Australian Dietary Guidelines Scoping Survey - Submission 2021

Submitted to the National Health and Medical Research Council (March 2021).

Recommended updates to the Australian Dietary Guidelines

A review of the language, categories and definitions of terms such as ‘unhealthy’ or ‘discretionary’ foods and food categories such as 'meat' and 'grains' is needed, to make these phrases (and all terminology) meaningful to the public. These terms should acknowledge the place of a variety of foods within a balanced diet, and avoid encouraging restrictive eating behaviours.

Additionally, many of the existing food groups include foods that don't fit within the definitions, so a review is required to clearly identify the correct terminology and categorisation throughout the guidelines.

More thorough information is required. The guidelines should provide more guidance on alcohol and added sugars, particularly how they contribute to energy intake.

Recommended inclusions in the reviewed Australian Dietary Guidelines

The review of the guidelines should include developing distinct dietary guidelines for older adults, taking into account their unique needs, such as greater protein intake to maintain protective muscle mass, and calcium to protect bone strength. At present, the guidelines only consider the generally well adult population.

The guidelines should consider sustainability of food choices, and the impact of climate change on national food security. They currently don't address the impact of eating habits on the health of the planet, or the effect of climate on food supply and security. With an

increasing focus on human and planetary health, this must be considered.

The processing of food and its impact on nutritional value should be incorporated. The increasing prevalence of ultra-processed foods in the diets of Australians is leading to a lower intake of valuable nutrients from core food groups like vegetables, fruit, wholegrains, dairy and lean meats. The impact of these processed foods on health outcomes, and planetary health, should be included.

Finally, the guidelines should consider the context of eating, including the availability and accessibility of foods eaten at home or outside the home, purchasing decision influences, social aspects of eating, setting healthy habits from childhood and food marketing.

The guidelines should also be presented in a more accessible way to cater to a wider range of people, including using practical visual guides, more diverse images and foods, information applicable to different life stages, games, easy reading resources, and translations into languages other than English.

For more download our full submission.

Get in touch

If you have questions about this submission, contact us at policy@dietitiansaustralia.org.au