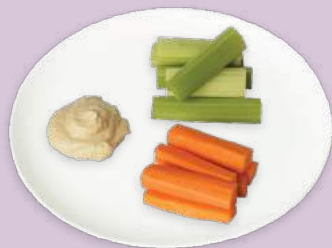




# Healthy Food for Life

The Food Pyramid guide to every day food choices for adults, teenagers and children aged five and over



# Do you want to feel good and have more energy?

Eating a wide variety of nourishing foods provides the energy and nutrients you need every day to stay healthy. Plan what you eat using these tips.



## Plan and prepare

**Take time to plan your meals in advance.** This will help you to introduce variety, eat more nutritious foods, save money and rely less on convenience and processed foods.



**Prepare your meals using mostly fresh ingredients** and choose foods like fruits, salads and vegetables for snacks.



**Use healthier cooking methods like grilling and steaming** instead of frying or roasting with oil or fat.



**Size matters.** Use the Food Pyramid as a guide for serving sizes.



**Take time to enjoy your meals sitting at a table.** Try to avoid eating in front of TV or computer screens.



## Make healthy choices

### From Food Pyramid to Plate.

Base your meals on plenty of vegetables, salads and fruits – up to half your plate or bowl at every meal. Choose a variety of colours.



### Choose wholemeal and wholegrain breads, cereals, pasta and brown rice.

Choose wholemeal for most of the bread you eat. Be aware of the calorie difference – some types contain more calories than others.

Swop



for



### Choose low-fat milk, yogurt or cheese.

Choose milk and yogurt more often than cheese.

Swop



for



### Include a small amount of poultry, fish, eggs, nuts, beans or meat at 2 meals.

Choose fish up to twice a week – oily fish is best.

Swop



for



### Limit chips and takeaway food as much as possible.

Most are very high in fat, salt and calories.



### Don't eat the following foods and drinks every day:

- Sugary drinks
- Biscuits, cakes, desserts, chocolate, sweets
- Processed salty meats like sausages, bacon and ham
- Salty snacks like crisps

**!** Limit foods and drinks high in fat, sugar and salt to sometimes and only in small amounts. Not every day, maximum once or twice a week.



Women of child-bearing age are advised to take 400 microgrammes of folic acid every day as a folic acid supplement.

## Get active

To be healthy you need regular physical activity.

### Adults and children

To maintain a healthy weight adults need at least 30 minutes a day of moderate activity on 5 days a week or 150 minutes a week.

Children need to be active at a moderate to vigorous level for at least 60 minutes every day.

**Moderate activity** is any activity that causes your heart to beat slightly faster and your breathing to become noticeably heavier without feeling out of breath. Examples include brisk walking and cycling slower than 10mph.

**Vigorous activity** is any activity that causes a big increase in heart rate and your breathing becomes much faster and deeper leaving you feeling out of breath and sweaty. Examples include running and sports such as football or basketball.

For more information about being active, visit [www.getirelandactive.ie](http://www.getirelandactive.ie)



## Alcohol

Alcohol is not needed for health and is not recommended for young people under 18 years, pregnant or breastfeeding women.

- Alcohol contains calories and may promote snacking.
- Have 2–3 alcohol free days a week.
- No safe limit for alcohol use by under 18s.

### Weekly lower risk limits

#### Men

**17 standard drinks**  
170g alcohol over a week

#### Women

**11 standard drinks**  
110g alcohol over a week

### Standard drinks

#### One standard drink contains

Calories: 100–150

Pure Alcohol: 10g

#### Examples of one standard drink



½ pint beer or lager



Small glass wine



Single measure spirit

# Use the **Food Pyramid** to plan your daily food choices



**The Food Pyramid shows how much of what you eat overall should come from each shelf to achieve a healthy, balanced diet.**

**The shape of the Food Pyramid shows the types of foods and drinks people need to eat most for healthy eating.** It is divided into six shelves and each provides you with the range of nutrients and energy needed for good health. Healthy eating is all about choosing the right amounts from each shelf.

Many of the foods you eat, such as pizzas, casseroles, pasta dishes and sandwiches, are a combination of the food shelves. For these sorts of foods, you just need to work out the main ingredients and think about how these fit with shelves on the Food Pyramid.

