VEGETABLES

In an ‘ideal plate’, half the plate will be filled with non-starchy vegetables, a quarter with protein, and a quarter with starchy vegetables or other carbohydrate.

Non-starchy, low-energy vegetables
- Asian greens
- asparagus
- beans
- beetroot
- broccoli
- Brussels sprouts
- cabbage
- capsicums

High-carbohydrate vegetables
- kumara
- potatoes
- • Find out what’s in season – it’s cheaper.
  • Frozen and canned vegetables are just as good.

BREADS AND CEREAL PRODUCTS

Bread
Aim to make your daily bread dense with visible grains.
Look for these words early in the ingredients list:
barley, brown rice, granary, kibbled (grain), millet, mixed grain, multigrain, oats, rye, seeded, stoneground (grain), whole grain, whole wheat.

More fibre
- Good: 5g or more per 100g
- Better: 7g or more per 100g

Less sodium
- 400mg or less per 100g

Snack bars
Aim for more than 50% from these ingredients

Energy
- Good: less than 600kJ per bar if you are watching your weight
- Better: less than 1g saturated fat per bar

DRINKS

Compare the kilojoules in a 250ml glass*.

Water 0kJ
Diet carbonated soft drink 0kJ
Vegetable/tomato juice 190-310kJ
Sugar-sweetened carbonated soft drink 420-490kJ
Fruit drink (contains 5% or more fruit juice or pulp) 100-500kJ
Fruit juice (contains undiluted fruit juice) 360-530kJ

*Note: brands will vary

MEAT

- Buy 100-150g raw meat per person.
- When buying beef or lamb mince, look to see how much white (fat) is marbled through it. Choose the leanest option with the least amount of white.
- Always trim visible fat, and remove skin from poultry.
- If you add legumes such as lentils or chickpeas to a recipe, you can reduce the amount of meat.

Breakfast cereals
Sugar 15g or less per 100g
Cereals with dried fruit: 25g or less per 100g
Sodium 400mg or less per 100g
Fibre more than 5g per 100g

Snack bars
Fruits, nuts, seeds, or whole grains
Energy
- Good: less than 600kJ per bar if you are watching your weight
- Better: less than 1g saturated fat per bar

Saturated fat
- Good: less than 2g saturated fat per bar
- Better: less than 1g per 100g

Sugars
- Less than 10g per bar

Crackers
It can be difficult to find crackers which meet our top criteria, so think about what you can compromise on.

Energy
- We recommend less than 1800kJ per 100g

Fibre
- Good: more than 5g per 100g
- Better: more than 10g per 100g

Sodium
- Good: less than 800mg per 100g
- Better: less than 500mg per 100g

Saturated fat
- Good: less than 2g per 100g
- Better: less than 1g per 100g

First published in Healthy Food Guide magazine. For more healthy tips and recipes go to www.healthyfood.com
© Copyright Healthy Life Media Ltd. The contents may not be reproduced in any form without the written permission of the publisher.
FATS
We need fats but aim to limit saturated fats and use more unsaturated fats. All fat is high in energy (kilojoules).

**COOKING AND SALAD OILS**
- One tablespoon = 500-550kJ

HFG recommends these oils for their balance of unsaturated fats:
- Avocado oil: Versatile and flavoursome, use for frying and dressing.
- Canola oil: Economical and versatile with a mild flavour, suitable for cooking, stir-frying, baking and salads.
- Flaxseed oil: Flavoursome oil; best for dressing and finishing. Should not be heated.
- Hazelnut oil: Versatile and flavoursome, use for cooking and dressing.
- Macadamia nut oil: Versatile and flavoursome, use for cooking and dressing.
- Olive oil: Flavoursome oil; use for dressing and finishing, especially extra-virgin olive oil.
- Peanut oil: Distinctive flavour, good for stir-frying (be mindful of those with a peanut allergy).
- Rice bran oil: Versatile with a mild flavour, suitable for cooking, stir-frying, baking and salads.
- Safflower oil: Versatile oil with mild flavour, good for stir-frying.
- Sesame oil: Distinctive flavour, good for stir-frying.
- Soy oil: Versatile oil; best for cooking, frying and salads.
- Sunflower oil: Versatile oil with mild flavour, good for stir-frying.
- Walnut oil: Flavoursome oil; good for dressing and finishing. Should not be heated.

