

Healthy Eating Pyramid

The Healthy Eating Pyramid is a simple visual guide to the types and proportion of foods that we should eat every day for good health.

It contains the five core food groups, plus healthy fats, according to how much they contribute to a balanced diet based on the Australian Dietary Guidelines (2013).

The Healthy Eating Pyramid encourages Australians to enjoy a variety of foods from every food group, every day.

Visit www.nutritionaustralia.org for more information about the Pyramid and healthy eating.



The layers of the Healthy Eating Pyramid

The foundation layers

include the three plant-based food groups:

- **vegetables and legumes**
- **fruits**
- **grains**

These layers make up the largest portion of the Pyramid because plant foods should make up the largest portion of our diet – around 70% of what we eat!

Plant foods contain a wide variety of nutrients like vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. They are also the main source of carbohydrates and fibre in our diet.

Older children, teens and adults should aim to have at least 2 serves of **fruit** and 5 serves of **vegetables or legumes** each day.

From the **grains** group, choose mostly whole grains (such as brown rice, oats and quinoa), and wholemeal/wholegrain varieties of bread, pasta, crisp breads and cereal foods (over highly processed, refined varieties).

The middle layer

includes the **milk, yoghurt, cheese & alternatives** and the **lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, nuts, seeds, legumes** food groups.

Foods in the **milk, yoghurt, cheese & alternatives** group primarily provide us with calcium and protein, plus other vitamins and minerals. This food group also refers to non-dairy options such as soy, rice or cereal milks which have at least 100mg per 100ml of added calcium. Choose reduced fat options of these foods to limit excess kilojoules from saturated fat.

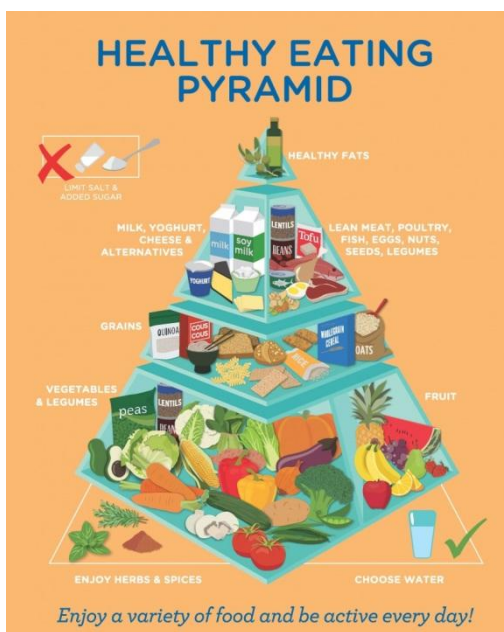
Foods in the **lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, nuts, seeds, legumes** section are our main sources of protein. But each food also provides a unique mix of nutrients, including iodine, iron, zinc, B12 vitamins and healthy fats. We should aim to have a variety of meat and non-meat options from this food group.

The top layer

refers to **healthy fats** because we need small amounts every day to support heart health and brain function. We should choose foods that contain healthy fats instead of foods that contain saturated fats and trans fats.

Choose unrefined polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats from plant sources, such as extra virgin olive oil, nut and seed oils. Limit the amount of saturated fat you consume and avoid trans fats.

We also get healthy fats from foods in the other food groups, such as avocados, nuts, seeds and fish, so we only need a little bit extra from oils and spreads each day.



Additional messages

Enjoy herbs and spices

Herbs and spices provide a wonderful range of flavours and aromas to our food. Many herbs and spices have health-promoting properties, but since we tend to eat them in smaller amounts their primary purpose is to flavour and colour our meals.

Cooking with fresh, dried or ground herbs and spices is an easy way to create foods that suit your tastes, and increase your enjoyment of home-made meals without needing to use salt when cooking or eating.

Choose water

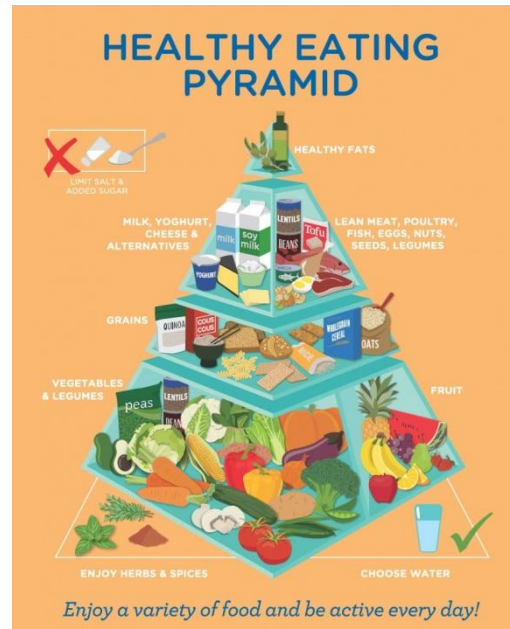
Water is the best drink to stay hydrated and it supports many other essential functions in the body. Choose water as your main drink, and avoid sugary options such as soft drinks, sports drinks and energy drinks.

Limit salt and added sugar

The Pyramid reminds us to limit our intake of salt and added sugar. This means avoiding adding salt or sugar to food when we're cooking or eating, and avoiding packaged foods and drinks that have salt or added sugar in the ingredients.

The average Australian already consumes too much salt and added sugar and this is linked to increased risk of diseases, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers.

Cooking your own meals at home, and choosing whole foods or minimally-processed foods will also help to limit how much salt and added sugar we consume.



Salt (sodium)

Sodium is found in salt and is naturally occurring in some foods. While we do need small amounts of sodium for good health, too much salt is linked to increased risk of high blood pressure, which can increase your risk of cardiovascular (heart) and kidney disease.

Avoid adding salt to food when cooking and eating, and read labels to choose foods that have less than 120mg of salt per 100g.

Added sugar

Consuming a lot of added sugars, especially from foods like lollies, chocolate, cakes, biscuits, desserts and soft drink, can add extra kilojoules to your diet. This can lead to weight gain and increase your risk of developing type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some cancers. Too much sugar can also cause dental cavities.

Most fruits, vegetables, legumes and unsweetened dairy foods contain small amounts of naturally-occurring sugars which are not harmful. Choose fresh or minimally-processed varieties of these foods, and check the ingredients on all packaged foods and drinks to see if sugar has been added.