

Wednesday 21 August 2019

Leading charity's recommendations worth taking to heart

New recommendations from the Heart Foundation, released today, highlights the need for the Australian Government to take a population-focused approach to food and nutrition. The Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) calls for the Australian Government to fund a review of the Australian Dietary Guidelines, as part of a new National Nutrition Policy.

“The scientific evidence that underpins nutrition recommendations is evolving, and it is important that Australian guidelines are responsive to this. This update by the Heart Foundation emphasises the need to make a National Nutrition Policy a priority, ensuring our nutrition guidelines are providing Australians with the most up-to-date, population-based, dietary advice,” said Phil Juffs, President of DAA.

The Heart Foundation's advice focuses on foods rather than nutrients. It promotes plenty of healthy plant-based foods (vegetables, fruit, wholegrains, legumes, nuts and seeds) plus milk, cheese, yoghurt, fish, poultry, eggs, modest quantities of lean meats, healthy oils and herbs and spices for added flavour. Reduced-fat dairy products are recommended for those living with high cholesterol or a high risk of heart disease. In line with the Australian Dietary Guidelines and DAA's approach, Australians are advised to limit processed meats and other discretionary foods.

“DAA is supportive of the updates to the Heart Foundation's position statements which highlight the important role a healthy diet plays in reducing cardiovascular disease, our nation's leading cause of death,” said Juffs.

These recommendations follow last Wednesday's announcement by Minister for Health, Greg Hunt, who committed to fund an Intergenerational Health and Mental Health Study from 2020. The Study will incorporate the National Nutrition and Physical Activity Study, to provide an update on the health of Australian's, including dietary habits, obesity rates and nutrition deficiencies.

“The results of this survey will be a positive step forward for Australians, as understanding the eating habits of our nation allows nutrition recommendations to be focused accordingly. However, our nation's dietary intake is currently characterised by Aussies consuming more than 35% of their energy from unhealthy, discretionary food and drinks¹. It is vital for access to affordable healthy food, including education on how to make healthy choices, to be made available now,” said Juffs.

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**For further information or to organise an interview with Phil Juffs, President of DAA,
contact Pattie King, Dietitians Association of Australia on 0409 661 920**

¹Australian Bureau of Statistics (2014). Australian Health Survey: Nutrition First Results - Foods and Nutrients, 2011-12. Available from: <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4364.0.55.007~2011-12~Main%20Features~Discretionary%20foods~700>