



Australian Government

National Health and Medical Research Council

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Translating the science behind eating well and staying healthy

Australia is facing an obesity epidemic. The scientific evidence suggests that one of the contributing issues is the replacement of healthy, nutritious food with energy dense food with minimal nutritional value in Australian dietary patterns.

Health professionals working with people trying to achieve a healthy diet now have access to updated scientific evidence about the best dietary patterns for Australians of all ages.

“To achieve and maintain a healthy weight, Australians need to balance physical activity with amounts of nutritious foods and drinks that meet energy needs. We all need to limit energy rich nutrient poor ‘junk foods’ that are high in saturated fat, added salt or sugar,” NHMRC CEO Professor Warwick Anderson said.

A stringent review of around 55,000 scientific publications shows that the scientific evidence has strengthened about the link between diet and health.

“The evidence that links a healthy diet and reducing the risk of chronic health problems such as heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, obesity and some cancers is stronger. There is also stronger evidence about the kind of foods that can increase the risk of weight gain and health problems,” Professor Anderson said.

The revised *Infant Feeding Guidelines* were also issued today. Prepared by experts in paediatric nutrition, nutrition research, nutrition communication, public health and primary health, these Guidelines will help healthcare workers support parents in giving infants the best nutrition and start to life.

The *Australian Dietary Guidelines* and the *Infant Feeding Guidelines* are a joint initiative of NHMRC and the Department of Health and Ageing.

Further information

Further information is available from www.eatforhealth.gov.au

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Australian Dietary Guidelines - key points

- Good nutrition contributes significantly to maintaining healthy weight, quality of life, good physical and mental health throughout life, resistance to infection, and to protection against chronic disease and premature death.
- The revised Guidelines are based on Systematic Literature Reviews which looked at around 55,000 pieces of peer reviewed published scientific research. This created a body of evidence on which the Guideline recommendations are based (not single studies).
- The revised Australian Dietary Guidelines reflect the expert technical dietary modelling around 100 flexible dietary patterns based on nutrient requirements, cultural acceptability and Australian consumption patterns and the evidence for optimal health and wellbeing.
- The evidence about what is healthy to eat and what is not so healthy has strengthened since the 2003 edition of the Dietary Guidelines.
- There has been strong consultation throughout the revision of the Guidelines and all submissions have been carefully considered.
- The Guidelines have been developed to help health professionals give advice to the public about their dietary choices and their health.
- The total diet approach of the Guidelines reflects information about helping Australians eat the right foods for health, with an energy (kilojoule) intake to help achieve and/or maintain a healthy weight.
- The Guidelines reflect stronger evidence that Australians should eat more fruit and vegetables, wholegrain cereals and core reduced fat dairy foods, while limiting their consumption of energy rich nutrient poor 'junk' foods.

Infant Feeding Guidelines - key points

- The overall objective of NHMRC's Infant Feeding Guidelines is to support optimum infant nutrition by providing a review of the evidence and clear guidance on infant feeding for health workers.
- In Australia, it is recommended that infants are exclusively breastfed until around 6 months of age when solid foods are introduced, and that breastfeeding is continued until 12 months of age and beyond, for as long as the mother and child desire.
- If an infant is not breastfed or is partially breastfed, commercial infant formulas should be used as an alternative to breast milk until 12 months of age.
- A mother's informed decision not to breastfeed should be respected and support from a health worker and/or other members of the multidisciplinary team provided.
- Health workers should provide families with all the information and support they need to prepare, store and use feeds correctly.
- Introducing solid foods at around 6 months is necessary to meet the infant's increasing nutritional and developmental needs.
- As long as iron-rich foods are included in first foods, foods can be introduced in any order and at a rate that suits the infant.
- Delaying the introduction of solid foods beyond this age may increase the risk of developing allergic symptoms.
- By 12 months of age, a variety of nutritious foods from the Five Food Groups is recommended, as described in the Australian Dietary Guidelines.