- Olive oils labelled ‘pure’ or ‘light’ are usually lower quality than ‘extra virgin’ olive oil. All olive oils have the same fat content.

**Spreads**

- **Lower fat**
  - Less than 55g fat per 100g
- **Lower saturated fat**
  - Less than 15g per 100g
- **Low trans fat**
  - Less than 1g per 100g. Do not accept any higher
- **High monounsaturated fats**
  - Aim for a third or more of total fat to be monounsaturated fat
  - Example: At 50g total fat per 100g, aim for 17g+ monounsaturated fat
- **Sodium**
  - Less than 400mg per 100g

HFG TIP
- Use a lower-fat cheese such as cottage cheese, and add a small amount of a strong-flavoured cheese (e.g., parmesan) to boost flavour.

DAIRY

Fat in dairy products is high in saturated fat – the one we want to limit – so choose lower-fat options for everyday use.

**Milk**

- **Fat**
  - Aim for 1.5% total fat or less per 100ml
- **Calcium**
  - At least 120mg per 100mls
- **Protein**
  - At least 3g per 100ml
- **Budget**
  - Consider powdered milk. It’s just as good and very economical
- **Non-dairy**
  - Always choose a calcium-fortified option

**Cheese**

- **Type of cheese**
  - **Fat %**
  - **Energy in 250ml glass %**
  - **Trim**
    - green
    - 0.2%
    - 0.1%
    - 410kJ
  - **Reduced fat/light**
    - light blue
    - 1.5%
    - 0.9%
    - 500kJ
  - **Standard**
    - dark blue
    - 3.3%
    - 2.1%
    - 660kJ

**Yoghurt**

For a snack choose a filling, low-energy yoghurt.

- **Saturated fat**
  - Everyday use: 1.3g or less per 100g
  - For a dessert or treat: 3.5g or less per 100g
- **Calcium**
  - 150mg or more per 100g
- **Sugars**
  - For plain yoghurt: no added sugars (see ingredients list); for flavoured yoghurt: 10g or less per 100g
- **Energy**
  - If watching your weight: for plain yoghurt ~ 300kJ or less per 100g; for flavoured yoghurt ~ 400kJ or less per 100g

For dessert, where using a small amount, a higher-fat yoghurt is much better than cream with 40% fat and 25% saturated fat.

**Frozen desserts**

Remember these are treats, not everyday foods.

- **Frozen yoghurt**
  - Tends to be higher in sugar
- **Ice cream and gelato**
  - Made from cream or milk products
- **Sorbet**
  - Uses water instead of dairy so it’s naturally low fat
GRAINS AND CEREALS
Brown rice, arborio rice, wholemeal pasta, egg noodles, bean noodles, wholegrain couscous, quinoa, microwaveable rice pots/pouches
Opt for the wholegrain version of these where you can. They have more fibre, which helps you feel fuller and is important for a healthy digestive system. Noodles and pasta made from beans (eg, black or edamame beans) are a great way to boost the protein in a meal and good for kids.

Having a few pouches or pots of pre-cooked rice (brown or the mixes with quinoa) on hand is ideal for when you're short on time. Just mix with canned fish and salad or frozen veges.

Oats (wholegrain and rolled)
Oats make a quick and easy breakfast. Try porridge, bircher muesli or overnight oats, or you can add them to smoothies. They are also great to use in baking.

Breakfast cereals
Look for cereals that meet these criteria:
- 15g or less of sugar (25g or less if contains dried fruit)
- 5g or more of fibre (5g-15g for children)
- 3g or less of saturated fat (6g or less if it contains coconut)

Flour (wholemeal, cornflour and alternative flours, such as buckwheat, brown rice, spelt or quinoa)
Wholemeal flour is higher in fibre and B vitamins than white flour, so is a better choice, and cornflour helps thicken sauces without needing to make a roux with butter and plain flour. Alternative flours can be nice to use if you have a good recipe that you know works well with them. If you're a baker, you'll need some white flour too.

Popping corn
Making your own popcorn is very easy. It's also cheaper and healthier as you don't have the added salt and sugar.

CANS AND CARTONS
Fish (tuna, salmon and sardines)
Canned fish is a quick and easy way to add protein to breakfast (on toast), lunch (sandwich, wrap or salad) or dinner (fish pie, fish cakes or in a frittata).

