



Food, drink, and activity guide

For adults aged 18 to 70 years

In this book

Eating and activity for your health and wellbeing.....	3
Eat a variety from the four food groups.....	4
Vegetables and fruits.....	4
Grain foods.....	5
Milk and milk products.....	6
Protein foods.....	7
An eating pattern for lifelong health	8
Choose fats and oils that are better for your heart.....	8
Choose foods that are low in salt	9
Choose or prepare foods with little added sugar	10
Choose mostly 'whole' and less processed foods.....	11
Reading food labels	12
Drinks and alcohol.....	13
Food safety	14
Active living.....	15-19

Eating and activity for your health and wellbeing

Choose a variety of nourishing foods and move your body regularly to support your health and wellbeing, and:

- give your body the nutrients it needs to stay healthy and strong
- help your body work well and support your energy, mood, and overall wellbeing
- lower your risk of heart disease, stroke, some cancers, and support a healthy body weight.

This picture shows the proportions of the 4 food groups to eat across your day. The foods pictured are examples of the types of foods you can choose from in each group.



If you find some foods difficult because of taste, texture, or sensory sensitivities, try introducing new foods slowly or preparing them in ways that feel comfortable for you.

Eat a variety from the four food groups

Vegetables and fruits

Aim for at least 5 servings of vegetables and 2 servings of fruit a day. Serving size examples include: ½ cup cooked vegetables, 1 cup salad, ½ medium kūmara or potato, 1 medium apple, 2 small plums or 1 cup (drained) canned fruit.

- Vegetables and fruits give your body vitamins, minerals and fibre to help it work well.
- They help with digestion and support your immune system.
- Try to eat a mix of colours. Different colours give different nutrients. Frozen vegetables and fruit are just as nutritious.

Tips to add in more to your day:

- Aim to fill half your plate with vegetables. Buying in season can be cheaper.
- Add vegetables to meals you already make. Using frozen or canned options can save time and money.
- If you crave something sweet, try having fruit (like a smoothie) or peanut butter on apple slices or with yoghurt.
- Grow easy options like spinach, silver beet, lettuce and herbs. If you don't have space, try a local community garden.



Grain foods, mostly wholegrain and high in fibre

Most people should aim for 6 serves a day.

Some people, including women aged 51 to 70, may need less and should aim for 4 serves a day as they are generally less active and don't use as much energy as they get older.

- Grain foods give you energy, vitamins, minerals and fibre to keep you going.
- Wholegrains help your heart by lowering cholesterol and blood pressure.
- Pick wholegrain or high-fibre options, they're better for your gut and keep you fuller for longer. Try choices like wholemeal and grainy breads and crackers, rolled oats, wholemeal pasta, brown rice, quinoa, barley, millet, amaranth, bulgur wheat, bran cereals or wheat biscuits.
- Add wholegrains into your day by trying porridge or overnight oats for breakfast, keeping wholegrain crackers and plain popcorn on hand for snacks, and adding grains like quinoa, barley or brown rice to your meals.

Serving size examples:

- 1 sandwich slice of wholegrain bread or ½ a bread roll
- 1 small wholemeal roti
- ½ cup cooked rice, pasta, noodles, barley, buckwheat, semolina, polenta, bulgur or quinoa
- 2 breakfast wheat biscuits
- ¼ cup muesli or ½ cup cooked porridge
- 3 to 4 crackers or crispbreads



Milk and milk products, mostly low and reduced fat

Most people should aim for 2 to 3 serves a day. Some people, including women aged 51 to 70, may need more and should aim for 4 serves a day to help protect bone strength.

- Milk products are high in protein, calcium and vitamin D to help keep your bones, teeth and muscles strong.

Serving size examples:

- 1 cup (250 ml) low or reduced fat milk or calcium-added plant-based milk, for example soy, rice, oat, almond milk
- 2 slices (40 g) cheese, such as Edam
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (200 g) or 1 small pottle of reduced fat yoghurt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (120 g) of cottage cheese, ricotta or paneer



Protein foods: legumes, nuts, seeds, fish, seafood, eggs, chicken, or lean red meat

Aim for 2 to 3 serves a day.

