

Your Guide to Healthy Eating Using the Food Pyramid

NEW



for Adults and Children over 5 years of age

Using the Food Pyramid and the Healthy Eating Guidelines

Do you want to feel good and have more energy?

Do you want to maintain a healthy weight and help reduce your risk of becoming ill from high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, cancer and other chronic diseases?

Eating healthy food and being physically active are two of the most important steps that you can take to improve your health. To help you do this, follow the Healthy Eating Guidelines, use the Food Pyramid Guide and the Physical Activity Guidelines.

Healthy eating is about getting the correct amount of nutrients – protein, fat, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals you need to maintain good health.

Foods that contain the same type of nutrients are grouped together on each of the shelves of the Food Pyramid. This gives you a choice of different foods from which to choose a healthy diet. Following the Food Pyramid as a guide will help you get the right balance of nutritious foods within your calorie range. Studies show that we take in too many calories from foods and drinks high in fat, sugar and salt, on the Top Shelf of the Food Pyramid. They provide very little of the essential vitamins and minerals your body needs. Limiting these is essential for healthy eating.

At different stages in your life you have different daily nutrient requirements. These depend on your age, whether you are male or female and how active you are. While the general number of servings for adults and children over 5 years of age is given for each shelf of the Food Pyramid, where there are different requirements, the recommended number of servings is highlighted underneath the Food Pyramid picture on pages 8, 10, 12 and 14. Try to pick a variety of foods from each of the bottom 4 shelves every day to get a good range of vitamins and minerals.

Watch Portion Sizes

Portion sizes are very important for all ages, but particularly for children from 5-13 years. When making food and drink choices, it is important to follow the recommended number of servings from each shelf of the Food Pyramid. A serving is a unit of measure used to describe the total amount of foods recommended daily from each of the shelves of the Food Pyramid. The actual portion that you eat may be bigger or smaller than the servings listed in the Food Pyramid and if so, you count these as $\frac{1}{2}$ a serving or 2 servings. See the examples for bread given on page 7.

Portion size servings for children

While the Food Pyramid can be used as a guide for children over 5 years, it is important that children eat according to their growth and appetite. Smaller children will need smaller servings - so start with smaller portion sizes from the Bread, Cereals, Potatoes, Pasta and Rice shelf of the Food Pyramid and increase these as the child asks for more. Children need a well balanced diet to get enough but not too many calories, and the vitamins and minerals they need to be healthy.

Foods and drinks from the Top shelf of the Food Pyramid are not essential for health. These foods provide mostly calories and are best limited to $\frac{1}{2}$ - 1 serving a day maximum. Higher amounts of these can lead to overweight and obesity. Sugar sweetened drinks, in particular if taken regularly, can promote overweight and obesity. One in four 7 year old children is overweight or obese.

The advice in this booklet for children is about healthy eating and not about reducing weight.

Understanding the Food Pyramid



Healthy Eating Guidelines

- **Limit foods and drinks from the Top Shelf of Food Pyramid.**

This is the most important Healthy Eating Guideline, as these are high in fat, sugar and salt