Following the Food Pyramid doesn't mean that you need to achieve this balance with every meal, but aim to get the balance right over the day and over the week. Small changes can make a big difference.

This Food Pyramid guide is for children aged 5 and over, teenagers and all adults, both healthy weight and overweight. As two out of three Irish adults are overweight there is a list of top tips to help overweight adults get to a healthy weight on the back page.

## **Vegetables, salad and fruit**

This is the biggest shelf and is at the bottom of the Food Pyramid so you need to choose more of these.

## **Wholemeal cereals and breads, potatoes, pasta and rice**

The foods on this shelf provide the best energy for your body to work. Energy needs are different throughout life and this shelf covers a wide choice of foods. Follow the Daily Servings Guide opposite carefully to make sure you're getting the right amount for you depending on:

- your age
- if you're male or female
- if you're active or inactive
- if you're a healthy weight or overweight.

You may be surprised by the amount of servings you can have from this shelf. It may seem like a lot but these wholemeal foods are healthy choices and are recommended to give you energy instead of choosing unhealthy high calorie foods and drinks from the Top Shelf.

## **Foods and drinks high in fat, sugar and salt**

This is the smallest shelf and is at the top of the Food Pyramid so people need to choose very little of these – not every day, maximum once or twice a week only. They are not needed for health and may promote overweight and obesity.

## **Fluids**

Drink at least 8 cups of fluid a day – water is best.

## Foods and drinks high in fat, sugar and salt



Most people consume snacks high in fat, sugar and salt and sugar sweetened drinks up to 6 times a day (Healthy Ireland Survey 2016). There are no recommended servings for Top Shelf foods and drinks because they are not needed for good health.



NOT every day

## Fats, spreads and oils

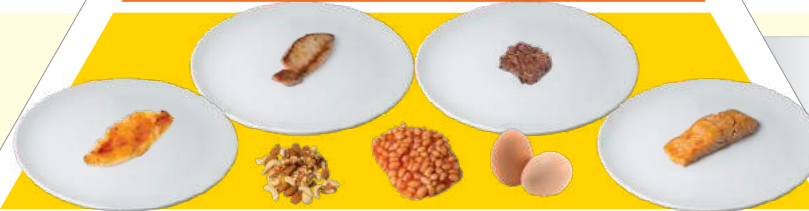
Use as little as possible. Choose mono or polyunsaturated reduced-fat or light spreads. Choose rapeseed, olive, canola, sunflower or corn oils. Limit mayonnaise, coleslaw and salad dressings as they also contain oil. Always cook with as little fat or oil as possible – grilling, oven-baking, steaming, boiling or stir-frying.



In very small amounts

## Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans and nuts

Choose lean meat, poultry (without skin) and fish. Eat oily fish up to twice a week. Choose eggs, beans and nuts. Limit processed salty meats such as sausages, bacon and ham.



2 Servings a day

## Milk, yogurt and cheese

Choose reduced-fat or low-fat varieties. Choose low-fat milk and yogurt more often than cheese. Enjoy cheese in small amounts. Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding need 3 servings a day.



3 Servings a day

5 for children age 9–12 and teenagers age 13–18

## Wholemeal cereals and breads, potatoes, pasta and rice

Wholemeal and wholegrain cereals are best. Enjoy at each meal. The number of servings depends on age, size, if you are a man or a woman and on activity levels. Watch your serving size and use the Daily Servings Guide.\*



3-5\* Servings a day

Up to 7\* for teenage boys and men age 19–50

## Vegetables, salad and fruit

Base your meals on these and enjoy a variety of colours. More is better. Limit fruit juice to unsweetened, once a day.



