

FOCUS ON DISCRETIONARY FOOD

WHAT IS A DISCRETIONARY FOOD?

Discretionary foods are foods which are not essential for our health. They are characterised by being high in saturated fat, added sugars, salt and/or alcohol. These foods contribute an excess amount of energy (kilojoules) to the diet and by displacing nutritious foods, increase the risk of consuming a nutritionally deficient diet. In the longer term over consumption or discretionary foods associated with an increased risk of obesity and chronic disease. However, when consumed occasionally and in small amounts, they can contribute to a more varied and enjoyable dietⁱ.

The average number of kilojoules consumed by the average Australian.



8,700 kilojoules (kJ) each day

How much discretionary food do we eat [and drink]?

- 1 Far more than the recommended daily amount of none to no more than 2 ½ to 3 serves of discretionary foods each day depending on sex, height and activity levels^{iv}.
- 2 In 2011-12, adults and children living in the Australian Capital Territory reported an intake of discretionary foods calculated to contribute around one third of their daily energy intakeⁱⁱ.
- 3 For an adult consuming an average Australian diet of 8,700 kilojoules (kJ) each day, this would be the equivalent of eating 4 ½ serves of discretionary foodsⁱⁱⁱ.
- 4 When there are higher energy needs, it is preferable to make this up using foods from the core foods - breads and cereals; dairy and dairy alternatives; fruit; vegetables, and meat and meat alternatives - rather than from discretionary foods.

AN EXAMPLE OF FOODS WHICH WOULD MAKE UP A HEALTHY MEAL PLAN TOTALLING 8700KJ



Breakfast

1 1/3 cup of flake cereal + 1 cup of milk



Lunch

1 sandwich with 1 slice ham and 1 slice cheese and salad



Dinner

130g chicken, 1 cup of cooked rice, 2 cups of cooked vegetables



Morning Tea

1 piece of fruit



Afternoon tea

1 piece of fruit



Supper

200g tub of yoghurt



Discretionary foods

1 serve (600kJ) Two scoops of ice cream OR Two small sweet biscuits OR 25g chocolate bar



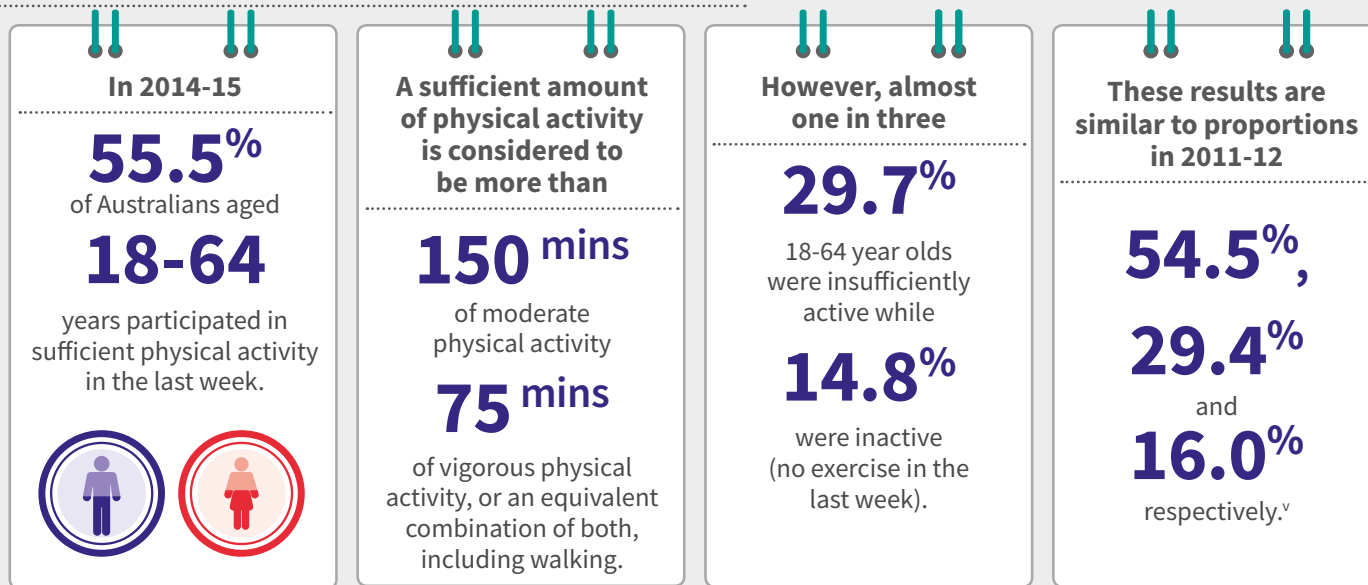
Healthy oils allowance

Around 1 Tbspn of unsaturated margarine/oils for the day. This is 1 tsp of margarine (4 tsp = 1 Tbspn)

WHAT DOES AN 8,700 KJ HEALTHY MEAL PLAN LOOK LIKE?

Breads & cereals	Dairy & alternative	Fruit	Vegetables
6 serves	3 serves	2 serves	5 serves
3000kJ	1800kJ	700kJ	500kJ
Meat & alternatives	Healthy Oils	Extras / Discretionary foods	
2.5 serves	1 Tbspn	1 serve	
1500kJ	600kJ	600kJ	

How many and how often do Australians participate in physical activity? Is this enough?



