

Healthy Eating Guidebook for Arabic Communities

Ethnic Communities
Council of Queensland

English



Ethnic Communities
Council of Queensland



Acknowledgement

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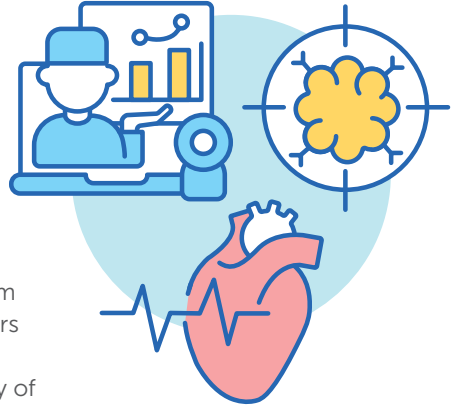
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Introduction

This booklet provides information, tools and strategies to help our communities eat well. We have addressed some frequently asked questions that we have received from Arabic and multicultural communities in Queensland.

Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland is a charity and non-governmental organisation representing the needs and interests of people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities (CALD) in Queensland. ECCQ Chronic Disease Program provides vital culturally appropriate and translated information, education, and support through face to face, telephone, and online platforms to the community about chronic disease prevention and self-management. If you need more information, please contact us at **(07) 3844 9166** or visit our website: **www.eccq.com.au**

What are Chronic Diseases?



According to the Department of Health, the term “Chronic Diseases” or “Chronic Conditions” refers to long term illnesses or conditions which can significantly impact an individual’s overall quality of life. The major groups of chronic diseases are:

- Arthritis
- Asthma
- Back Pain
- Cancer
- Cardiovascular Disease
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
- Diabetes
- Mental Health Conditions
- Overweight and Obesity

Chronic conditions are very common. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reported that half of all Australians have at least 1 of the following 8 major chronic conditions: Arthritis, Asthma, Back pain, Cancer, Cardiovascular disease, Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, Diabetes and Mental Health conditions. (Australian Government Department of Health, 2021).



How can healthy eating prevent Chronic Diseases?

- Healthy eating prevents obesity. Obesity is a major risk factor for many conditions, like type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, stroke, and heart disease. Eating foods that are high in sugar, fats and calories can add extra weight to your body, weakening your bones and making your organs work harder. Studies showing that for people who are overweight or obese, a weight loss of 5-10% of the total body weight is beneficial in improving your blood pressure, total blood cholesterol and blood sugars (Blackburn, 1995) and (Ryan & Yockey, 2017).
- Healthy eating can help improve cholesterol levels by decreasing bad cholesterol (LDL) and increasing good cholesterol (HDL). Low bad cholesterol (LDL) levels can help lower our risk of heart disease.
- Healthy eating improves the mood, which in turn boosts physical activity. If we are happy, we are more likely to be active. Eating the right foods can help us be happier, therefore leading to more motivation for exercise and regular physical activity is an important strategy for chronic disease prevention.

What are some tools and strategies to help us eat well?

Some nutritional issues that are prevalent in Arabic Communities are:

- High intake of fats including full fat yoghurts and animal- based oils;
- High intake of high energy grains, cereals and rice;
- Low consumption of fruits and vegetables;
- High intake of sugar and sweet foods and
- Cooking with high amount of oil.

In the next pages are some tools and strategies that can help our Arabic communities address these concerns and live a healthy life.

Healthy Eating Plate

Use the Healthy Eating Plate as a guide for creating a healthy and balanced meal. The plate size is on average 25cm in diameter. To build our plate, we divide our meals into 3 sections. Fill $\frac{1}{2}$ of our plate with non-starchy vegetables including different types and colours, $\frac{1}{4}$ with carbohydrates including mostly wholegrain or high fibre variety and $\frac{1}{4}$ with protein including lean meats or other protein alternatives.



