

Women's Health Week – “Food for Thought” info sheet

Let's celebrate & embrace Women's Health Week with food health!

Jean Hailes for women's health, is focusing on specific food and nutrition topics for this week:

- Calcium
- Magnesium
- Vitamin D
- Protein
- Gut health

Nutrition Tip 1: Healthy Eating should never be boring! Include and enjoy a wide variety of foods full of colour and distinctive flavour.

How to do healthy eating!

- Don't over think. Consider planning just a day or two ahead if that helps
- Practise mindful eating -chew well, take your time and observe the taste of food
- Avoid distractions such as television or devices
- Make use of the Supermarket magazines with tips for foods in season and simple, healthy recipes
- Have a nutritious snack on hand for those mid meal Energy dives including fresh or tinned fruit, small tub of yoghurt or custard, handful of nuts +seed mix
- Cook meals in bulk and freeze into portions to save time

Nutrition Tip 2: Frozen vegetables are just as nutritious as fresh.

Calcium!

Our bodies cannot make calcium. If our blood calcium levels fall, the body will help by taking calcium from our bones and put back into the blood, where it is critical for the function of cells in our body. Aim for two serves of dairy foods a day and a serve of other calcium rich foods.

Dairy:

- 250ml of regular or skim milk
- 200g of natural or low-fat yoghurt
- 40g of cheddar cheese

One serve of calcium rich foods include:

- 1 slice of white bread
- 1 cup of cooked spinach or broccoli
- 15 almonds
- 100g of tofu

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Nutrition Tips 3: Dairy foods are the only food group that the dietary guidelines of Australia recommend we include more of with ageing, almost double!

Vitamin D!

Did you know that not only is Vitamin D good for our bone strength but with deficiency can be related to depressive symptoms and there are links to dementia with low blood levels.

Vitamin D increases the absorption of calcium in our gut.

Almost 50% of women in Australia may be deficient, with ~58% during Winter and Spring.

Good Food source of Vitamin D, are:

- Mushrooms
- Fish
- Eggs

Some foods are also fortified with Vitamin D, including margarines, and some dairy foods.

Nutrition Tip 4: Did you know by having two eggs each day you will meet >80% of your daily Vitamin D requirements.

Magnesium!

Research shows that a healthy, balanced diet with vitamins and nutrients including magnesium, zinc, vitamins B, C and E, and omega-3 fatty acids may help with anxiety.

Just over half the magnesium in the body is found in the bone and about a third in muscle and soft tissue.

Magnesium is widely distributed in the food supply in both plant and animal foods.

Food Sources to include:

- Green leafy vegetables, spinach, bok choy, broccoli
- Legumes - baked beans, chickpeas, kidney beans, peas
- Nuts – especially Brazil nuts
- Seeds – particularly pepitas and linseeds
- Shellfish

Nutrition Tip 5: A 30g serve of nuts, as recommended, is about 10 Brazil nuts

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Protein!

Nearly half the body protein is present in skeletal muscle – the necessary building blocks in bones.

Unlike carbohydrates and fats, the body does not keep a storage supply of protein. This is why we should consume quality protein foods daily.

If you have a high protein intake but a low calcium rich diet, then it is likely your body may be taking calcium from the bones. Important to keep your calcium rich foods daily in the diet.

High protein foods are:

- Animal Sources: Beef, lamb, chicken, pork, fish, eggs, high protein dairy products
- Plant sources: legumes –eg baked beans, kidney beans, soybeans lentils, tofu, nuts and other meat alternatives

Good sources of protein, but not to replace the sources above are dairy foods, whole grain cereals and breads.

Nutrition Tip 6: Include animal and plant-based proteins across the day at each meal.

Gut Health!

What is good for the gut is good for our brain.

The Mediterranean diet, which is rich in plant-based foods, high in fibre and with a decent splurge of Extra Virgin Olive Oil has been shown to reduce symptoms of depression.

We now know that the guts cells talk with the brain cells and this is known as the brain-gut axis.

To improve our gut health, we should include:

- Wholegrain cereals and breads
- Rice and pasta
- Nuts and seeds - a variety and handful is enough
- Legumes and Lentils – baked beans, chick peas, soyabeans
- Fresh Fruit – take your pick
- A colourful variety of vegetables and salad choices everyday

Nutrition Tip 7: Keep a stock of canned beans and lentils in the cupboard. Just, rinse and add to your spag bolognaise, casseroles or even salads. Increases the fibre and protein in your diet and they are inexpensive!