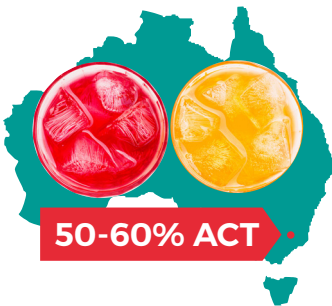
HOW MUCH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IS NEEDED TO BURN OFF 600KJ?

Activity	Time (minutes)							
	18-24 years		25-34 years		35-44 years		45-54 years	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Ht 1.78m	Ht 1.65m	Ht 1.78m	Ht 1.64m	Ht 1.77m	Ht 1.63m	Ht 1.76m	Ht 1.62m
	Wt 81.6kg	Wt 67.3kg	Wt 85.1kg	Wt 68.7kg	Wt 87.1kg	Wt 73.7kg	Wt 89.4kg	Wt 73.7kg
	BMI 25.5	BMI 24.8	BMI 26.9	BMI 25.5	BMI 27.7	BMI 27.6	BMI 28.6	BMI 27.9
Running or Jogging	13	15	12	14	11	12	10	11
Soccer or Swimming	15	13	13	16	12	14	12	13
Cycling	17	20	16	18	15	16	14	15
Health club exercise	20	24	19	22	17	19	16	18
Pilates	27	31	25	29	23	25	21	24
House work – vacuuming, Walking – gentle pace, or Gardening	29	34	27	31	25	27	23	26
Walking the dog or Weight lifting	34	39	31	36	29	32	27	31
House work – light or Yoga	41	47	38	44	35	38	33	37

How much do we spend on discretionary foods?

In 2015, research was undertaken to calculate the amount spent on discretionary foods in Canberra.

The results showed that for Canberrans, discretionary food and drinks made up over half (50-60%) of the total food spend^{vi}.



In a household of two adults and two children (one teenage boy and one primary school-aged girl), the average fortnightly amount spent on food and drinks was \$753, of which \$435 was for discretionary foods 58% including \$119 for takeaways, \$27 for soft drinks and \$87 for alcoholic beverages.

If discretionary foods were replaced with healthy foods which allowed the family to meet their recommended intake of core foods, the total spend would be \$626 (\$127 less) - a saving of

16%

How often are we eating out?

Fast food chains dominate when Australians eat out. In 2016, Ipsos Australia reported that on average Australians eat out at fast food chains 4.6 times per month followed closely by restaurants and cafes at 4.2 times per month.^{vii}



How is Canberra tracking with discretionary food consumption in our children?

Primary school children in the ACT Year 6 *Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey* were asked “How often do you usually drink Coke or other sugary drinks?” In 2015, a significantly larger proportion of students (18.7%) reported that they usually don’t drink Coke or other soft drinks compared to year 6 students in 2006 (9.5%), and conversely a smaller proportion (8.4%) reported having these drinks 4 or more times per week compared to year 6 students in 2006 (18.9%). Similarly in 2015, in response to the question “How often do you usually eat food from a fast food outlet (e.g. McDonalds, KFC, Pizza, Hungry Jacks)?”, a significantly larger proportion of year 6 students (21.0%) reported that they usually didn’t eat food from a fast food outlet compared to year 6 students in 2006 (11.7%) and a smaller proportion (2.1%) reported eating fast food 4 or more times per week compared to those in 2006 (5.4%).

In the *ACT Secondary Students’ Alcohol and Drug Survey*, students were asked “How many times in the last week did you drink a can of soft drink, energy drink, fruit juice, or cordial?” In 2015, a significantly larger proportion of secondary students (22.9%) reported not drinking these soft drinks in the last week compared to secondary students in 2006 (10.0%) and a smaller proportion (25.6%) reported drinking these drinks 4 or more times per week in 2015 compared to secondary students in 2006 (42.3%). Students were also asked “How many times in the last week did you eat a fast food meal like McDonalds, Hungry Jacks, pizzas, fish and chips, hamburgers, meat pies, pasties?” In 2015, a larger proportion of secondary students (25.3%) reported not eating fast food in the last week compared to secondary students in 2006 (22.2%), while a smaller proportion of students in 2015 (7.3%) reported eating fast food 4 or more times last week compared to those in 2006 (9.0%).

REFERENCES

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- iii NHMRC 2013, p34.
- iv NHMRC 2013, p41.
- v Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015, National Health Survey: First Results, 2014-15, cat. no. 4364.0.55.001, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, viewed 8 December 2016, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4364.0.55.001~2014-15~Main%20Features~Exercise~29>
- vi Lee A, Kane K & Lewis M 2016, Healthy Diets ASAP (Australian Standardised Affordability and Pricing) survey, Canberra: the price, price differential and affordability of current (unhealthy) and healthy diets and potential impacts of policy change – Final report 20 May 2016, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane.
- vii ‘Food facts, fiction and fads – How Australia eats, thinks about and shops for food’ 2016, Ipsos Australia – Press Centre -Latest news, viewed 7 December 2016, <http://ipsos.com.au/food-facts-fiction-and-fads-how-australia-eats-thinks-about-and-shops-for-food/>