- Prepare and cook your meals using fresh ingredients. Ready meals and take-aways tend to be high in fat and salt and should not be eaten regularly.
- Always read the nutrition label - check for high levels of fat, sugar and salt.
- Eat a variety of 5 or more of different coloured fruit and vegetables every day. Choose leafy green vegetables regularly. Smoothies can count towards your fruit and vegetable intake, but try and choose only fruit and/or vegetable based smoothies. Check the label for sugar and fat.
- Wholegrain breads, high fibre cereals, especially porridge, potatoes, wholewheat pasta and brown rice satisfy hunger and are the best foods to fuel your body. These provide a slow release of energy. Be aware of the calorie difference - some types may contain more calories than others.
- Choose healthier cooking methods like steaming, grilling, baking, roasting and stir-frying instead of frying foods. Limit bought fried foods, such as chips.
- Eat more fish; it's a good source of protein as well as containing important vitamins and minerals. Try to eat oily fish at least once a week, for example, mackerel, sardines and salmon. These are high in omega 3 fats.
- Choose lower fat milks, low fat/no added sugar yoghurts and yoghurt drinks and reduced fat cheese.
- Choose vegetable oils that are high in monounsaturated fats such as rapeseed or olive oil. Oils high in polyunsaturated fats such as sunflower or corn oil are also good fats.
- Add as little as possible or no salt to your food in cooking or at the table. Try other flavourings instead such as herbs, spices, pepper, garlic or lemon juice. Have fresh foods as much as possible. Look at the salt content on food labels.
- Adults need about 8-10 cups or glasses of fluid every day. 1 cup is about 200mls. You need more if you are active. Children and teenagers need to drink regularly throughout the day. Water is the best fluid.
- Take time to enjoy 3 meals a day sitting at a table. Eat slowly and chew your food properly. Eating while watching TV or the computer screen distracts you from the amount of food you eat and you may end up eating more than you need.
- Always make time to have a breakfast – people who eat breakfast are more likely to be a healthy weight.
- Alcohol contains calories, so if you drink, drink sensibly within recommended limits and preferably with meals.
- If you eat a healthy balanced diet, you should not need to take food supplements, unless you are advised to do so by your doctor. However, all women of childbearing age who are sexually active are advised to take 400µg folic acid every day – preferably as a folic acid supplement. The Irish diet is low in vitamin D - talk to your pharmacist or doctor about taking a supplement.
- Healthy eating before and during pregnancy protects your child's risk of lifestyle diseases like obesity and heart disease, later in life. Breast milk is also protective, so breastfeeding is strongly recommended.
- If you are overweight, consider the quantity of foods you eat from all shelves of the Food Pyramid, with the exception of fruits and vegetables. For weight loss advice see the safefood website www.weigh2live.eu.
- Prepare and store food safely, see the Food Safety Authority of Ireland website www.fsai.ie.

Bread, Cereals, Potatoes, Pasta and Rice

Choose any 6 or more servings each day for all ages and up to 12 servings if you are active. Body size is important too. Younger, smaller children (5-13 years) need less than older children. Teenage boys, men and older men need more servings than girls or women. Most men need about 8 servings a day and most women need about 6 servings.

Foods on this shelf are the best energy providers for your body, so the more active you are the more you need.

Wholegrain choices contain fibre to help your digestive system. Have at least half your servings as wholegrain breads and high fibre breakfast cereals. Try using brown rice and wholewheat pasta. The actual portion that you eat may be bigger or smaller than the servings listed in the Food Pyramid. For example, a sandwich with 2 slices of bread counts as 2 servings.

Other choices like 1 pitta pocket, 1 tortilla wrap, 1 small bagel, 1 small scone and one small French bread roll count as 2 servings.

1 serving is:

- 1 slice of brown sliced bread or wholegrain soda bread
- 2-3 crackers or crispbreads
- 4 dessertspoons flake type high fibre breakfast cereal, without sugar, honey or chocolate coating
- 3 dessertspoons dry porridge oats
- 2 breakfast cereal wheat or oat biscuits
- 3 dessertspoons muesli, without sugar or honey coating
- 1 medium or 2 small potatoes,
- 2 dessertspoons of mashed potatoes
- 3 dessertspoons or 1/2 cup boiled pasta, rice, noodles (25g/1 oz uncooked)
- 1 cup of yam or plantain

Be aware of the calorie difference - some types may contain more calories than others - see page 24.

Choose any

6 +



Men and teenage boys who are active may need up to 12 servings a day. Women and teenage girls who are active may need up to 8 servings a day. Younger children (5-13 years) need smaller serving sizes.

Fruit and Vegetables

Choose any 5 or more servings each day - more is better

Fruit and vegetables provide fibre. They also provide many important vitamins and minerals and are low in calories. Fresh, local fruit and vegetables in season are best and can be very good value.

Eat a variety of coloured fruit and vegetables – green, yellow, orange, red and purple in order to benefit from the variety of vitamins and minerals provided by each colour group.

Include a vitamin C rich fruit each day such as an orange or orange juice, strawberries or blackberries.

Count fruit juice and smoothies as only one serving each day as they may be low in fibre.

The actual portion that you eat may be bigger or smaller than the servings listed in the Food

Pyramid. For example, one plum would count as ½ a serving.