Vegetables and fruit
Canned tomatoes are incredibly versatile and can be used in anything from homemade pasta sauces and soups to casseroles. Canned beetroot is also a great way to add interest to any salad. Canned fruit (in juice) is great for smoothies, to enjoy on top of yoghurt or cereal and makes a quick and easy dessert.

Reduced-salt stock and tomato paste
Choose low-salt or no-salt versions. Most of us have too much salt and this is an easy way to have less.

Canned legumes (no-added-salt chickpeas, kidney beans, black beans and reduced sugar-and-salt baked beans)
Legumes are low GI, packed with fibre and cheap. They can be used to make delicious meat-free meals, as the basis of salads and casseroles or to bulk out mince dishes. Legumes are also the prefect base for healthy dips. If you have unexpected guests, grab a can of white beans, blend with a little olive oil and season to make a creamy dip - serve with veges and wholegrain crackers.

Dried lentils, split peas and legumes (if you have time to soak and cook your own)
Red or yellow lentils are great in a dhal. Brown or Puy (French green) lentils hold their shape so are perfect cooked, then used as the base for a filling salad.

Curry pastes and reduced-fat coconut milk (canned or powered)
Use curry pastes and coconut milk to quickly create a vegetable curry. Compare nutrition labels to choose products lower in sodium and saturated fat.

Long-life milk (or milk powder)
It's always good to have a backup for this essential.
**SPICES, HERBS AND SEASONING**

Mixed herbs, mixed spice, cinnamon, cumin, curry powder, paprika and chilli flakes

These are good staples that add flavour with less salt. Keep stock of your favourites, and remember they don’t keep their flavour forever. Check the ingredients list on spice mixes. For some, salt is the first ingredient, meaning the product has more salt than anything else.

**SPREADS AND SWEETENERS**

Nut and seed butters

These have all the benefits of nuts and seeds, ready to spread on toast. Choose products with no added sugar or salt.

Honey and maple syrup

Honey and maple syrup are useful for baking and making the occasional sweet treat, but they are still ‘free sugars’ so limit the total amount you have.

Reduced-sugar jams

There are jams available now with a higher proportion of fruit to sugar. These are a better choice as most people have more sugar than they need. An easy swap for jam lovers.

**OILS**

Extra virgin olive oil

A flavoursome oil, especially useful in salads.

Rice bran or canola oil

Good value oils that are incredibly versatile. Their high smoke point means they are ideal to use in cooking. Their subtle taste also makes them great to use to dress salads too when you don’t want to add too much additional flavour.

Sesame oil

Adds an Asian flavour to dressings and stir-fries.

Oil spray (or in a pump bottle)

This helps you control how much you use.

**NUTS, SEEDS AND DRIED FRUIT**

Nuts (unsalted almonds, peanuts, cashews, walnuts, Brazils and pine nuts)

Nuts are packed with healthy fats, fibre and a variety of vitamins and minerals. Add a few to your breakfast, smoothies and salads, or sprinkle them over stir-fries.

Seeds (pumpkin, sunflower, sesame and linseeds/flaxseeds)

Seeds are a healthy snack, just be mindful of your portion size as they are very energy dense. A tablespoon or two is enough for most people. You can also make your own nut and seed butters if you have a good blender.

Dried fruit (figs, apricots, dates and prunes)

Use dried fruit in baking or have a small serving with breakfast or as a snack. Keep in mind, dried fruit is a concentrated source of sugar. Dried fruit can be easy to graze on, so avoid making it too accessible in the pantry if you’re tempted to keep nibbling.

**SAUCES AND CONDIMENTS**

Vinegars (red, white and balsamic)

Vinegars are perfect for dressing your salads.

Mustard, wasabi and horseradish

Best kept in the fridge once open, these are great flavour boosters.

Reduced-salt soy sauce and fish sauce

Soy sauce is very high in sodium, so choose the reduced-salt option and use small amounts. Fish sauce is commonly used in Thai cooking, but is also very high in sodium, so use sparingly.

Reduced-fat mayonnaise

Lower in kilojoules and saturated fat than standard versions.

**DRINKS**

Tea, coffee and herbal teas

Stock decaf options for those who can’t tolerate caffeine or for that afternoon or evening hot drink.

Hot and cold brew teas

There are lots of delicious tea bags available, which have no added sugar, that can be made into hot or iced tea.