoy water. Sweet drinks such as juices, cordial and soft drinks may cause health problems for children if consumed in large amounts..
Soft drinks, juice and sweet drinks – limit intake
Consumption of drinks containing added sugar is associated with weight gain, reduced bone strength and tooth erosion and decay.

Vitamins and supplements

- 10 tips for getting enough vitamin D
  A balanced UV approach is required to ensure some sun exposure for vitamin D while minimising the risk of skin cancer.
- Antioxidants
  Antioxidants scavenge free radicals from the body’s cells, and prevent or reduce the damage caused by oxidation.
- Calcium
  If you don’t have enough calcium in your diet, your bones will eventually become weak and brittle.
- Folate for pregnant women
  Even women who aren’t planning to have a baby should increase their folate intake in case of unplanned pregnancy.
- Iodine
  Good sources of iodine include fortified bread and any type of seafood, including seaweed.
- Iron
  Iron is important for transporting oxygen in the blood.
- Vitamin and mineral supplements
  Taking vitamin supplements is no substitute for a healthy diet.
- Vitamin B
  The eight B-group vitamins are essential for various functions within the body.
- Vitamin D
  A balanced approach to sunlight exposure will help you get enough vitamin D while protecting against skin cancer.
- Vitamin D - maintaining levels in winter (video)
- Vitamins - common misconceptions
  There is no evidence that any one vitamin can slow ageing, restore sex drive or cure infertility.

Health conditions and food

- Arthritis and diet
  No special diet or ‘miracle food’ can cure arthritis, but some conditions may be helped by avoiding or including certain foods.
- Asthma and food allergies
  It is important to identify any foods or food chemicals that may trigger your asthma, but this must be done under strict medical supervision.
- Cancer and food
  Diet can influence your risk of developing some cancers, but there is no evidence that specific foods can cause or cure cancer.
- Cholesterol - healthy eating tips
  Replacing foods that contain saturated fats with foods that contain polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats will help to lower your cholesterol.
- Coeliac disease and gluten sensitivity
  Coeliac disease is an immune disease caused by gluten.
- Diabetes and healthy eating
  Healthy eating for people with diabetes is no different than for everyone else.
- Eggs
  The humble egg is a powerhouse of nutritional goodness. Eggs are full of things your body needs. They are a great source of protein, antioxidants, vitamins and minerals (such as vitamin A, vitamin D, ...)
- Food allergy and intolerance
  Food allergy is an immune response, while food intolerance is a chemical reaction.
- Food poisoning - prevention
  You can minimise the risk of food poisoning by taking simple precautions.

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• Getting enough protein

Protein is an important nutrient that helps your body grow and repair cells. Most Australians eat more than enough protein, but if you are vegetarian or vegan you may not be getting enough protein or...

• Have you had an allergic reaction to packaged food?

The Food Standards Code requires that certain foods must be listed on the package of a food, or made known to the customer upon request. If you experience an allergic reaction to a known allergen not...

• Health check

This health assessment questionnaire will identify which areas of your lifestyle are contributing to your personal health risk and provide actions you can take to make positive change...

• Heart disease and food

A diet low in saturated fats and high in fibre and plant foods can substantially reduce your risk of developing heart disease..

• Huntington's disease and diet issues

Weight loss is often associated with Huntington's disease, but it doesn't appear to be a direct result of diet..

• Lunch at work

Did you know lunch is just as important as breakfast? In other words, don't skip lunch; you need it every day! A nutritious lunch will give you the energy to get through an afternoon of work..

• Mood and food

Your mood can affect your food choices, and your food choices may affect your mood..

• Pregnancy and diet

Good nutrition during pregnancy can help to keep you and your developing baby healthy..

• Scurvy

Scurvy is uncommon in Australia but anyone whose diet is inadequate in vitamin C is at risk..

• Type 2 diabetes - healthy eating and exercise (video)

People with type 2 diabetes talk about positive lifestyle changes that improve their quality of life..

Food science and technology

• Carbohydrates and the glycaemic index

The glycaemic index (GI) can be a useful tool to control blood sugar levels..

• Eggs

The humble egg is a powerhouse of nutritional goodness. Eggs are full of things your body needs. They are a great source of protein, antioxidants, vitamins and minerals (such as vitamin A, vitamin D).