1 serving is:

- 1 medium apple, orange, banana, pear or similar size fruit
- 2 small fruits - plums, kiwis or similar size fruit
- 10-12 berries, grapes or cherries
- ½ a grapefruit
- 1 heaped dessertspoon of raisins or sultanas
- 4 dessertspoons of cooked fresh fruit, fruit tinned in own juice or frozen fruit
- 4 dessertspoons of cooked vegetables – fresh or frozen
- a bowl of salad – lettuce, tomato, cucumber
- a bowl of homemade vegetable soup
- 1 small corn on the cob or 4 heaped dessertspoons of sweetcorn
- a small glass (100ml) of unsweetened fruit juice or a smoothie made only from fruit or vegetables.

Choose any

5 +



All age groups need at least 5 servings a day and more, if active

Milk, Yogurt and Cheese

Choose any 3 servings each day

Milk, yogurt and cheese provide calcium needed for healthy bones and teeth. Calcium is important during the teenage growth spurt and also for older adults.

However foods on this shelf, especially full-fat cheese, can be high in saturated fat - so choose lower fat cheese regularly.

When choosing foods from this shelf have milk and yogurt more often than cheese.

If the family prefer skimmed milk, remember it is not suitable for children under 5. Low fat milk is not suitable for children under 2. If dairy products have to be avoided, have calcium and vitamin D enriched soya products. Vitamin D helps you absorb calcium better. The Irish diet is low in vitamin D – talk to your pharmacist or doctor about taking a supplement.

The actual portion that you eat may be bigger or smaller than the servings listed in the Food Pyramid. For example 2 oz of cheddar cheese would count as 2 servings and 1 cheese triangle would count as ½ a serving.

1 serving is:

- 1 large glass (200ml) low fat or low fat fortified milk
- 1 large glass (200ml) calcium enriched Soya milk
- 1 small carton yogurt (125ml)
- 1 yogurt drink (200ml)
- 1 small carton fromage frais
- 25g/1oz (matchbox size piece) of low fat cheddar or semi-soft cheese
- 50g/2oz low fat soft cheese
- 2 processed cheese triangles
- 75g/3oz cottage cheese
- 1 portion of milk pudding made with a large glass low fat milk

Choose any

3



Children aged 9-18 years need 5 servings a day.
Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding need 3 servings a day.

Meat, Poultry, Fish, Eggs, Beans and Nuts

Choose any 2 servings each day

Much of the protein in your diet comes from foods on this shelf.

Go for a variety of choices. Choose lean meat, trim excess fat from meat and remove skin from poultry. Limit processed meats such as bacon or ham, because these are usually high in fat and salt. You do not need large amounts of meat and poultry to satisfy your nutritional needs.

Iron rich foods such as red meat and egg yolks are important for children, teenagers and women. Have a vitamin C food or drink (such as orange juice) in the same meal with the iron-rich food to increase the amount of iron you absorb.

Other good sources of protein are beans and peas when eaten with wholegrain breads, rice or pasta. They are also fat-free. If you are a vegetarian and get your protein regularly from cheese, always choose lower fat cheeses.

The actual portion that you eat may be bigger or smaller than the servings listed in the Food Pyramid. For example, 1 egg would count as ½ a serving, but 150g/6oz of meat would count as 2 servings.

