

Eating Well

Who is this information for?

People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities

Family members

Disability support workers

What is a balanced diet and why is it important?

A balanced diet is one that gives your body all the nutrients it needs to function properly. It should include a wide variety of foods to make sure you get all of the vitamins, minerals, carbohydrates, fats and protein that your body needs to stay both physically and mentally well.

A balanced diet:

- helps you have enough energy to get through the day
- strengthens your immune system
- supports good mental wellbeing
- helps you stay physically healthy

Our bodies needs changes throughout our life so a balanced diet for a toddler is different to a balanced diet for a teenager or an adult. What your body needs may also change if you have certain health conditions or allergies, where this is the case, it's a good idea to seek help from a dietitian to make sure your diet is providing the right nutrients in the right amounts for your body.

If you have any concerns about your diet or the diet of someone you care for it may be useful to make an appointment with a dietitian to discuss this.

What does a balanced diet look like?

A balanced diet includes a wide variety of nutritious foods from these five groups every day:

- Plenty of vegetables, including different types and colours, and legumes/beans
- Fruit
- Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain and/or high cereal fibre varieties, such as breads, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles, polenta, couscous, oats, quinoa and barley
- Lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds, and legumes/beans
- Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or their alternatives, mostly reduced fat (reduced fat milks are not suitable for children under the age of 2 years)
- Drink plenty of water.

The Australian Dietary Guidelines and Australian Guide to Healthy Eating provide more information and a guide to what a balanced diet might look like and include.

Which medical supports can you seek?

- Dietitian
- Speech Pathologist – swallowing issues
- Occupational Therapist – for assistance with equipment to make feeding yourself or the person you care for easier
- General Practitioner

Other services to support a balanced diet?

The find a dietitian page on the Dietitians Australia website can help you find a dietitian to suit your needs <https://dietitiansaustralia.org.au/find-an-apd/>

Where can I find out more?

[Australian Dietary Guidelines and Australian Guide to Healthy Eating](#)

[Dietitians Australia](#)

[Nutrition Australia](#)

[Baker - Food and your immune system](#)

[Healthy, easy recipes](#)

[Grow your own food from seed](#)

[Growing food at home](#)

[Food activities at home with the kids](#)

Note: If you regularly see a health professional, we encourage you to continue your care and support during COVID-19.