

# FUEL FOR LIVING

**A simple guide for nutritious eating for a strong body**

*MECC is a joint initiative of Meals on Wheels SA,  
Aged and Community Services and SA Health.*

**Good nutrition and a healthy lifestyle is always important, and even more important as we get older. Having a full nutritious diet helps us to:**



- Maintain a healthy weight (it's healthy to carry a little extra weight as a reserve in case you get ill or lose your appetite)
- Maintain muscle strength
- Maintain bone strength
- Reduce the risk of broken bones if you fall
- Reduce the risk of malnutrition.

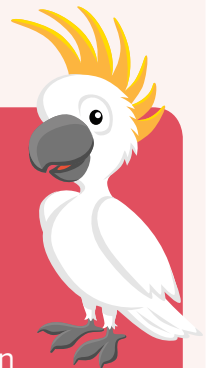
## **WHAT TO eat**

Eating a well-balanced diet isn't as hard as you might think. Aim to include the following five food groups in your daily diet and you're well on your way to consuming the nutrients you need.

- 1.** Protein: Meat, fish, poultry, eggs, tofu, nuts and legumes (beans and lentils)
- 2.** Dairy: Milk, cheese, yoghurt and custard
- 3.** Grains: Breads, cereals, rice and pasta
- 4.** Vegetables
- 5.** Fruit

### **TOP TIP**

Eating at least 3 meals a day and nourishing snacks between meals is recommended.



## The importance of protein

Protein is an important part of a healthy and nutritious diet. Protein helps to prevent muscle loss, which will assist with strength and reduce the risk of a fall.

Our muscles are continually being broken down and rebuilt by our body, and this process requires 25g – 30g of protein in a single meal. Unfortunately, grazing on small amounts of protein throughout the day won't have the same muscle building effect.

Each of the following will provide 7g of protein: One egg, 200ml of milk, 30g of cooked meat (roughly the size of a matchbox).

### High protein milk drink for those with a small appetite or underweight

Combine:

- 1 cup full cream milk
- 2 tablespoons of skim milk or full cream milk powder
- Flavouring may be added also

This drink provides 12.5g protein and 400g calcium (when made with skim milk powder)

## TOP TIP

It is best to eat your protein with carbohydrates (like bread, cereal, rice, pasta, milk or yoghurt) and fats (like cheese, oil or margarine), this will ensure the protein is used for muscle building rather than consumed as energy.

### Enriching meals for small appetites

Following these tips can provide additional energy and protein without filling you up too much:

- Add banana, honey, almond meal or yoghurt to your morning cereal
- Have cheese and biscuits or yoghurt instead of sweet biscuits
- Add extra cheese to your meals (melted over vegetables or sprinkled over pasta or salad)



## The value of dairy foods

Dairy foods are an important part of an everyday diet. Providing protein, energy and nutrients such as calcium, reducing the risk of osteoporosis (thinning of the bones), breaks and fractures.

Try to have at least 4 serves of calcium rich foods each day. The following are considered 1 serve:

- 1 cup of milk (250ml)
- Small tub of yoghurt (200g)
- 2 slices of cheese (40g)

Unless you are malnourished or trying to put on weight, we recommend choosing mostly reduced fat or low fat varieties, as many dairy products can contain high levels of fats.

If you have problems with dairy, or simply don't like it, try calcium fortified soy milk, which is rich in protein, or canned fish with bones, like salmon or sardines, which are high in calcium.

## Why Vitamin D?

Vitamin D helps our bodies absorb calcium into our bones. Direct sunlight on our skin is the main source of Vitamin D for many of us, so aim to get out into the sun for about 15 minutes each day, taking care to avoid the hottest part of the day and to wear sun protection.

If you're having trouble getting your daily source of Vitamin D from the sun, good dietary sources include:

- Eggs
- Oily fish
- Breakfast cereals with added Vitamin D
- Margarine

Speak to your GP about whether you need to take vitamin supplements like Calcium or Vitamin D.



## Essential Fats

A small amount of healthy (unsaturated) fats and oils makes up part of a nutritious diet.

Healthy fats include olive, canola and sunflower oil and margarines containing the above oils. If your appetite has decreased consider adding margarine, butter or cream to your diet to meet your energy needs.

## DID YOU KNOW...

1 in 3 patients in hospital are malnourished.