Fill $\frac{1}{4}$ of our plate with carbohydrates or a fist size worth

$\frac{1}{4}$ plate carbohydrates



Fill $\frac{1}{2}$ of our plate with non-starchy vegetables or 2 full hands worth

$\frac{1}{2}$ plate non-starchy vegetables



Fill $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate with protein or a palm size worth

$\frac{1}{4}$ plate protein



What a healthy, balanced meal looks like...



1/4
plate
carbohydrates

1/2
plate
non-starchy
vegetables

1/4
plate
protein

Serving Sizes

To help make sure we are eating a balanced diet, the Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend the serving sizes for each food group depending on our age group. Below are the main age groups and their recommended daily serves.

Vegetables & Legumes / Beans



Fruit



Grain Foods (Cereal Foods)



Meats & Poultry (eggs, nuts, tofu, fish)



Dairy and/or Alternatives (Milk, yoghurt, cheese, alternatives)



Water



A table of the Australian Dietary Guidelines recommended serves for all age groups can be found at the back of this booklet.

	19-50 year olds	51-70 year olds	Pregnant women
Men	6 serves	5.5 serves	-
Women	5 serves	5 serves	5 serves

1 serve = 1/2 cup cooked/tinned vegetables, or 1 cup leafy salad vegetables

	19-50 year olds	51-70 year olds	Pregnant women
Men	2 serves	2 serves	-
Women	2 serves	2 serves	2 serves

1 serve = 1 medium piece, or 30g pieces of dried fruit, or 2 small pieces (e.g., plums, kiwi), or 1 cup tinned fruit

	19-50 year olds	51-70 year olds	Pregnant women
Men	6 serves	6 serves	-
Women	6 serves	4 serves	8.5 serves

1 serve = 1 slice of bread, or 1/2 cup cooked rice/pasta/noodles, or 1 small piece of Lebanese bread

	19-50 year olds	51-70 year olds	Pregnant women
Men	3 serves	2.5 serves	-
Women	2.5 serves	2 serves	3.5 serves

1 serve = 2 large eggs, or 8-12 nuts, or palm size of red lean meat or hand-size of chicken/fish, or 1 cup of cooked beans

	19-50 year olds	51-70 year olds	Pregnant women
Men	2.5 serves	2.5 serves	-
Women	2.5 serves	4 serves	2.5 serves

1 serve = 1 cup of any milk, or 2 slices of hard cheese, or 3/4 cup yoghurt, or 1 small wedge of soft cheese

	19-50 year olds	51-70 year olds	Pregnant women
Men	2.6L/10 cups daily	2.6L/10 cups daily	-
Women	2.1L/8 cups daily	2.1L/8 cups daily	2.13L/9 cups daily

Making Better Choices

We can enjoy all food if we eat them in moderation, therefore try not to identify food as good and bad but to focus on 'the better choices'. Try to choose foods that have more nutrients such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean meats rather than foods containing high level of salt, sugar or fat.

Below are some examples of better food choices.

Swap **THIS** for **THAT**



Chocolate



Berries



White Bread



Wholegrain or Wholemeal Bread



Short or Medium Grain Rice



Long Grain Brown or Basmati Rice



Hot Chips



Vegetable Sticks



Yoghurt (Full Fat)



Yoghurt (Low Fat)



Fatty Beef



Lean Beef



Soft Drink



Water



High Salt Beef or Chicken Stock Cubes



Reduced Salt Beef or Chicken Stock Cubes or Herbs and Spices



Fried Chicken



Skinless Baked Chicken



Ghee or Animal Fats



Canola or Olive Oil

Healthy Recipes

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By making small changes in each recipe we can lower the amount of fats, sugars and salts we are eating while still enjoying our favourite foods.

The following are common dishes in the Arabic culture. They have been modified to be healthier versions of your favourite traditional recipes. The fat content per serve is illustrated in tablespoons (where 1 tablespoon = 20g of fat).



Look out for the ingredients highlighted in green for the healthier substitute for the recipe.