5-7 Servings a day

Small or fun-size servings of chocolate, biscuits, cakes, sweets, crisps and other savoury snacks, ice cream and sugary drinks – **not every day, maximum once or twice a week.**

### 1 serving size is:

1 portion pack reduced-fat or light spread for 2 slices of bread  
1 teaspoon oil per person when cooking






50–75g cooked lean beef, lamb, pork, mince or poultry (half size of palm of hand)  
100g cooked fish, soya or tofu  
¾ cup beans or lentils  
2 eggs  
40g unsalted nuts or seeds

1 glass (200ml) milk  
1 carton (125g) yogurt  
1 bottle (200ml) yogurt drink  
2 thumbs (25g) hard or semi-hard cheese such as cheddar or edam  
2 thumbs (25g) soft cheese such as brie or camembert





2 thin slices wholemeal bread, 1½ slices wholemeal soda bread or 1 pitta pocket  
⅓ cup dry porridge oats or ½ cup unsweetened muesli  
1 cup flaked type breakfast cereal  
1 cup cooked rice, pasta, noodles or cous cous  
2 medium or 4 small potatoes, 1 cup yam or plantain

1 medium sized fruit – apple, orange, pear or banana  
2 small fruits – plums, kiwis or mandarin oranges  
Small fruits – 6 strawberries, 10 grapes or 16 raspberries  
½ cup cooked vegetables – fresh or frozen  
1 bowl salad – lettuce, tomato, cucumber  
1 bowl homemade vegetable soup  
150ml unsweetened fruit juice

### Serving guide

				
<b>Cereals, cooked rice and pasta, and vegetables, salad and fruit</b> Use a 200ml disposable plastic cup to guide serving size.	<b>Cheese</b> Use two thumbs, width and depth to guide serving size.	<b>Meat, poultry, fish</b> The palm of the hand, width and depth without fingers and thumbs, shows how much you need in a day.	<b>Reduced-fat spread</b> Portion packs found in cafes can guide the amount you use. One pack should be enough for two slices of bread.	<b>Oils</b> Use one teaspoon of oil per person when cooking or in salads.

### \*Daily Servings Guide for wholemeal cereals and breads, potatoes, pasta and rice shelf

Active	Child (5–12)	Teenager (13–18)	Adult (19–50)	Adult (51+)
	<b>3–4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4–5</b>	<b>3–4</b>
	<b>3–5</b>	<b>5–7</b>	<b>5–7</b>	<b>4–5</b>
Inactive	Teenager (13–18)	Adult (19–50)	Adult (51+)	
	<b>3</b>	<b>3–4</b>	<b>3</b>	
	<b>4–5</b>	<b>4–6</b>	<b>4</b>	

There is no guideline for inactive children as it is essential that all children are active.

### Average daily calorie needs for all foods and drinks for adults

	<b>Active</b> 2000kcal	<b>Inactive</b> 1800kcal		<b>Active</b> 2500kcal	<b>Inactive</b> 2000kcal
---	------------------------	--------------------------	---	------------------------	--------------------------

# Top tips for overweight adults to get to a healthy weight



## Know your weight

Check your body mass index (BMI) on [www.healthyireland.ie](http://www.healthyireland.ie)  
Weigh yourself once a week and set a target of 1–2lb/1kg weight loss a week.



## Watch what you eat – use the Food Pyramid guide

Avoid Top Shelf foods and drinks. Limit chips and takeaway food as much as possible – maximum once a month.

Limit or avoid alcohol.

Eat lots more fruit and vegetables.

Choose the lower servings options recommended for your age and activity levels in the Daily Servings Guide for wholemeal cereals and breads, potatoes, pasta and rice shelf.\* Be aware of the calorie difference.

Drink more water – at least 8 glasses or cups a day.



## Eat regularly and healthily

Eat regular meals and cook mostly with fresh ingredients.

Use very little fats and oils on food and in cooking.

At meals:

- Use a smaller plate
- Eat slowly
- Stop when you feel full.

Be mindful of what you're eating and drinking.

Sit at a table and try not to watch TV or a screen while you're eating.



## Get active

Being physically active for 60–90 minutes every day will help you lose weight.



## For more tips and advice, visit [www.healthyireland.ie](http://www.healthyireland.ie)

### Food shelf fact sheets

Find out more about the food you need to stay healthy.

### Serving guides

Find out more about serving sizes and the number of servings you need every day.

### Daily meal plans – from Food Pyramid to Plate

There are seven daily meal plans covering a range of ages and activity levels. They show how to apply the information on the Food Pyramid to your breakfast, lunch, evening meal and snacks.

