

Eating and Activity Guidelines for New Zealand Adults

Summary of Guidelines Statements and key related information

This resource summarises the key information from the *Eating and Activity Guidelines for New Zealand Adults* (Ministry of Health 2020). It covers what the guidelines recommend, why and gives suggestions on how to put the recommendations into practice.

Making good choices about what and how much you eat and drink and being regularly physically active are important for good health.

Eating Statements

1 Enjoy a variety of nutritious foods every day including:



plenty of vegetables and fruit

Vegetables and fruit provide many beneficial nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and dietary fibre. They protect against conditions like heart disease, stroke and some cancers.

- Seasonal fresh vegetables and fruit are great choices, but frozen and low-salt or low-sugar canned options are also good.
 - Include vegetables and/or fruit at each meal time and as snacks.
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grain foods, mostly whole grain and those naturally high in fibre

Whole grains provide dietary fibre, vitamins and minerals. Eating whole grains is linked with a lower risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, weight gain and bowel cancer.

- Examples of healthy grain foods include whole grain bread, whole grain cereals like oats (porridge), brown rice, wholemeal pasta and noodles, and whole grain couscous.
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some milk and milk products, mostly low and reduced fat

Milk and milk products are highly nutritious and provide protein, vitamins and minerals.

Choosing low- and reduced-fat varieties provides the benefits of milk products with less saturated fat and energy (kilojoules).

- Examples include green- or yellow-label milk and low-fat yoghurt.
 - Non-dairy milk alternatives include soy or rice milk with added calcium.
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some legumes*, nuts, seeds, fish and other seafood, eggs, poultry (eg, chicken) and/or red meat with the fat removed

* Legumes include lentils, split peas, chickpeas and cooked dried beans (eg, kidney beans, baked beans)

Eating patterns that include legumes, seeds, nuts, fish and seafood may reduce the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, weight gain and some cancers.

- Add lentils or drained canned kidney beans to mince dishes or drained canned chickpeas to casseroles to add more plant food to the diet.
- Replace crisps or snack bars with a small handful of unsalted nuts.
- Eat less than 500 grams of cooked red meat a week.

2 Choose and/or prepare foods and drinks:



with unsaturated fats instead of saturated fats



The body needs some fat. The best type of fat is unsaturated, which comes mainly from plants, fish and other seafood.

- Examples of plant-based sources of unsaturated fats are canola, rice bran or olive oil and plant-based margarines, seeds, nuts and avocados.
- Examples of seafood with unsaturated fats are mackerel, sardines, salmon, tuna, herring, and mussels.

Reducing saturated fat intake and partially replacing it with unsaturated fats, in particular polyunsaturated fats, is linked with a decreased risk of cardiovascular disease.

- Animal fats, and plant-based coconut oil and palm oil are high in saturated fat.
- Limit foods that can be high in saturated fat, such as biscuits, cakes, pastries, pies, processed meats, store-bought burgers and pizza, crisps and other savoury snacks.
- Remove fat from meat or poultry before cooking and cook in a way that removes fat rather than adds it, for example, by grilling, boiling, poaching or steaming.



that are low in salt (sodium); if using salt, choose iodised salt

If you have a high intake of salt, it may increase your risk of high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke.

- Choose foods with the lowest amount of salt (sodium) by comparing the food labels of similar foods.
- Gradually decrease the amount of salt you use in cooking or add to food over time so that you get used to the taste with less salt.



with little or no added sugar

Adding sugar increases the energy (kilojoule) content of food and drinks and can lead to tooth decay.

- Choose foods with the lowest amount of added sugar by comparing the food labels of similar foods.
- Replace high-sugar drinks like fizzy drinks and sports drinks with plain water



that are mostly 'whole' and less processed

Foods that are 'whole' or less processed contain less refined grains, added fat, salt and/or sugar. Eating patterns low in refined grains, added fat, salt and/or sugar are linked with better health and less heart disease and stroke.