Packaged foods such as frozen, canned, dried or UHT products are perfectly okay to use. Look for the Health Star Rating now on the front of many packaged foods.

## More about the Health Star Rating

The Health Star Rating scores foods from half a star to 5 stars based on the nutritional value per 100g or 100ml. The more stars, the better the choice, making it a quick, easy way to compare packaged foods.

# HEALTHY eating and PRE-existing CONDITIONS



Many of us have pre-existing conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, cholesterol etc, and this may mean that a healthy diet for you is slightly different to others. Speak to your GP or dietitian for more information about your diet.

## Malnutrition

Loss of appetite and eating poorly can lead to weight loss and malnutrition, which will make you weak and may ultimately lead to loss of independence. The malnutrition screening tool below will help assess if you are at risk of malnutrition.

<b>Have you lost weight recently without trying?</b>	If No	<b>0</b>
	If Unsure	<b>2</b>
<b>If Yes, how much weight (kg) have you lost?</b>	From 0.5 to 5 kg	<b>1</b>
	From 5 to 10 kg	<b>2</b>
	From 10 to 15 kg	<b>3</b>
	More than 15 kg	<b>4</b>
	Unsure	<b>2</b>
	<b>Have you been eating poorly because of a decreased appetite?</b>	No
Yes		<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>		

**Low Risk: MST= 0-1**

**At risk: MST= 2+**

If the screening tool shows you are at risk of malnutrition speak to your GP to further assess your risk in greater depth. Your GP may be able to assist you with accessing a dietitian at no cost.

## Special diets for pre-existing conditions

Are you on a special diet for a pre-existing condition such as high blood pressure, diabetes or cholesterol? If so, we suggest you speak with your GP or dietitian for more information about what your diet should include.

Unplanned weightloss of 3-5kg (1/2-1 stone) over 6 months or less is a concern. If this happens you should speak with your GP.

## Eating nutritiously with diabetes

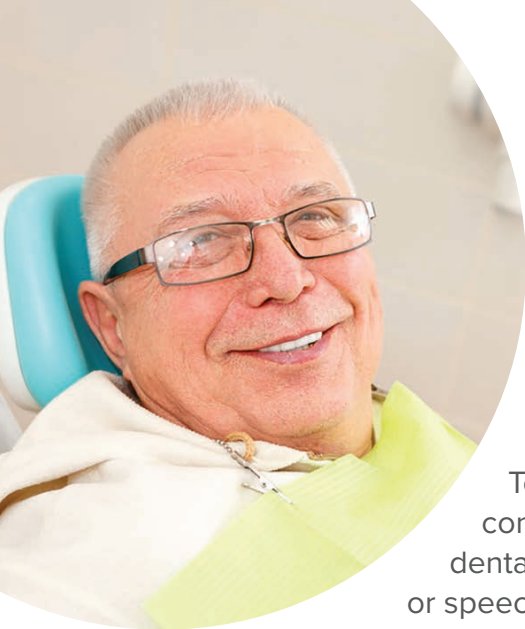
People with diabetes should follow the Australian Dietary Guidelines. Eating the recommended amount of food from the five food groups will provide you with the nutrients you need to be healthy and prevent chronic diseases such as obesity and heart disease.

**Excellent resources are available at the Diabetes Australia website, [diabetesaustralia.com.au/what-should-i-eat](https://diabetesaustralia.com.au/what-should-i-eat) or discuss with your GP.**

## Healthy eating to lose weight

It is better for older people to carry a little extra weight, however, if you are looking to shed a few kilos, following these healthy guidelines, including foods from the five food groups and exercising regularly should help. If you feel you need to lose weight, speak with your GP about the best steps for you to take.





## Teeth, mouth and swallowing problems

Health concerns like toothaches, poorly fitting dentures, mouth ulcers, sore gums and lips, reduced saliva, stroke and Parkinson's disease may make eating difficult.

To reduce the risk of these conditions try to have regular dental checks and talk to your doctor or speech pathologist if you are having problems chewing or swallowing, or if you are choking on your food often.

## Healthy eating and dementia

It can be challenging to keep people with dementia well-nourished, as they can have a poor appetite or get too tired to finish a meal, forget how to eat or how to use cutlery, crave sweet food, always be hungry or refuse to sit down to eat.

