



# Healthy Eating Background Information

[www.workwell.health.nz](http://www.workwell.health.nz)

## Overview

Food is a basic necessity; our bodies need the nutrients from food and drink in order to perform daily functions and stay healthy. It is important to have a varied and well-balanced healthy diet for good physical health and wellbeing as no single food or drink can provide all the nutrients that the body needs.

## Implications for health and wellbeing

[Poor nutrition](#) can lead to:

- Reduced immunity
- Increased risk of disease (such as heart disease, obesity and some cancers)
- Impaired physical and mental development
- Reduced productivity

The [Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Adults](#) provides advice on healthy eating:

- Maintain a healthy body weight by eating well and through daily physical activity
- Eat well each day by including a variety of nutritious foods from each of the four major food groups:
  - Vegetables and fruits
  - Breads and cereals, preferably wholegrain
  - Milk and milk products, preferably reduced or low-fat options
  - Lean meat, poultry, seafood, eggs or alternatives

- Choose food, drinks and snacks that are:
  - Low in fat, especially saturated fat
  - Low in salt
  - Low in added sugar (less than 5%)
- Drink plenty of liquids each day, especially water, and avoid sugar sweetened beverages
- Limit alcohol intake
- Follow food safety procedures for preparing, cooking and storing food.

## Healthy Eating in New Zealand

The [2012/2013 New Zealand Health Survey](#) indicated that:

- 66% of adults are not meeting recommended 3 or more serves of vegetables a day
- 58% are not meeting the recommended two or more servings of fruit each day
- Māori, Pacific and Asian adults, and those living in areas of high deprivation were less likely to eat fruit and vegetables
- 31% of adults were obese, and higher among Māori (48%) and Pacific (68%)

## In the workplace

An average adult will spend one third of their life at work and consume about a [third of their daily food intake](#) during work hours. Workplaces can empower staff to assess and take responsibility for their own health by



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supporting and encouraging healthy eating behaviours.

Many factors within the workplace have a significant role in influencing what individuals eat. These include:

- Choice, availability and cost of different food/drink options
- Promotion and marketing of food/drink choices
- Working practices e.g. workload, hours of work
- Facilities available for purchasing and/or preparing food/drinks
- Dietary habits of colleagues
- Individual knowledge and skill development.

Knowledge and skills gained in relation to healthy eating in the workplace can also be transferred through to family/whānau at home, improving the health of children and the wider community.

## Key Messages

- Healthy Eating is important for good health
- Following the Food and Nutrition Guidelines can support healthy eating
- A significant proportion of the New Zealand's population are not meeting the recommendations
- Working adults consume a third of their daily intake during work hours
- Workplaces can support employees

by creating a healthy eating culture

## Incorporating Healthy Eating into your Workplace

Your efforts to support and encourage healthy eating practices within the workplace should consider a multi-level approach to ensure it is effective and sustainable.

A multi-level approach involves considering what is available within your workplace at each of the following levels:

- Organisational (Policies and procedures)
- Environmental (Infrastructure and facilities)
- Individual (Opportunities, information and training)