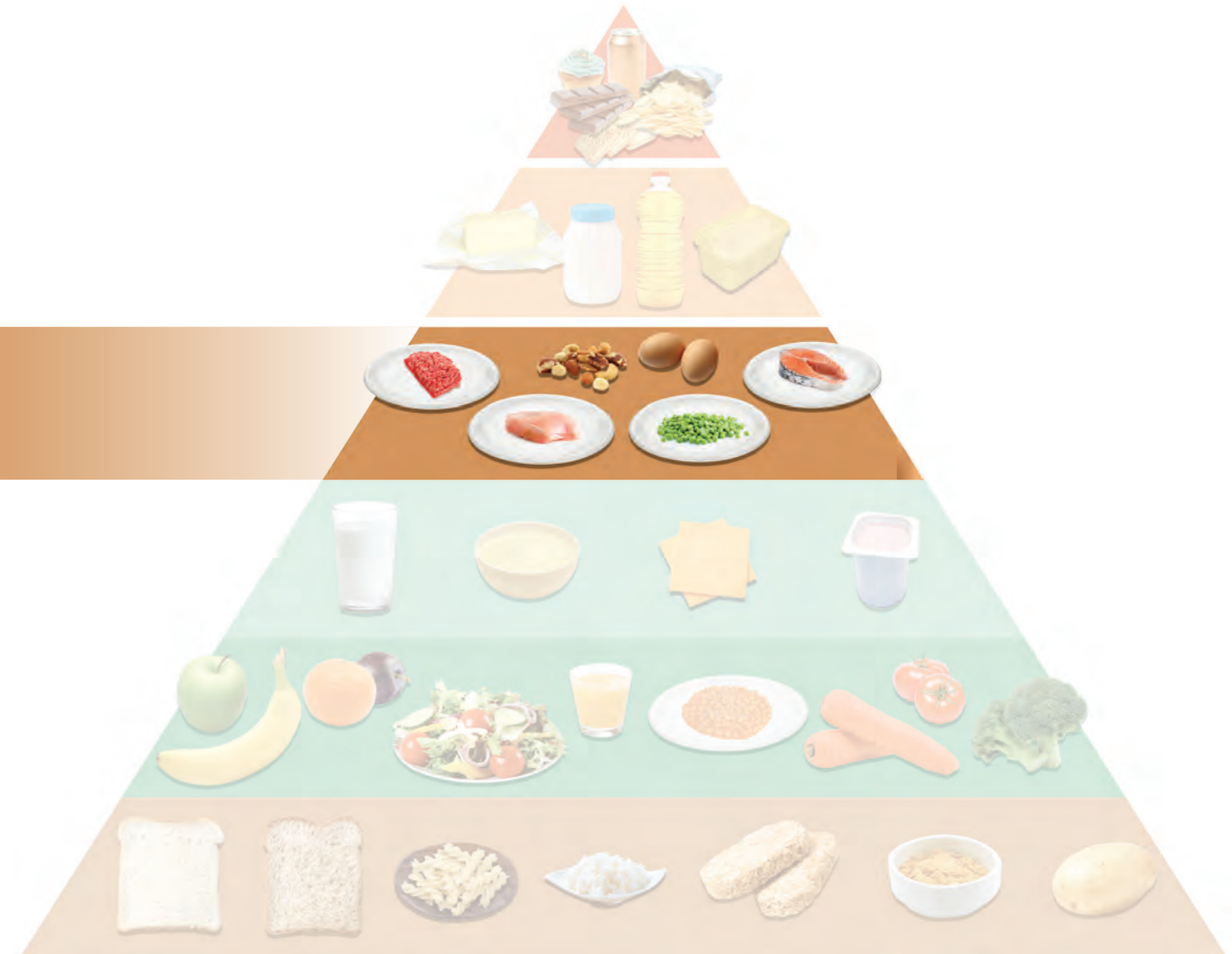
1 serving is:

- 50-75g/2-3oz cooked lean beef, pork, lamb, lean mince, chicken (This is about 100g/4oz of raw meat or poultry and is about the size of a pack of cards)
- 100g/4oz cooked oily fish (salmon, mackerel, sardines) or white fish (cod, haddock, plaice)
- 2 eggs- limit to 7 eggs a week
- 100g/4oz soya or tofu
- 125g/5oz hummus
- 6 dessertspoons of peas, beans (includes baked beans) or lentils
- 40g/1.5oz unsalted nuts or peanut butter or seeds

100-150g/4-6oz cooked meat or 200g/8oz fish is equal to 2 servings - this is about the width and depth of the palm of your hand.

Choose any

2



Try to have fish at least twice a week and oily fish at least once a week. Pregnant and breastfeeding women should limit their consumption of tuna to no more than one serving a week.

Reduced fat spreads and Oils

Choose any 2 servings each day

Spreads and oils provide essential fats but these are only needed in very small amounts. Choose low fat and reduced fat spreads and oils such as rapeseed or olive oil (monounsaturated) instead of hard margarine, lard or butter. To have a low level of saturated fat, which is very important for your heart, you need to limit butter to once a week.

All oils contain the same amount of calories, so measure out the oil, don't just pour it onto the pan.

For more information on the different types of fats and oils see page 21.