• Fats and oils

Animal products and processed foods like fried fast food are generally high in saturated fats..

• Fibre in food

A diet high in fibre keeps the digestive system healthy..

• Food additives

The long-term effects of consuming a combination of different additives in our food are currently unknown..

• Food - genetically modified (GM)

Some foods include ingredients that have been genetically modified (GM), or are made using ingredients derived from GM organisms..

• Food irradiation

Food irradiation can kill insects, moulds and bacteria, but it cannot kill viruses..

• Food labels

Food labels carry useful information to help you make good choices about food..

• Food - pesticides and other chemicals

Chemicals such as pesticides, antibiotics and hormones are used to boost food production and ensure adequate food supply..

• Food processing and nutrition

Careful cooking and storage will help retain the nutrients in your food..

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Meat and poultry

Meat and poultry are a great source of protein and lots of other nutrients your body needs. Check your recommended intake of meat and poultry and try to stick with it.

Mercury in fish

Pregnant women and young children should limit consumption of fish that contain high levels of mercury.

Protein

The human body can't store protein, so it must be supplied daily from the foods we eat.

Salt

Too much sodium (salt) can cause high blood pressure and many other health conditions.

Sugar

Too much sugar in the diet can contribute to health problems, so limit foods and drinks with high amounts of added sugar.

Planning shopping and cooking

10 tips for healthy shopping

Make a shopping list for healthier food choices – 10 tips for healthy shopping.

Breakfast

Children who skip breakfast may lack sufficient vitamins and minerals including iron, calcium, zinc and vitamin B2.

Celebrations - Christmas Day the healthy way (video)

Victorian State Public Health Nutritionist, Veronica Graham shows us how to cook a light and healthy Christmas meal without overindulging. Whatever way you celebrate, there are ways to eat healthily.

Celebrations - healthy birthday parties (video)

Birthday parties can be healthy as well as fun. Flip Shelton reports on some great ideas for healthy and tasty treats for your child’s next birthday.

Cooking healthy alternatives (video)

Chef Andrew Blake shows people how to cook healthy fish and chips, spring rolls and pancakes.

Cooking tips for busy people

If you lack the time or motivation to cook, try these tips.

Eating out – healthy food from different cultures (video)

Nutritionist Shane Bilsborough takes us on a tour of Melbourne’s restaurants. Some popular food from different cultures is high in fat and kilojoules. There are, however, some healthy alternatives.

Food labels

Food labels carry useful information to help you make good choices about food.

Food shopping - a family’s healthy market shop (video)

Food shopping - fresh produce choices at local markets (video)

Reporter Flip Shelton takes us on a tour and shows us what fresh produce is available at a local market.

Food to have sometimes

Junk food should be kept to a minimum. It usually contains a lot of fat, salt or sugar.

Food variety and a healthy diet

If you eat a variety of good food, your diet will provide you with adequate nutrition.

Healthy budget - tucker talk tips

You can buy more food if you spend most of your money on basic healthy foods like bread, cereals, fruit and vegies.

Healthy cooking tips

Eating healthy food doesn't mean giving up your favourite foods and switching to eating only salads.

Healthy eating tips

A good balance between exercise and food intake is important to maintain a healthy body weight.

How to cut down on salt (slide show)

Even if you are careful about the salt you consume, you may be surprised that some of the food you eat contains hidden salt that you’re not even aware of. Learn how to cut down on salt.

Lunch at work
Did you know lunch is just as important as breakfast? In other words, don’t skip lunch; you need it every day! A nutritious lunch will give you the energy to get through an afternoon of work.

- Lunch - avoid the fast food fix (video)

Nutritionist Shane Bilsborough shows us how much energy it takes to burn off a fast food lunch. Join tradies, Corky and Danny as they find out how to maintain a healthy weight.

- Lunch boxes - healthy shopping ideas (video)

Victorian State Public Health Nutritionist Veronica Graham takes us shopping for the right foods to include in your child’s lunchbox.

- Lunch boxes - how to make them healthy (video)

Victorian State Public Health Nutritionist Veronica Graham shares three healthy and delicious lunchbox examples for the kids and provides some great food preparation tips to save you time throughout.

- Reading food labels - tucker talk tips

Labels on packaged food can give you useful information about the nutrition, ingredients, storage and weight of the food. Add full stop to pull quote.

