**A BALANCED DIET**

**THE 5 FOOD GROUPS**

A healthy diet does not need to be complicated. Eat food from the 5 food groups every day. The 5 food groups are:

* vegetables and legumes (beans)
* fruit
* grains and cereals
* lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, legumes (beans), tofu, nuts, seeds
* milk, cheese, yogurt or alternatives

Each food group has important nutrients. The amount of food from each group you need will vary during your life. Your diet will depend on factors such as:

* how active you are
* whether or not you are growing
* whether or not you are [pregnant](https://www.pregnancybirthbaby.org.au/healthy-diet-during-pregnancy) or [breastfeeding](https://www.pregnancybirthbaby.org.au/diet-and-medication-while-breastfeeding)

**VEGETABLES AND LEGUMES (beans and peas)**

Vegetables and legumes are rich in nutrients such as:

* vitamins
* minerals
* dietary fiber

To get the most nutrition, make sure you choose:

* vegetables that are in season
* fresh, frozen or canned vegetables
* different colored vegetables:
  + Greens like beans, peas, spinach, brussels sprouts and broccoli
  + red, orange, or yellow vegetables like capsicums, tomatoes, carrots, sweet potato, and pumpkin
  + purple vegetables like red cabbage and eggplant
  + white vegetables like cauliflower, mushrooms and potatoes

Eating vegetables raw is often the healthier option. However, there are some vegetables which offer useful benefits when they are cooked.

**HOW MUCH?**

* Adults and people ages 9 and over = 5-6 servings a day

One serving of vegetables and legumes is equal to:

* ½ cup, cooked vegetables and legumes
* 1 cup, raw vegetables and legumes

You can include vegetables at lunch as well as dinner, by eating:

* raw veggies
* salad
* soup
* roasted vegetables on sandwiches or in salads

Cherry tomatoes, snow peas, green beans, red pepper, celery, or carrot sticks with hummus make a great snack.

**FRUIT**

Fresh fruit is a good source of vitamins, minerals and dietary fiber. Fresh fruit is the best to purchase and consume over canned.

**HOW MUCH?**

* **Adults and people over 9 years old: 2** servings a day

A single serving of fruit is one of the following:

* 1 piece of medium-sized fruit
* 2 pieces of small-sized fruit
* ½ cup (125ml) of 100% fruit juice
* 1 cup of diced, cooked, or canned fruit
* 30g of dried fruit

If you want to have fruit juice, drink it only occasionally. Half a cup (125ml) is enough. Fruit juices without pulp lack fiber and commercial fruit juices are often high in sugar. If you choose to eat canned fruit, choose options that are canned in water or natural juice rather than syrup.

Dried fruit also has a high sugar content. It is only suitable as an occasional extra.

**GRAIN AND CEREAL FOODS**

Grain and cereal foods include rolled oats, brown rice, whole meal and whole grain breads, cracked wheat, barley, buckwheat, and breakfast cereals. Whole grain foods are better for you because they have more fiber and vitamins.

**HOW MUCH?**

* Adults= 3-6 Servings a day

A serving is one of the following:

* 1 slice of bread
* ½ cup cooked rice, oats, pasta, or other grain
* 3 rye crispbread
* 30g of breakfast cereal (⅔ cup flakes or ¼ cup muesli or oats)

**LEAN MEAT, POULTRY, FISH, EGGS, LEGUMES (Beans), TOFU, NUTS and SEEDS**

These foods are high in protein, minerals, and vitamins. Legumes, nuts, and seeds also have dietary fiber. It’s good to choose a variety of foods from this group. Oily fish such as salmon and mackerel are very healthy. It is recommended that you eat these twice per week.

**HOW MUCH?**

* 9–18-year-olds = 2 ½ servings a day
* Adult Men = 2 ½ to 3 servings a day
* Women and children over 9 = 2 - 2 ½ servings per day

A serving is one of the following:

* 65g cooked red meat (2.5 ounces)
* 80g poultry (3 ounces)
* 100g fish (3.5 ounces)
* 2 eggs
* 1 cup legumes (beans)
* 170g tofu
* 30g nuts, seeds, or pastes, such as peanut butter (1-1.5 ounces)

**DAIRY: MILK CHEESE AND YOGURT**

Dairy Products give you protein, vitamins, and calcium.

Soy drinks with added calcium can be used as a milk substitute for children over one year.

Some other plant-based alternatives to milk, such as nut or oat milk, have added calcium. However, they can lack vitamin B12 and enough protein.

**HOW MUCH?**

* 9–18-year-olds = 2 ½ - 3 ½ servings a day
* Adult males = 2 ½ - 3 ½ servings a day
* Adult women = 2 ½ - 4 servings a day
* Women over age 51 = 4 servings a day

A serving is one of the following:

* 1 cup of milk
* 2 slices of cheese
* ¾ cup yogurt
* 1 cup of calcium enriched plant-based milk

If you use plant-based alternatives to milk, check that they have at least 100mg calcium per 100mL.

**DRINKS**

Apart from milk, the ideal drink for everyone is tap water.

**DISCRETIONARY CHOICES**

Foods that are not included in the 5 food groups are called discretionary choices or extras. Some of it could be called “junk food”.

Oils and Spreads: You can eat small amounts of unsaturated oils and spreads. These may be from: Olives, Soybeans, Corn, Canola, sunflower, safflower, sesame, or grapeseed.

Other discretionary choices are not needed in a healthy diet. These include:

* Biscuits
* Cakes and ice cream
* Soft drinks/sodas
* Sport drinks, energy drinks and fruit drinks
* Candies and chocolates
* Processed meats
* Potato chips and snack foods
* Fast food hamburgers
* Fried foods
* alcohol

These foods often provide excess sugar, saturated fats, sugar and/or salt. They are nutrient-poor. They also often replace healthier foods in diets.