1 serving is:

- Low fat and reduced-fat spread - 1 heaped teaspoon or the size of 1 mini-pack. This is enough for **2** slices of bread
- If having full fat spreads or margarine, you should use less of these, so 1 heaped teaspoon spread very thinly to cover **3** slices of bread. Butter is limited to small amounts on special occasions

In addition to the 2 servings above, you can add up to 1 teaspoon per person of the oils mentioned across in cooking. If you are **very** active and having up to 12 servings from the Bread, Cereals, Potatoes, Pasta and Rice shelf – you can have 1-2 extra servings from this shelf.

Mayonnaise and oil-based salad dressings also count towards your oil intake. Choose lower fat options.

Choose any

2



All age groups need to follow these guidelines very carefully to restrict fat, saturated fat and calories.

Foods and drinks high in fat, sugar and salt

There are **NO** recommended servings for this group because they are not essential. These foods should be avoided as they are high in fat, including saturated fat, sugar and salt. They may promote obesity, which can lead to heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers.

*Start today and limit what you eat from this shelf to **no more than 1 serving a day maximum** and ideally not everyday.*

Don't be tempted to swop eating healthy foods so you can have more of these foods high in fat, sugar and salt. You need healthy foods in the serving sizes recommended to provide all your vitamins and minerals.

The examples across are about 100 calories – so check the label when choosing foods high in fat and sugar.

These are about 100 calories:

- about 4 squares of chocolate (half a bar)
- 1 small or fun sized chocolate coated bar
- 1 bag of lower fat crisps
- 1 small cup cake (without icing) or one plain mini muffin
- 1 small slice of fruit brack
- 2 plain biscuits or 1 chocolate biscuit
- about ½ a can of sugary drink
- 1 scoop of vanilla ice-cream
- ½ or 1 cereal bar, check the label for calories

Alcohol is not essential for health and is not recommended for children under 18 years.

1 glass of beer, lager, wine and spirits contains about 100 - 150 calories.

For low risk drinking advice see page 22.

Maximum



All age groups need to reduce foods and drinks from the Top shelf, especially younger children (5-13 years). Avoiding these will help you be a healthy weight.

Facts about sugars and sugary drinks

Many processed foods like ready meals, cakes and confectionery contain high levels of added sugars and can be high in calories. Some soft drinks contain mostly sugar and provide very little nourishment. Cutting down on these will help you be a healthy weight.

Sports drinks or energy drinks are also high in sugar and energy. These are not needed for those following the regular physical activity guidelines of at least 30 minutes most days of the week. In fact, having these extra calories can undo the benefits of physical activity in helping to maintain a healthy weight. In hot weather, remember to have a glass or two of water afterwards.

Sugar and sugary foods are included on the Top shelf of the Food Pyramid and need to be limited. Remember - added sugars can be called by their chemical names - sucrose, glucose, maltose and are also in syrups and honey, so always check the nutrition label on the back or side of packaged foods!

EU guidelines on nutrition labels to tell you if a food or drink is high in sugar:

Total sugar

- High is more than 15g of total sugars per 100g
- Low is 5g of total sugars or less per 100g

If you are trying to cut down on sugar, you should limit your consumption of foods that have more than 5g/100g.

Facts about salt

Eating too much salt is not good for health and can lead to raised blood pressure, which triples your chances of developing heart disease and stroke. The recommended amount of salt is 6 grams per day. Irish men consume 10g of salt a day and women consume 7g. Children need only 3-5g a day so try not to give them a taste for salty foods.

About 80% of the salt that you eat is hidden in everyday foods. These include processed meats, bacon, sausages, puddings, ready-made meals and sauces. Packet soups, stock cubes, gravy granules and some breakfast cereals and breads are also high in salt, as are salty snacks from the Top Shelf of the Food Pyramid. Eat less of these high salt foods and remember to check the label.

EU guidelines on nutrition labels to tell you if a food is high in fat:

Salt

- High is more than 1.5g of salt per 100g (or 0.6g sodium)
- Low is 0.3g of salt or less per 100g (or 0.1g sodium)

If you are trying to cut down on salt, you should limit your consumption of foods that have more than 0.3g/100g.

Facts about spreads and oils

Both the amount and type of fat you eat is important. 1 teaspoon of oil contains 5g of fat. 1 heaped teaspoon of margarine or butter has almost 6g of fat, while low fat spread or low fat butter have almost 3g fat. Reduced fats spreads contain different amounts so check the label. All oils are the most concentrated source of fat (100%) followed by margarines and butter (80%), which contain the same amount of calories and fat but have different types of fat. Low fat margarine or low fat butter has less fat (about 40%).