- Shopping at fresh food markets (video)

Victorian State Nutritionist, Veronica Graham talks about the benefits of shopping at fresh produce markets.

- Tips to keep our snacks on track (slideshow)

Most of us are prone to the odd snack or two. Check out these simple tips to keep your snacks on track.

Food safety and storage

- Avoid food poisoning - Cook Safe (video)

Learn how to prepare and cook food safely at home.

- Avoid food poisoning - Shop Safe (video)

Learn how to keep your hot and cold foods separate and shop safely for food.

- Avoid food poisoning - Store Safe (video)

Learn how to store food safely in your fridge at home.

- Be savvy with food this summer (slideshow)

How to keep food fresh and safe in warmer weather.

- Cockroaches

Cockroaches prefer to live in kitchens and other food preparation areas, so they can feed off food spills.

- Don't let food poisoning ruin your summer (slideshow)

How to avoid food poisoning this summer.

- Eggs

The humble egg is a powerhouse of nutritional goodness. Eggs are full of things your body needs. They are a great source of protein, antioxidants, vitamins and minerals (such as vitamin A, vitamin D).

- Emergencies - coping without gas or electricity

In a gas or electricity blackout you may have to think laterally to come up with ways to continue bathing, eating and keeping warm.

- Fishing - eat your catch with care

People who fish in the Lower Yarra and Maribyrnong rivers need to be careful about eating their catch because of the risk of chemical exposure.

- Food poisoning - listeria

Listeria infection is uncommon but very dangerous for the elderly, people whose immune systems are not working properly and pregnant women and their unborn babies.

- Food poisoning - prevention

You can minimise the risk of food poisoning by taking simple precautions.

- Food safety and storage

High-risk food should be kept at 5 °C or below, and above 60 °C to avoid the temperature danger zone and food poisoning.

- Food safety - eggs

To enjoy eggs safely - buy clean, keep cool and cook well.

- Food safety for summer celebrations (video)

In the hot weather there is a higher risk of food poisoning but if you follow some simple rules when you prepare, handle and store food it will significantly reduce your risk of...
Food safety outdoors

Food poisoning is a real risk when taking food outside the home, especially in warmer weather.

Food safety when cooking

Most foods should be cooked to at least 75 °C to minimise the risk of food poisoning.

Food safety when eating out

If you have any doubt about the safety of food when you're out, don't eat it.

Food safety when shopping

When you shop, choose, pack and transport food carefully.

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ)

FSANZ's role is to protect the health and safety of people in Australia and New Zealand by maintaining a safe food supply.

Food – use-by and best-before dates

Check the ‘use-by’ or ‘best before’ date when you buy food.

Dieting and diets

10 tips on how to eat more calcium
Reduce your intake of coffee, alcohol and soft drinks.

Body image and diets

Some people diet because they have a poor body image, not because they want to be a healthy weight.

Dairy and dairy alternatives

Dairy products (and dairy alternatives) are packed with calcium, protein and lots of other essential nutrients. Calcium is vital for healthy teeth and bones. It is also important for your muscles.

Food allergy and intolerance

Food allergy is an immune response, while food intolerance is a chemical reaction.

Food for sport - tucker talk tips

Carbohydrate is the most important nutrient for athletes.

Getting enough protein

Protein is an important nutrient that helps your body grow and repair cells. Most Australians eat more than enough protein, but if you are vegetarian or vegan you may not be getting enough protein.

Gluten-free diet

Gluten sensitivity can be managed with a gluten-free diet.

Heart disease and food

A diet low in saturated fats and high in fibre and plant foods can substantially reduce your risk of developing heart disease.

How to cut down on salt (slide show)

Even if you are careful about the salt you consume, you may be surprised that some of the food you eat contains hidden salt that you’re not even aware of. Learn how to cut down on salt.

Mood and food

Your mood can affect your food choices, and your food choices may affect your mood.

Simple ways to cut down on fat (slide show)

Cutting down on fat is not as hard as you think. Here's how to maintain a healthy weight by consuming the right amount and types of fat.

Sporting performance and food

Good nutrition and a healthy diet are essential to improving your sports performance.

Tips to keep our snacks on track (slide show)

Most of us are prone to the odd snack or two. Check out these simple tips to keep your snacks on track.