- These foods provide protein, to help your muscles grow and repair. They also help you to feel fuller for longer.
- Legumes (beans, lentils, chickpeas, split peas), nuts, and seeds give you fibre, vitamins, and minerals. Eating foods rich in vitamin C, like citrus fruit and green leafy vegetables, helps your body absorb iron. If you are vegetarian, you can find more advice here health.govt.nz/products/eating-for-healthy-vegetarians-nga-kai-totika-ma-te-hunga-puku-huawhenua
- Fish and seafood have omega-3 fats, which can help protect your heart and lower stroke risk.
- Lean meats, chicken and fish are good sources of iron, zinc and B12 your body absorbs easily. If you eat red meat, eat less than 500 g of cooked red meat per week to help reduce your risk of bowel cancer.

Serving size examples:

- 1 cup (150 g) cooked or canned beans, lentils, split peas, chickpeas or tempeh
- ½ cup (65 g) mince or diced meat, for example, beef, lamb, pork, or goat
- 170 g tofu
- 30 g nuts, seeds (or nut/seed paste)
- 2 large eggs
- 100 g cooked or canned fish
- 80 g cooked lean chicken



An eating pattern for lifelong health

Choose fats and oils that are better for your heart

- Unsaturated fats are usually oils that are liquid at room temperature, like olive, canola, sunflower, soybean and rice bran oil. Avocado, nuts, seeds and oily fish are also good sources. They can help raise HDL (“good”) cholesterol which is better for heart health.
- Saturated fats are usually solid at room temperature, like butter, ghee, lard, palm oil and coconut oil. They can raise LDL (“bad”) cholesterol, so eating less is better for heart health.

Ways to eat less saturated fat

- Choose lean meat and trim off any fat.
- Grill or roast meat on a rack so fat can drip away.
- Boil meat (like in a boil up) and skim off the fat.
- Remove chicken skin after cooking.
- Check labels and aim for less than 2 g saturated fat per 100 g (see page 12).

Food swaps

- Swap butter, lard, and ghee for margarine, oil or avocado
- Use light coconut milk or cream or dilute with water
- Swap takeaway pizza and burgers for kebabs with salad, or vegetable-rich dishes.
- Choose Edam cheese instead of colby or tasty.



Choose foods that are low in salt

Using less salt protects your heart and lowers the risk of stroke.

Most of the salt we eat comes from processed foods. Lowering salt gradually helps your taste adjust.

Ways to eat less salt

- Choose whole or less processed foods (see page 11)
- Check labels and choose options with the least amount of sodium per 100 g. Low salt options with less than 120 mg per 100 g are best.

Food swaps

- Swap processed meats (sausages, bacon, ham, luncheon, canned corn beef) for fresh meat.
- Use herbs, spices, lemon, or lime juice instead of salty sauces like tomato or soy.
- Swap chips for unsalted nuts and seeds.
- Prepare or freeze meals ahead instead of getting takeaways.

If you choose salt, choose iodised salt. New Zealand soils are low in iodine, so our local foods have little iodine. Iodine is important for making thyroid hormones. Himalayan and mineral salts don't provide iodine.



Choose or prepare foods with little added sugar

Eating less sugar helps lower the risk of diabetes and tooth decay and supports weight management.

Sugars are naturally found in some foods and drinks like fruit and milk. These can be enjoyed as part of a balanced diet.

Added sugars are sugars added to foods and drinks to make them taste sweeter, like white or brown sugar, honey, golden syrup, and maple syrup.

Ways to eat less added sugar

- Choose foods that are lower in sugar by reading labels to compare similar products (see page 12).
- Add little or no sugar to foods and drinks.

Food swaps

- Swap sugary drinks (fizzy, fruit juice, cordial) for water with lemon, mint, or cucumber.
- Swap high-sugar breakfast cereals for porridge, overnight oats, congee, bran flakes, or wheat biscuits.
- Swap chocolates, lollies, cakes, biscuits, and muesli bars for fruit and yoghurt, or a homemade smoothie.

Fruit juice and dried fruit are high in sugar. Try a piece of fruit instead, as it's more filling and provides fibre and much less sugar.



Choose mostly 'whole' and less processed foods

Try to eat mostly whole and less processed foods.

Whole foods are close to their natural form, like vegetables, fruit, milk, legumes, nuts, seeds, eggs, fish, seafood, chicken and meat.

Less processed foods are still close to their natural form, like oats, brown rice, frozen and canned vegetables and fruit, yoghurt, cheese, canned legumes and canned fish.

Highly processed foods are very different from their natural form. They often have less fibre and fewer vitamins and minerals, and are usually high in added sugar, salt, saturated fat and energy. Examples include sugary drinks, biscuits, cakes, muesli bars, pastries, pies, instant noodles, luncheon and chips.

