

Eating well for good health

What you eat can make a huge difference to your health and wellbeing.

Choosing healthy and nutritious foods can lower your risk of getting health problems. It can help you manage health conditions like heart disease and diabetes. It can also boost your energy levels and make you feel good.

Tips for eating well

The following tips can help you make healthy and nutritious eating choices.

Have regular meals

Have regular meals to keep your energy levels up and your mind focused. Regular meals can also prevent hunger pains and overeating.

Be smart with snacks

If you are physically hungry between meals, have a small nutritious snack such as cheese, hummus, peanut butter, or avocado on a slice of wholegrain toast or crackers. Being physically hungry is your body telling you to eat. Signs include your tummy rumbling or feeling low on energy. See *Smart snacking for adults* on www.healthinfo.org.nz.

Eat plenty of different-coloured vegetables and fruit

Vegetables and fruits are full of fibre, vitamins, and minerals. These can help to keep you healthy and protect you from heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers.

Have at least three servings of vegetables and two servings of fruit every day (a serving is about a handful). Try to have vegetables or fruit at all meals. They are also great snacks.

Eat wholegrains

Wholegrains can help keep your bowels healthy. They can help you feel fuller and reduce your cholesterol and blood glucose (sugar) levels. They can also reduce your risk of diseases such as heart disease and bowel cancer.

Have at least one meal a day based around a wholegrain.

Wholegrains include wholegrain bread, rolled oats, brown rice, and wholemeal pasta. It also includes grains like quinoa, millet, barley, and buckwheat.



Watch the sugar

Sugary foods and drinks provide lots of calories but not much nutritional value. Choose foods that are naturally sweet and contain lots of nutrients, like fruit. Keep sugary foods and drinks as occasional treats.

Have some low-fat milk and milk products every day

Milk, yoghurt, and cheese give you nutrients like protein, calcium, and some B vitamins. These help to keep your body and bones healthy and strong. If you choose a plant-based milk such as soy, rice, or almond, make sure that it has added calcium. Choose natural yoghurts, as fruit yoghurts can contain lots of sugar and additives.



Watch your portion sizes

Use your hand to judge portion size (see www.heartfoundation.org.nz/shop/nutrition/docs/food-portions-a4.pdf). Or, follow the healthy plate model for lunch and dinner. Fill:

- half of your plate with vegetables or salad
- a quarter of your plate with protein-rich food like meat, chicken, seafood, eggs, legumes (dried beans, split peas, and lentils), tofu, tempeh, or Quorn
- a quarter of your plate with wholegrains or starchy vegetables such as potato, kumara, corn, or taro.



Drink plenty of fluids

Drink at least eight cups of fluid a day. Water is best. Low- or reduced-fat milk (light-blue, green, or yellow top) and tea and coffee with no sugar are also fine. If it's hard to drink tea and coffee without sugar, add a tiny bit of the natural sweetener stevia.

Go easy on alcohol

If you drink alcohol, follow national guidelines (see *Safe drinking* on www.healthinfo.org.nz) on how much to drink safely.

Prepare your own meals


Try to cook most of your meals at home. This can help you take charge of what you're eating and check exactly what goes into your meals. It can also help you eat fewer calories. If you do have takeaways, choose healthier options (see *Takeaway tips* on www.healthinfo.org.nz).

Eat mindfully

Eating quickly, on the run, or while distracted can lead you to eat more food than you realise or need. Eating mindfully can help you gain control over your eating habits.

Where to find out more about eating well

Talk to your general practice team for more information and visit the following websites:

-  *HealthInfo recommends the following pages*
 - Hapū Hauora – Oranga kai (healthy food)
Information on healthy eating from a Māori perspective.
 - Healthy Food Guide (www.healthyfood.com)
This site is full of information, recipes, videos, and expert advice to help you make healthy choices
 - Ministry of Health – Healthy eating, active living (go to www.healthed.govt.nz and search for “HE1518”)
Download this booklet which has easy-to-follow advice on how to choose healthy foods and drinks, have a healthy bodyweight, and be active every day.

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