



DISCRETIONARY CHOICES

'Discretionary choices' are called that because they are not an essential or necessary part of healthy dietary patterns. These foods and drinks appear in the bottom right-hand corner of the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating on page 4. Discretionary choices are high in kilojoules, saturated fat, added sugars and/or salt or alcohol. Most Australians consume too many discretionary choices instead of choosing foods from the Five Food Groups.

Examples of discretionary choices include: most sweet biscuits, cakes, desserts and pastries; processed meats and sausages; ice-cream and other ice confections; confectionery and chocolate; savoury pastries and pies; commercial burgers; commercially fried foods; potato chips, crisps and other fatty and/or salty snack foods; cream, butter and spreads which are high in saturated fats; sugar-sweetened soft drinks and cordials, sports and energy drinks and alcoholic drinks.

If chosen, discretionary choices should be eaten only sometimes and in small amounts. While discretionary choices can help contribute to the overall enjoyment of eating, often as part of social activities and family or cultural celebrations, most Australians need to eat these foods less often and in much smaller amounts, and greatly increase physical activity to 'burn off' the added kilojoules from discretionary choices to help prevent gaining excessive weight. If you are short, small, above your healthiest weight or not very physically active, there may be little or no room in your usual dietary pattern for any discretionary choices at all, or the portion size needs to be quite small.

Australian Government
 National Health and Medical Research Council
 Department of Health and Ageing

www.eatforhealth.gov.au

Australian Guide to Healthy Eating

Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods from these five food groups every day.
 Drink plenty of water.

Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain and/or high cereal fibre varieties

Vegetables and legumes/beans

Fruit

Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives, mostly reduced fat

Lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans

Use small amounts

Only sometimes and in small amounts

Source: Commonwealth of Australia (2013). Eat for health: Australian Dietary Guidelines Summary, pp. 4, 27 Australian Dietary Guidelines can also be found online at <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/n55>