Ways to eat less processed foods

- Cook your own meals when you can. This gives you more control over what goes into your food. If cooking is difficult, look for ready to eat options such as frozen meals with vegetables.
- Prepare meals ahead of time and put them in the fridge or freezer.
- Check food labels. Look for more fibre and less sugar, salt (sodium) and saturated fat.



Reading food labels

All packaged foods have a food label that shows the ingredient list and the nutrition information panel. Online supermarkets also provide this information on their websites.

Health Star Rating

Some products have a Health Star Rating. This is a quick guide to help compare similar products. The scale goes from ½ a star to 5 stars. The more stars a food has, the more nourishing it is.



How to check a food label

Nutrition information		
Servings per pack: 24		
Serving size: 30 g (2 biscuits)		
	Per serving	Per 100 g
Energy (kJ)	444	1480
Protein (g)	3.6	12.0
Fat, Total (g)	0.4	1.4
- Saturated (g)	0.1	0.3
Carbohydrate, Total (g)	20.1	67.0
- Sugars (g)	0.8	2.8
Dietary fibre (g)	3.0	10.1
Sodium (mg)	81	270

Fat

Aim for less than

- 10 g per 100 g total fat
- 2 g per 100 g saturated fat

Sugar

Aim for less than

- 10 g per 100 g sugar in foods
- 5 g per 100 g sugar in drinks

Fibre

Aim for more than

- 6 g fibre per 100 g

Sodium (Salt)

Aim for less than

- 450 mg per 100 g

Drinks

Make plain water your first choice.

It's what your body needs. Water helps with digestion, absorbing nutrients and removing waste.

Women need about 8 cups (2 litres) a day, and men need about 10 cups (2.5 litres) a day.

- Drink tap water. It's safe and contains fluoride, which helps prevent tooth decay.
- Low-fat milk or added-calcium soy milk are good choices too, as they contain protein, vitamins and minerals.
- Tea and coffee also count, but because of caffeine, try to limit to no more than 6 cups of tea or instant coffee, or 2 espresso-style coffees a day.
- Plain water is the best choice. For variety, add natural flavours to water, like mint, lemon or cucumber slices. If you usually drink sugary drinks, switching to diet drinks is safe and can reduce sugar and energy intake.

Alcohol

There is no safe level of alcohol. If you drink, keep your intake low to reduce health risks like cancer and injury.



Everyone should have at least 2 alcohol-free days every week.

For more information about alcohol, visit alcohol.org.nz

Food safety

Buy or gather, prepare, cook and store food in ways that keep it safe to eat.

Food safety is about making sure that food is safe to eat. Harmful bacteria and viruses (bugs) can live in some foods which can make you or other people ill.

Buying safe food:

- Check the “use by” date before you buy.

Gathering food:

- Always wash food that you have gathered or bought from someone who has gathered it, such as pūhā and watercress.
- Before gathering seafood, check it is safe to eat. See MPI’s guide to safe gathering and eating at mpi.govt.nz/food-safety-home/food-safety-tips-fishing-hunting-homekill/food-safety-fishing-gathering-shellfish

Storing food:

- Make sure the fridge temperature is at or less than 4°C.
- Store raw meat away from other food.
- Follow storage advice on labels.
- Cover leftovers and store them in the fridge (within two hours). Use leftovers within two days of cooking.

Preparing and cooking food:

- Always wash and dry your hands before and after preparing food.
- Use clean surfaces and utensils to prepare foods.
- Make sure reheated food is steaming hot right through and only reheated once.
- Some foods are more likely to have harmful bugs in them, such as meat, chicken, fish, milk products, rice and legumes. Make sure you safely store and cook these foods. If in doubt, throw them out.

You can find out more about food safety on the Ministry for Primary Industries’ website mpi.govt.nz/food-safety/

Active living

Active living means being regularly physically active, sitting less, and moving more.

Along with eating a variety of nourishing foods, moving your body regularly can lower your risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes and some cancers. It can help with weight management and support your well-being. Being active can also help lift your mood, and help you connect with friends and whānau and the environment.

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

Physical activity can look different for everyone, and all movement counts – what matters is finding ways that feel safe, enjoyable, and right for you.



Break up long periods of sitting

Everyone's body and circumstances are different. These suggestions can be adapted to suit your health needs, abilities, culture, preferences and lifestyle.