Vegetarian and vegan eating

A well-planned vegetarian or vegan diet can meet nutritional needs during all stages of life.

Vegetarian diets and children

betterhealth.vic.gov.au
Children can eat a vegetarian diet and stay healthy as long as their extra nutritional needs are met.

- **Weight loss and fad diets**
  With a balanced eating plan, it's what you leave in that makes all the difference.

- **Weight management services**
  Always consult with your doctor before choosing any weight management service.

- **Women's nutrition for life**
  ‘Nutrition for life’ identifies a woman’s four main life stages and how to eat healthily for each of them. Following this information can lead to better health at any stage of your life.

### Nutritional needs throughout life

- **Women's nutrition for life**
  ‘Nutrition for life’ identifies a woman’s four main life stages and how to eat healthily for each of them. Following this information can lead to better health at any stage of your life.

- **Bottle feeding - nutrition and safety**
  Breastmilk or commercial infant formula is necessary for all babies less than 12 months.

- **Breastfeeding and your diet**
  Breastfeeding women need to eat regularly and include a wide variety of healthy foods in their diet.

- **Childcare and healthy eating**
  Childcare centres should provide healthy meals for your children.

- **Dairy and dairy alternatives**
  Dairy products (and dairy alternatives) are packed with calcium, protein and lots of other essential nutrients. Calcium is vital for healthy teeth and bones. It is also important for your muscles.

- **Disability - managing underweight**
  There are a number of ways that a person with a disability can successfully avoid unwanted weight loss.

- **Eating tips for babies**
  First foods for babies can be prepared easily and cheaply at home without salt, seasonings and sweeteners.

- **Eating tips for children (3) - older toddlers**
  Offer children the same foods as the family, with a variety of textures and flavours for balanced nutrition.

- **Eating tips for preschoolers**
  Children are able to decide how much food they need for activity and growth if allowed to eat according to their appetite.

- **Eating tips for school children**
  Snacks are an important part of a healthy diet for active children, so offer nutritious as well as high energy snacks.

- **Eating tips for young toddlers**
  Children have a natural ability to sense when they are hungry and when they are full.

- **Eggs**
  The humble egg is a powerhouse of nutritional goodness. Eggs are full of things your body needs. They are a great source of protein, antioxidants, vitamins and minerals (such as vitamin A, vitamin D).

- **Food and your life stages**
  The nutritional requirements of the human body change as we move through different life stages.

- **Food for babies - tucker talk tips**
  Before six months, breastmilk or formula is the only food and drink that your baby needs.

- **Getting enough protein**
  Protein is an important nutrient that helps your body grow and repair cells. Most Australians eat more than enough protein, but if you are vegetarian or vegan you may not be getting enough protein either.

- **Good food for Elders - tucker talk tips**
  Good nutrition, a healthy diet and physical activity can help Elders prevent or manage health problems.

- **Healthy active Koori kids - tucker talk tips**

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**betterhealth.vic.gov.au**
Good nutrition and physical exercise help to keep Koori kids healthy and avoid diseases when they get older.

- Healthy budget - tucker talk tips
  You can buy more food if you spend most of your money on basic healthy foods like bread, cereals, fruit and veggies.

- Healthy eating during pregnancy - tucker talk tips
  Some foods should be avoided during pregnancy as they carry bacteria that could harm your unborn baby.

- Healthy eating for adolescent girls
  Eating healthy food is important at any age, but it’s especially important for teenagers.

- Healthy eating for women in midlife
  As you get older you need fewer calories, but your need for other nutrients remains unchanged. Healthy...

- Healthy eating for women in their later years
  Being well nourished improves women’s mental and physical health and quality of life at all life stages.

- Healthy eating for young women
  Good nutrition is especially important during this stage of your life when there is so much happening: independent living, career development, travel, establishing relationships, babies and families.

- Lunch at work
  Did you know lunch is just as important as breakfast? In other words, don’t skip lunch: you need it every day! A nutritious lunch will give you the energy to get through an afternoon of work.

- Nutrition needs when you're over 65
  Nutrition needs vary with age and gender. Now you’re older, the foods and drinks that make up a healthy diet may need to be slightly different from when you were younger. In general, you&...
Healthy recipes

Check out our recipes section for a range of healthy eating options. You can search for delicious recipes by meal, ingredient or your dietary requirements.