

Guide to Healthy Eating

A healthy lifestyle that provides you with sufficient energy, health and wellbeing to enjoy life, is vital at all ages.

Introduction It is important to take good care of yourself, ensure you eat a healthy balanced diet and maintain a physically active lifestyle.

This guidance sheet highlights the fundamental guidelines for achieving a healthy balanced lifestyle and simple advice, so you can enjoy and live your life to the full.



What is a healthy diet?

A healthy balanced diet incorporates a range of foods from each of the food groups as highlighted in the food pyramid. The food pyramid is a visual model, presenting the general principles of healthy eating. It divides food into five categories depending on their nutritional qualities and effects on health, and provides guidelines on the amount and the portion size of foods to be consumed from each food group.

Choose
very small
amounts

Fats, High Fat/Sugar Snacks, Foods and Drinks

Use sparingly – choose fats high in monounsaturates or polyunsaturates.
Limit fried foods to 1-2 times a week. Only have small amounts of high fat/sugar snacks and drinks and not too often.



Choose any **2**

Meat, Fish, Eggs & Alternatives Choose lean cuts of meats.
Eat oily fish.



Choose any **3**

Milk, Cheese & Yogurt Choose low fat varieties.



Choose
any **5**

Fruit & Vegetables Choose green leafy vegetables
and citrus fruit frequently. Fruit juice only counts for
one serving, each day.



Choose
any **6+**

Bread, Cereals & Potatoes

Eat these foods at each meal – high fibre is best.



Source: Department of Health & Children (2005)

• Bread, Cereal & Potatoes

This is the largest of the food groups. It includes foods rich in carbohydrates which are an excellent source of energy. It is recommended to consume six or more portions from this group per day, depending on your lifestyle. High fibre options should be chosen regularly.

• Fruit & Vegetables

Fruit and vegetables are a source of essential vitamins and minerals and antioxidants. This group is also a source of dietary fibre. A wide variety of fruit and vegetables is recommended.

• Milk, Cheese & Yogurt

Milk and dairy products are a source of calcium which is vital for bone health¹. Recent research is also demonstrating that this group has a number of other important functions in the body e.g. blood pressure management². It is recommended that children and adults consume



three portions from this food group every day, while teenagers and pregnant/breastfeeding women need five portions. (Note: semi-skimmed/low-fat not recommended for children under 2 years of age and skimmed/fat-free not recommended for children under 5 years).

¹ Minerals and Trace Elements. *In Manual of Dietetic Practice*, 4th edition [Thomas B & Bishop J, editors]. Blackwell Publishing, London. 2007.

² Kris-Etherton PM *et al.* *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* 2009; 28: 103S-119S.

● Meat, Fish, Eggs & Alternatives

This food group is a source of protein and essential vitamins and minerals. Lean cuts of meat should be chosen and fish should include 1-2 portions of oily fish per week e.g. trout, salmon, mackerel or herring. Alternatives refer to pulses and non-meat products such as Quorn.

● Fats, High Fat/Sugar Snacks, Foods & Drinks

This food group is typically composed of high-energy foods which are low in nutritional quality. These foods should only be consumed occasionally and in small amounts.

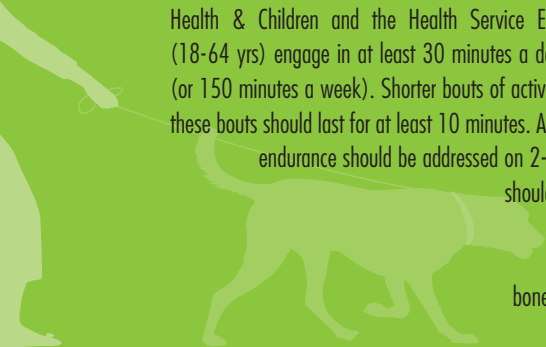
Some other tips for a healthy balanced diet

- Establish a regular eating pattern, ideally consisting of 3 meals—breakfast, lunch or light evening meal and dinner.
- Choose the healthier cooking method - grill, bake, boil or steam foods rather than frying.
- Limit salt intake - avoid adding salt while cooking or at the table.
- As more and more meals are consumed outside of the home, try to remember healthy eating options when dining out.

Other factors for a healthy lifestyle

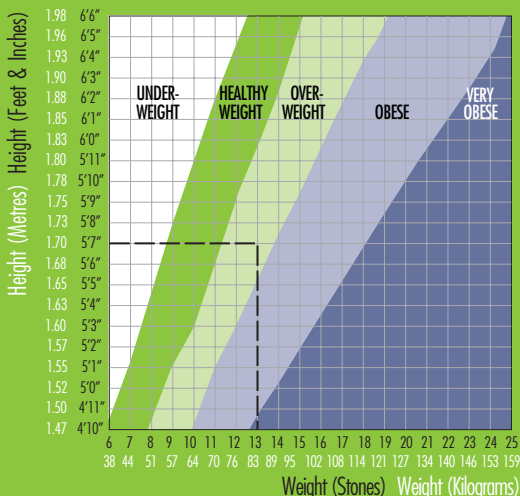
Physical Activity






There is no doubt that regular physical activity is beneficial to health. Being physically active can reduce your risk of many chronic diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure, and can also improve mental health and wellbeing. Guidelines published by the Department of Health & Children and the Health Service Executive in 2009 recommend that adults (18-64 yrs) engage in at least 30 minutes a day of moderate activity on five days a week (or 150 minutes a week). Shorter bouts of activity can contribute towards the guidelines, but these bouts should last for at least 10 minutes. Activities which increase muscular strength and endurance should be addressed on 2-3 days per week. Children and young people should engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity every day and should include muscle-strengthening, flexibility and bone-strengthening exercises three times a week.



Body Weight

Maintaining a healthy body weight is vital for health and wellbeing. Body mass index (BMI) is commonly used to assess body weight status. This chart will give you an idea of your current weight status. Simply draw a line across from your height and up from your weight to check what category you are in.



-  Underweight
-  Healthy weight
-  Overweight
Losing weight will benefit your health.
-  Obese
It is important that you lose weight.
-  Very Obese
Weight loss is vital for your health.
See your doctor/dietitian for advice and support.

Alcohol

If you consume alcohol, ensure to comply with guidelines; a weekly limit of 14 standard drinks for women and 21 standard drinks for men is advised. It is important to spread these guidelines over the week. This corresponds to daily a daily limit of two or three standard drinks for women and three or four standard drinks for men, while leaving some alcohol free days. One unit is equal to a half pint of beer, small glass of wine, a glass of sherry or a pub measure of spirits.

For further information contact:



Smoking

Smoking is a major risk factor for a number of chronic diseases. Refraining from smoking is one of the most important lifestyle changes to enhance health and wellbeing. If you would like help to stop smoking, consult your GP.

The National Dairy Council,
28 Westland Square, Dublin 2.
Tel: (01) 616 9726 Fax: (01) 616 9760
Email: info@ndc.ie

www.ndc.ie

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