Eating for good health

Enjoying a healthy diet can boost energy and improve your mood. It can also help to combat disease, control your weight, and improve your chances of living a long and fulfilling life.

There's a lot of information available about nutrition and you might feel as if the guidelines are always changing. It can be hard to know which foods are considered healthy and which are not.

The good news is, you'll be happier and healthier if you allow yourself to eat a range of foods. Michael Pollan is a Harvard Professor who became famous for his practical books about food and nutrition. He found that eating for health can be guided by seven words. Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants.

There are no rules

Focusing too much on food rules can negatively impact your happiness and health (Appetite 2016).

The optimal diet is one personalised for you and your body. What is best for you may not be good for someone else. However, there are two facts which are not up for debate:

1. **People tend to have higher rates of obesity, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer when they eat a diet which is high in:**

   - Processed foods
   - meat
   - refine grains
   - added fat and sugar.

2. **Populations eating traditional diets are healthier.**

Researchers have found that there is no one ideal human diet. Humans are adapted to eat a wide range of foods. However, we are not well adapted for the Western diet of processed food (bmcpublichealth 2019).

The Western diet is linked to many chronic diseases, but research has shown the negative effects of this diet can quickly be turned around (BMC 2023). This means it's never too late to make positive changes.

Open Food Facts is a database of food products from around the world. It shows that most products have long lists of unhealthy ingredients and artificial additives. It can help you make healthy choices between processed and unprocessed food .

The effects of processed foods

Unprocessed, whole foods affect your hormones in a good way. This is what helps you register your body's natural cues and lets you know when you're full (Cell Metabolism 2019).

Processed foods tend to be eaten faster. This might be why your body doesn't register when you're full until you've eaten too much. Processed foods are also engineered to be addictive. (PLOS 2018).

If you don't get the nutrients you need, you may begin to feel unwell or end up malnourished. If you already have poor health or a chronic condition, this could get worse.

A diet that supports healthy bones is particularly important as you get older.

Changing nutritional needs

As you age, your lifestyle and appetite can change. This may affect the type and amount of food you eat . A smaller appetite, or reduced ability to buy and prepare healthy foods, can also affect the vitamins, minerals, and fibre intake you need.

Learn more about your changing nutritional needs at:

- [Healthy eating over 60 | Healthdirect](#)

- [Nutrition and older adults | Nutrition Australia](#)

- [How Your Nutritional Needs Change as You Age | Healthline](#)

- [Nutrition for Older Adults | Oregon State University online course](#)

When to get help

Consult a health professional before changing your diet if you have any medical conditions. You may be referred to a dietitian.

A dietitian can help you manage health conditions. They work with your doctor. They can review blood and other test results to make an eating plan for you.

You may also be eligible for a Medicare rebate as part of a [disease management plan](#).

Healthdirect provides detailed information about the dietitian services available in Australia. This includes the costs of seeing a dietitian and options for reducing the cost.

Beware of fad diets and supplements

Avoid fad and restriction diets. Restriction makes you want to eat things you're telling yourself you shouldn't eat (ABC 2023).

A balanced diet with lots of variety will give your body all the vitamins and minerals it needs (Conversation 2022).

If you're at risk of a deficiency, or if you follow a vegan or vegetarian diet, see a health professional. They can help you with your diet and give you advice about supplements you might need.

Supplements can interact with medications and sometimes do more harm than good. This is why it's best to get advice from your health professional.

Start with swaps

Eating a healthy diet starts with small changes. Begin by swapping a few processed foods with vegetables and unprocessed ingredients.

Explore the links below for ideas:

- Try for 5 recipes of the day

- Dietitians Australia recipes

- Foolproof ways to make vegetables taste good

- How to make vegetables taste good with 8 tricks

- Nutrition Australia recipes and healthy eating resources

- How to make vegetables taste good: flavour pairings & cooking strategies

Healthy eating on a budget

Many vegetables and legumes are good value for money. This is because they have a high nutrient value per calorie. Use the links below for tips to eat well on a budget:

- Healthy eating on a budget - LiveLighter
- 90 dirt cheap meals
- Cheap, easy ways to eat more vegetables - ABC
- Shopping seasonally could save you money - ABC
- Is fresh produce better than tinned and frozen fruit and veg? Not always - ABC News
- Planning a vegetable patch that produces all year round in Australia - ABC Everyday
- It's cheaper to buy meat close to its use-by date. But is it safe? - ABC Everyday

Assistive products

The LiveUp In the kitchen section has links to assistive products that can make cooking easy and enjoyable.

CONTACT US

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