If you, or someone you know, is caring for someone with dementia, the following tips may help them address these challenges:

- Serve their favourite foods one course at a time
- Shared meal times with family and friends can provide visual clues and increase food intake
- Serve foods that are easy to manage, including finger foods like: pieces of fruit, small rissoles, hard boiled eggs, cubes of cheese



Modified meals can make eating easier.

**For more information about eating nutritiously with dementia visit [fightdementia.org.au/about-dementia/resources/help-sheets](https://fightdementia.org.au/about-dementia/resources/help-sheets).**



## Meals on Wheels



Are you a Meals on Wheels customer?

Meals on Wheels can provide both lunch and dinner meals each day, however, as some people select to receive only one meal to spread across the two meals, there are a few important things to remember:

- Put the food you are saving for later into the fridge as soon as possible
- To give your body the nutrients it requires, in addition to Meals on Wheels, each day you should aim to also eat:
  - ½ - 1 cup of cooked vegetables or 1-2 cups of salad
  - 1-2 pieces of fruit (fresh, canned or dried)
  - 4 more serves of bread or 2 cups of pasta or rice
  - 1 more serve of protein (eg. 2 eggs, 50g chicken or 65g cooked red meat)
  - 3 more serves of dairy (eg. A cup of milk, 200g yoghurt or 40g / 2 slices of cheese)

**If you're not currently a Meals on Wheels customer, but would like more information, visit [mealsonwheelssa.org.au](http://mealsonwheelssa.org.au) or call 1800 854 453.**





# DRINK UP

## Stay hydrated

Fluid is essential for your body to function properly, reducing the risk of kidney stones, constipation and urinary tract infection. Keeping hydrated will also improve your physical and mental health on a day to day basis.

Women and men require slightly different amounts of fluid each day in order to stay hydrated. **Women should aim for two litres** (8 cups) of fluid while **men should aim for 2.6 litres** (10 cups) each day. If you are active throughout the day you should aim to increase your fluid intake.

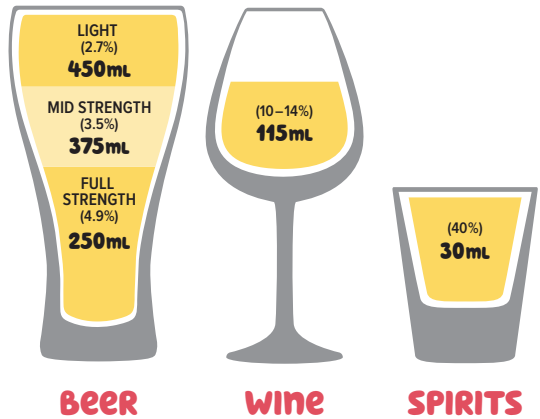
**Fluids include: Water, milk, fruit juice, cordial, vegetable juice, coffee, tea, custard, jelly, soup and ice-cream.**



## What about alcohol?

Alcohol should always be consumed in moderation, regardless of age. However, as we get older many people find they become more sensitive to the effects of alcohol, increasing the risk of impaired balance and falls.

For both men and women, drinking two standard drinks of alcohol a day is acceptable. Anything above this is too much. Standard drink sizes are shown in the diagram.



## Caring for others

If you are looking after a relative, spouse, partner or friend, it is important to look after yourself as well.

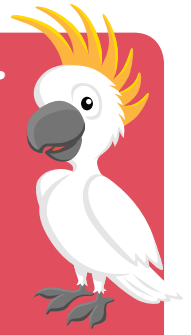
Healthy meals don't have to be complicated. Some quick, nutritious meal ideas include:

- Barbequed chicken and salad with a slice of wholegrain bread. Canned fruit and custard for dessert
- Scrambled eggs or omelette with fruit and yoghurt for dessert
- Baked beans on toast and a glass of Milo and fruit for dessert



# MECC: MAKING EVERY CONTACT COUNT

MECC is about embracing opportunities to talk to people about their health and wellbeing using the skills of asking and listening. MECC recognises the importance of good health and wants to support you to live independently.



Making Every Contact Count (MECC)  
SA is a joint initiative of Meals on Wheels SA Inc,  
Aged and Community Services SA & NT and SA Health.

MECC SA is based on the UK model, find out more at  
[makingeverycontactcount.co.uk](http://makingeverycontactcount.co.uk).