Saturated, hydrogenated (hardened) and trans fats are the 'bad' fats because they raise the amount of harmful cholesterol in your blood and increase your risk of heart disease. They include the white fat you see on meat, and are also in sausages, puddings and meat pies and in butter, hard margarines, lard and some dairy products like hard cheese and cream. Saturated fats are also in pastries, cakes, biscuits, chocolate, confectionery and salty snacks like crisps. Reduce intake of saturated fats by limiting these foods to special occasions.

Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats are the 'good' fats because they lower the harmful cholesterol in your blood and are good for your heart. They are found in most pure vegetable oils like sunflower, rapeseed and olive oil and the spreads made from these. They are also found in seeds and nuts.

Oily fish is the best source of an essential fat called Omega 3.

EU guidelines on nutrition labels to tell you if a food is high in fat:

Total fat

- High is more than 20g of fat per 100g
- Low is 3g of fat or less per 100g

Saturated fat

- High is more than 5g of saturated fat per 100g
- Low is 1.5g of saturated fat or less per 100g

If you are trying to cut down on fat, you should limit your consumption of foods and drinks that have more than 3g/100g of total fat and more than 1.5g/100g of saturated fat.

Facts about alcohol

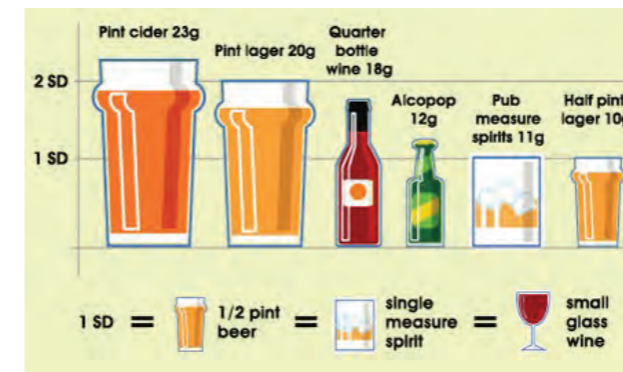
For low risk drinking the weekly limits are

- Up to 11 standard drinks a week for women (112 grams of pure alcohol)
- Up to 17 standard drinks a week for men (168 grams of pure alcohol)

Alcohol is high in calories but does not provide any nourishment. One standard drink contains about 100-150 calories. Drinking more than the weekly limit can increase your weight and your blood pressure, putting you at risk of heart disease and stroke. It can damage your liver and can increase your chances of getting cancer, including breast cancer.

Stick to recommended upper limits and spread drinks out over the week. Do not take more than 5 standard drinks in one sitting and have 3 alcohol free days during the week.

What is a standard drink?



These are weekly limits not targets to be reached. If you drink at home, get into the habit of using a measure. If you drink wine - use a small wine glass. A bottle of wine contains almost 8 standard drinks.

Alcohol should be avoided during pregnancy and breastfeeding and is best avoided while trying to conceive a baby.

A man who drinks up to 17 drinks per week, consumes more than 1700 extra calories each week. This can lead to weight gain of about 1.5 stone in 1 year. A woman who drinks up to 11 drinks per week can gain about 1 stone in a year.

Facts about being a healthy weight

It is not good for your health to be either overweight or underweight.

Being overweight can lead to heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers.

Being underweight can also affect your health by putting you at higher risk of infection, causing tiredness and slowing down wound healing.

Being a healthy weight means you feel better, have more energy and are less likely to develop chronic illnesses.

To keep an eye on your weight, it is a good idea once a month to weigh yourself and to measure your waist every few weeks.

Waist measurement should be

- less than 80cm or 32 inches in women
- less than 94cm or 37 inches in men

49% of Irish men and 70% of Irish women exceed the above waist measurements.

Where weight is stored in the body is important. People with excess weight around the tummy are more likely to develop health problems, such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes. If you notice your waist measurement increasing, reduce your energy intake from food and increase your activity.

For weight loss advice see the *safefood* website www.weigh2live.eu

Be Aware of the Calorie Difference

Breads, cereals, potatoes, pasta and rice are the best type of calories (energy) for maintaining a healthy weight. It is important to choose mostly WHOLEMEAL or WHOLEGRAIN choices, as these are more filling and check the serving sizes regularly.