- As much as possible, choose 'whole' foods (which are close to their natural state like fresh vegetables, and fruit, raw nuts, fish, chicken or red meat with fat removed) or less processed foods (which have had some processing but have kept most of their physical and nutritional properties. Examples are frozen or low sugar or salt canned vegetables and fruit).
- When choosing packaged foods, consider the entire food. Some foods may be low in fat but high in sugar and/or salt so are not necessarily the healthiest choice. If foods have a Health Star Rating, compare the ratings of similar foods to choose those with the most stars.
- Have fewer sweets, sugary drinks, biscuits, cakes, pastries, pies, processed meats, crisps and other savoury snacks, and takeaway/fast food like burgers, pizza, fried foods, and hot chips.

3 Make plain water your first choice over other drinks.



- The body needs plain water to survive and be healthy.
- Town-supplied tap water in New Zealand is safe to drink and widely available.
- Plain water contains no energy (kilojoules) so won't cause weight gain. It's also a good way to satisfy thirst.
- Pregnant and breastfeeding women need plenty to drink because their blood volume increases during pregnancy and they need fluids to produce breast milk.

4 If you drink alcohol, keep your intake low.



To lower long-term health risks:

- women should drink no more than two standard drinks a day and no more than 10 standard drinks a week
 - men should drink no more than three standard drinks a day and no more than 15 standard drinks a week
- AND**
- both women and men should have at least two alcohol-free days every week.

Alcohol contains a lot of energy (kilojoules). Drinking alcohol can contribute to weight gain.

To lower the risk of injury:

- women should drink no more than four standard drinks on any single occasion
- men should drink no more than five standard drinks on any single occasion.



Stop drinking alcohol if you could be pregnant, are pregnant or are trying to get pregnant

- There is no known safe level of alcohol use at any stage of pregnancy.
- Alcohol can harm an unborn baby.



When breastfeeding, it is best to be alcohol-free

- Alcohol enters the breast milk and may remain there for several hours.

5 Buy or gather, prepare, cook and store food to ensure it is safe to eat.



Food can easily grow harmful bacteria and viruses (bugs) that cause sickness/food poisoning. It is important to carefully buy or gather, prepare, cook and store food to reduce the risk of food poisoning.

- Don't buy food that is past its use-by date (check the label) or that has been tampered with.
- Always wash any fresh vegetables and fruit before eating them.
- Follow storage advice on labels.
- Reheat any leftovers until they are steaming hot before eating them.
- Visit www.foodsmart.govt.nz for more guidance.



Take extra care to protect yourself from foodborne illness if you are pregnant.

- Pregnant women have lower levels of immunity making them more at risk of foodborne illness.
- Foodborne illness in pregnant women can affect the baby.
- Visit www.mpi.govt.nz/food-safety-home/food-pregnancy/ for advice on food safety during pregnancy.

6 Encourage, support and promote breastfeeding



- Breastmilk is the ideal food for babies and has multiple benefits for the mother and baby.
- Providing support for breastfeeding mothers helps them to breastfeed their baby for longer.

Body weight Statement

Making good choices about what you eat and drink and being physically active are also important to achieve and maintain a healthy body weight.



A healthy weight:

- will help you stay active and well
- reduces your risk of getting type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some cancers.

To prevent weight gain and to lose weight:

- choose nutritious foods that are low in energy (minimal fat and added sugar)
- drink plain water instead of sugary drinks and/or alcoholic drinks
- reduce portion sizes
- sit less and reduce screen time
- be as active as possible.

If you are struggling to maintain a healthy weight, see your doctor, a dietitian or your community health care provider.



When you are pregnant, talk to your midwife or doctor about the right amount of weight to gain during pregnancy. This amount is different for each person.

Activity Statements

1 Sit less, move more! Break up long periods of sitting.



Standing up often is good for your health, even if you are already physically active.

- Break up sitting time throughout the day for at least a few minutes every hour, preferably more.
- Replace sitting with gentle activity, for example, standing when possible, using the stairs instead of the lift, taking regular breaks from driving, or walking to see a colleague face to face.