- Stand up to stretch often, for at least a few minutes each hour.
- Have standing or walking meetings while you are at work.
- Stand while you are travelling on buses, trains and ferries.
- Get off the bus or train one stop earlier and walk the rest of the way, or park further away.
- Limit TV, computer and other electronic device use when you are at home. Go for a walk instead. Stand up and stretch when the ads come on TV.
- Stand up while texting or talking on the phone.

Do at least 2 ½ hours of moderate or 1 ¼ hours of vigorous physical activity spread throughout the week.

Moderate and vigorous physical activity helps keep your heart, lungs, bones, and muscles strong and supports your overall wellbeing.

- Moderate activity makes you breathe faster but still able to talk, like brisk walking, dancing, or active play.
- Vigorous activity makes you breathe much harder, like running, biking uphill, or playing sport.
- Physical activity can look different for everyone. Activities such as seated exercises, gentle stretching, water-based movement, or physiotherapy exercises can also support health.

Being active can give you more energy, improve posture, balance and sleep. It can reduce stress, lower the risk of long-term health conditions like heart disease and diabetes, and help you stay independent and connected with your whānau as you get older.

Why spread activity throughout the week?

Any physical activity is good, but being physically active every day is better for you than doing all your activity on one or two days a week.

You could:

- do at least 30 minutes of moderate, or 15 minutes of vigorous physical activity on five days a week
- break up your activity sessions into smaller chunks that you do more often, for example, 10 minutes at a time.

For extra health benefits, aim for 5 hours of moderate or 2 ½ hours of vigorous physical activity spread throughout the week.

Doing more physical activity has extra health benefits, including management of weight and a greater reduction in the risk of some cancers.

To do more physical activity you could:

- do a brisk walk for 1 hour instead of 30 minutes
- change from brisk walking (moderate) to running (vigorous).

You could even set yourself a goal or challenge, such as an event to complete.

Do muscle strengthening activities on at least 2 days each week.

Muscle strengthening activities will help build strong muscles and bones, keeping your body flexible and able to do everyday activities like walking, hanging out the washing, gardening and carrying heavy objects as you get older.

There are plenty of ways that you can do muscle strengthening activities. Many of them are free and can be done anywhere. You could:

- carry young children or heavy shopping
- do push ups, sit ups or squats
- walk up hills
- go trampolining, aqua jogging or to the gym to do weights
- do waka ama, oe vaka or kayaking.

Doing some physical activity is better than doing none.

Doing any physical activity is good for your health, even if you do less than the recommended 2 ½ hours of moderate physical activity each week.

It's easy to add some physical activity to your day.

You could:

- take the stairs rather than the lift
- get off the bus early, or park further away, and walk
- cycle or walk from place to place
- do the housework.

Choosing activities you enjoy makes it easier to stay active. Being active with whānau or friends can also make activity more enjoyable.

If you haven't been active for some time or have health concerns, speak with your doctor or nurse. They can also provide a Green Prescription to support you.

For family-friendly activity ideas, visit healthykids.org.nz

Appendix 1

Moderate, vigorous and muscle strengthening activities

Do at least 2 ½ hours of moderate or 1 ¼ hours of vigorous physical activity spread throughout the week, plus muscle strengthening activities on at least 2 days each week, for extra health benefits.

Moderate activity	Vigorous activity	Muscle strengthening activity
I'm breathing faster and my heart is beating a bit more. I can still talk.	I'm breathing much harder and my heart is beating faster. I can only say a few words without taking a breath.	I can feel my muscles working harder.
Actively playing with children	Rope skipping*	Carrying young children
Vacuuming, washing the car	Heavy home repair, moving heavy furniture	Carrying heavy shopping bags
Strenuous gardening* – carrying loads in a wheelbarrow or digging	Heavy digging, chopping wood	Sawing
Brisk walking, stair climbing*	Hill walking*, running*	Tramping
Biking on the flat	Biking faster than 16 km per hour*	Uphill mountain biking
Aerobics	High-intensity interval training*	Push ups, sit ups, squats or weight training
Surfing	Fast swimming*	Water aerobics, water jogging
Sports, for example, cricket, kilikiti, surfing, golf (carrying your bag)*	Sports, for example, waka ama*, rugby, kī o Rahi, football, netball, touch, hockey, tennis	Sports, for example oe vaka, kayaking, canoeing

* These activities will also strengthen your muscles.

This resource is available from health.govt.nz
or your local Authorised Provider.

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