

## Vitamins and supplements

Whether you are bulking up, slimming down or think you need a boost of vitamins, there are supplements and pills for just about anything. Many people think that because these supplements claim to be natural or herbal, they can not do you any harm. This is not necessarily true. Serious illness and death have been associated with some of these 'natural' substances. If you follow the guidelines for healthy eating it is not necessary for you to take any supplements. If you feel your diet is inadequate or you want to gain or lose weight, talk to your doctor.

## Eating disorders

Poor eating habits, fad diets and overeating related to stress are common problems. Many people eat when they are not hungry but when they are worried or stressed. Food we eat when we are stressed is often called 'comfort food' and is usually high in fat and sugar. Comfort eating can lead to overeating and an eating disorder called obesity. Other eating disorders include:

### Anorexia

People with anorexia are determined to control the amount of food they eat. They often have a distorted image of themselves and think they are fat. They may refuse to eat and exercise obsessively.

### Bulimia

People with bulimia usually feel out of control while eating. They often binge on food and then vomit, use laxatives, or exercise excessively to avoid weight gain.

If you think you or a friend may have a problem related to food, it is important to talk to someone.

## More information

- Talk to a GP.
- Call Lifeline on 131 114.
- Call Kids Help Line on 1800 55 1800.
- Call your local Community Health Centre (look under Health Services in the information pages at the front of your white pages.)
- Talk to a Dietician or Nutritionist.
- [www.thesource.gov.au](http://www.thesource.gov.au)
- [www.reachout.asn.au](http://www.reachout.asn.au)
- [www.healthinsite.gov.au](http://www.healthinsite.gov.au)

If these services can't help you they can usually give you the contact details of a service in your area that can.

We acknowledge the assistance of  
'The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating'  
Commonwealth Department of Health and  
Aged Care



Produced by The Commonwealth Bank  
and AMA Youth Health Advocate Program.



# FOOD

Make Informed Choices

## Healthy eating

Like a car, your body needs the right fuel (food) for it to work. Put the wrong fuel in a car and it will not run well. Everybody has habits and preferences when it comes to food. As people grow, these habits may change and often differ from friends, family, housemates or partners. Healthy eating can:

- Give you energy
- Help you maintain a healthy weight
- Boost your immune system
- Improve sports performance
- Protect teeth and keep gums healthy
- Improve skin, hair and nails
- Enhance your concentration and maybe your mood

## Start your engine!

The easiest way to get on the road to healthy eating is to have breakfast. Breakfast kickstarts your metabolism. Metabolism is the way in which your body breaks down food for energy. Not everybody likes to have cereal for breakfast. Experiment with breakfast and find something that you like. Try banana on toast, baked beans, a smoothie, fruit or yoghurt. Stay away from breakfast foods that have a lot of sugar. They will give you a boost of energy but it will not last long.

## Rest of the day

Lunch is the next most important meal. If you don't eat lunch you will have no energy in the afternoon, making it hard to concentrate on activities at home, school or work. Every day most Australians should try and eat from each of the following five food groups:

1. Bread, cereals, pasta, rice and low fat noodles
2. Vegetables
3. Fruit
4. Lean meat, fish, poultry, eggs, nuts and legumes
5. Milk, yogurt and cheese.

Other foods that do not fit into these categories like chocolate, biscuits, soft drinks, and pies can be eaten sometimes in small amounts. Deciding never to eat a certain food again, usually makes you crave it more. Enjoy all food in moderation.

## 'Diets'

There are many fad 'diets' which make claims of dramatic weight loss or gain, as well as high protein, low carbohydrate and other diets, which insist that you can only eat a certain food, like cabbage. Most of these diets are not nutritionally balanced and do not promote healthy eating habits. Most people need to eat food from all of the five food groups.

## Vegetarian eating

People who are vegetarians do not include certain types of animal protein in their diets. Vegetarians need to eat a balanced diet that provides a full range of nutrients. It is a good idea to get advice from a GP, dietician or nutritionist.

## Take away food

Choose food that has the least fat:

- Sandwich, foccacia or roll with lean meat and salad or vegetables
- Baked potato with coleslaw and low fat filling without butter or sour cream
- Doner kebab or souvlaki with extra salad or tabouli rather than lots of meat
- Pasta with tomato based sauces
- Stir fry with steamed rice
- Low fat smoothies and milkshakes
- Pizza and hamburgers can be made at home with lean meat and low fat cheese

Avoid:

- Anything that is deep-fried or in batter eg chips and potato scallops (the thinner the chip the more fat it absorbs)
- Pasta or other dishes with creamy sauces
- Garlic or herb bread

## Water

The average person needs to drink 2 litres (8 cups) of water a day. In hot weather or if exercising, this amount needs to be increased. Cola drinks, tea or coffee do not count. They are diuretics and force the kidneys to excrete more fluid than normal causing dehydration. Headaches may be a sign of dehydration.