2 Do at least 2½ hours of moderate or 1¼ hours of vigorous physical activity spread throughout the week.



Aerobic activities are great for the heart, lungs, overall fitness and wellbeing.

- Moderate activities make breathing harder than normal but you should still be able to talk while doing them – for example, brisk walking on flat ground, playing with children, and dancing.
- Vigorous activities make breathing a lot harder than normal and you will not be able to talk easily while doing them – for example, brisk walking uphill, fast cycling (> 16 km/h), running, fast swimming, and team sports (such as netball, touch, league, hockey and rugby).

Do a range of physical activities and spread them throughout the week.

- You can achieve this by doing at least 30 minutes of moderate or 15 minutes of vigorous physical activity on five days a week, or by combining moderate and vigorous activity.
- Break your activity up into smaller more frequent chunks, for example, regular 10-minute periods.



Pregnant women should also aim to do 2½ hours of moderate-intensity physical activity spread over at least 3 days per week (preferably some activity every day)

- Moderate physical activity is safe for pregnant women without any pre-existing health conditions.

3 For extra health benefits, aim for 5 hours of moderate, or 2½ hours of vigorous physical activity spread throughout the week.



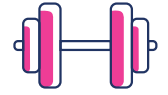
Spending more time being active or increasing the intensity of the activity will provide extra health benefits, such as better fitness and reduced risk of some cancers. It may also help maintain a healthy weight.

- You can achieve this by doing at least 60 minutes of moderate- or 30 minutes of vigorous physical activity on five days a week, or by combining moderate and vigorous activity.
- Short periods of intense activity with a brief recovery period in between are time efficient and can be good for your health.



Pregnant women should seek advice from a health care professional with specialist knowledge about the impact of vigorous-intensity activity if competing in events or if exercising significantly more than Activity Statement 2

4 Do muscle strengthening activities on at least two days each week.



Regular muscle-strengthening activities help to keep your body strong for doing everyday activities, and reduce the risk of injury. Muscle strengthening:

- activities are good for your muscles and can help you to reduce the risk of falls
- requires resistance by pushing or pulling against your own body weight, a heavy object or a machine eg, weight lifting, push ups, digging in the garden, or carrying children/shopping.

Some aerobic activities such as swimming and walking up hills/stairs may also provide resistance and contribute to achieving this guideline.



Pregnant women may also benefit from doing stretching and pelvic floor muscle training daily

- Do pelvic floor muscle training before, throughout and after pregnancy to strengthen the pelvic floor muscles and reduce the risk of incontinence and pelvic organ prolapse.
- Low-impact aerobics and yoga can be helpful during pregnancy. Avoid excessive stretching as ligaments are softened due to the hormones produced in pregnancy. Stretching should never feel painful.

5 Doing some physical activity is better than doing none.



Generally, any increase in physical activity is good for your health.

Choose activities that you enjoy and build them into your daily routine.

- Walk or cycle to places you might normally drive to, take the stairs instead of using the lift, put on some music and dance, or do DIY/active jobs around the house.

Being physically active with friends or whānau is good for your overall wellbeing (and theirs) and can motivate you to stay active.

- Go for a walk together, play ball with the children, go fishing or gather food for dinner.

If you have a health condition, you may wish to consult your doctor or physical activity specialist before starting physical activity.



All pregnant women without serious health conditions should be regularly physically active through a variety of aerobic and resistance activities

- What you can do during pregnancy is individual to you. Modify your physical activity level as the pregnancy progresses if you are constantly tired or uncomfortable.
- Pregnant women should listen to their bodies so that they slow down and rest when they need to.

References

Ministry of Health. 2020. *Eating and Activity Guidelines for New Zealand Adults: Updated 2020*. Wellington: Ministry of Health

For information for the public, see health education resources 'Healthy Eating Active Living' (HE1518) and Eat Healthy Food and Move More Everyday (HE1333) at www.healthed.govt.nz