Different types of breads and rolls can be used for variety, but be aware that some types may contain more calories than others. For example, 2 slices of 'thick cut' pan bread or a bagel contain almost twice the calories as a bowl of porridge or a medium potato. Choose wisely from these food options by choosing mostly foods from the top 2 rows in the table below.

Calories	Cereals				Potato, Pasta & Rice			
100-135 calories	½ cup raw porridge oats	1 slice soda bread	1 slice batch loaf	1 medium bread roll	1 medium boiled or baked potato	3 scoops mashed potato (using low-fat milk)	1 cup cooked pasta shapes	
135-160 calories	2 whole-wheat breakfast cereal biscuits	2 regular slices pan bread	1 large pitta bread	6 wholemeal crispbread or crackers	1 cup yam or sweet potatoes	1 cup cooked basmati rice		
160-190 calories	½ cup muesli	1 tortilla bread	½ lunch size baguette roll		8 baby potatoes	1 cup cooked white rice	1 cup cooked brown spaghetti	1 cup cous cous or quinoa
190-220 calories	1½ cups cereal flakes	2 "thick cut" slices pan bread	1 bagel	2 round pitta breads		1 cup cooked brown rice	1 ½ cup wholewheat noodles	

Example of a Daily Eating Plan

Follow the serving sizes from the Food Pyramid

Breakfast

- Wholegrain or high fibre cereal or porridge* with low fat milk, or
- Boiled or poached egg
- Wholegrain bread or toast* with low fat spread
- Fruit juice or fresh fruit (chopped on cereal)
- Tea, coffee, milk or water

Mid morning snack

- Fruit such as apple, banana, pear, 2 plums or kiwis, or
- 1 dessert spoon of unsalted nuts or seeds

Lunch

- Lean meat, poultry, fish, low fat cheese or egg (a small serving).
- A large serving of salad or vegetables or vegetable soup
- Wholegrain bread or small roll*
- Yogurt or glass of low fat milk
- Fresh fruit
- Tea, coffee or water

Mid afternoon snack

- Fresh fruit

Dinner

- Fish, chicken, lean meat or alternative source of protein (a moderate serving)
- A large serving of a variety of vegetables or salad
- Potato, rice, pasta, yam or plantain*
- Glass of low fat milk or yogurt
- Fresh or cooked fruit
- Tea, coffee or water

Supper

- Tea or milky drink made on low fat milk.

* Number of servings depends on activity levels

Children from 5 years of age should be offered smaller serving sizes and these can be increased up to regular serving sizes as the child gets older. It is very important that Top Shelf foods are limited for this age group so they do not fill up on calories from sugar and fat instead of eating healthy foods.

For further advice on healthy eating, see the factsheets on www.indi.ie

Facts about being active

How much activity is enough?

All children from 2- 18 years of age need at least 60 minutes a day every day.

Adults from 18 years onwards (including people over 65) need at least 30 minutes on 5 days a week. This is the minimum for health and should be gradually increased over time.

Being regularly active can give you more energy, help relieve stress, improve your mental health and lower your risk of heart disease and cancer. It also helps you maintain a healthy weight. The more activity you do, the more health benefits you achieve.

So move more every day!

Think about your average day and how you might include more activity into your lifestyle, then make a plan and set yourself weekly goals. It's that easy! If you think you don't have enough time, how about swapping 20-30 minutes of time spent watching TV or using the computer and going for a brisk walk instead.

To make sure you're getting the benefits from your activity, you should feel warmer or be sweating slightly and aware that there's an increase in your breathing and heart rate.

It is very important for children and adults to *balance* the amount of food eaten with enough activity to help control body weight.

To lose weight and to prevent weight gain

You may need 60-75 minutes a day to lose weight and to prevent weight gain BUT remember some activity is always better than none.

For more ideas on how to get active go to the Get Ireland Active website: www.getirelandactive.ie

The Department of Health and the Health Service Executive acknowledge the work of the Healthy Eating Guidelines Working Group, Food Safety Authority of Ireland and advice from the Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute and the Special Action Group on Obesity in reviewing the Healthy Eating Guidelines and the Food Pyramid.