Mloukhieh

Serves: 6 | Preparation Time 🕒 60 min

Ingredients

1kg of Mloukhieh or jute leaves
(washed, dried, and chopped)

✔ **500g** of skinless chicken breast (cubed)

12 garlic cloves (crushed with
a pinch of salt)

a handful of coriander (minced)

1tsp of red pepper paste

1tbsp of coriander powder

1 lemon (juiced)

salt & pepper to taste

✔ **1L** of reduced salt chicken stock

✔ **2 tbsp** of canola oil.

Method

1. Brown the chicken breast in the oil.
2. Add and stir in the crushed garlic.
3. Cook chicken and garlic a few minutes more.
4. Stir in the pepper paste and the coriander.
5. Add 500ml of chicken stock.
6. Let boil and cook until the chicken is tender.
7. Add lemon juice and the remaining chicken stock.
8. Bring to the boil.
9. Add in 1kg of Mloukhieh and stir.
10. Let boil and cook to taste.
11. Serve with a side of basmati rice and vinegar.
Optional: add nuts on top for garnish.



How we reduced the fat content

Original recipe used chicken with skin



Modified recipe uses skinless chicken





Maamoul (Date Filled Cookies)

Serves: 32 | Preparation Time 🕒 60 min

Ingredients

- ✔ **6 tbsp** of canola oil
- 312g** of whole-wheat flour
- 2 tbsp** of brown sugar
- 2 tbsp** of rose water or orange flower water
- ✔ **3 tbsp** of low fat milk
(start with 2 and add as needed)
- 300g** of medjool dates (pitted, chopped)

Method

1. Pre-heat oven to 175 degrees.
2. In a large mixing bowl, combine canola oil, sugar and flour.
3. Add rose water and add milk, 1 tbsp at a time.
4. Mix all ingredients together until milk is absorbed
5. Let dough rest for 30 minutes. Then roll out 32 portions of smooth balls.



- Mix dates in food processor until smooth.
- Flatten piece of dough, hold it in the centre (cup the dough) and place a ball of date in the centre. Crimp edges of dough till sealed, flatten to a disk (use a fork to create a design)
- Place maamoul on tray 4-6cm apart and bake for 15-20 minutes.
- Cool on wire rack and enjoy.



How we reduced the fat content

Original recipe used
regular fat milk and ghee

7
Tablespoons
per serve



Modified recipe uses
canola oil and low-fat milk

5
Tablespoons
per serve



Dolma

Serves: 8 | Preparation Time 🕒 60 min

Ingredients

- 1 **bulb** of garlic (minced)
- ½ **kg** of onions (hollow out the inside)
- 3 green capsicum (hollow out the inside)
- ¼ **kg** of zucchini (hollow out the inside)
- ¼ **kg** eggplant (hollow out the inside)
- ¼ **kg** grape leaves
- 1 **can** of tomato paste
- 2 **cups** of basmati rice
- ✔ ½ **kg** of lean lamb
- 3 **tsp** of allspice
- 1 **cup** of sumac juice (Sumac mixed with a cup of water)
- 1 **tbsp** of 7 mixed herbs

Method

1. Mix the allspice with rice, minced garlic, tomato paste, meat cubes in a bowl.
2. Stuff the hollowed-out onions, zucchini, green capsicum, and eggplants with the stuffing mix.
3. Place each stuffed piece neatly side by side in a large pot.
4. Take a small amount of the stuffing on each grape leaf, fold in the sides, and roll up tightly to form finger-like rolls. Then layer each one on top of the stuffed vegetables in the pot.
5. Pour one cup of sumac juice onto the stuffed vegetables, then cover the pot.
6. Place the pot over high heat and bring to a boil, then leave to simmer on low heat for 45 minutes or until vegetables are tender.
7. Once cooked, take the cover off the pot and let it cool for 10 minutes.



How we reduced the fat content

Original recipe used un-trimmed lamb

4

Tablespoons per serve



Modified recipe uses lean lamb

2

Tablespoons per serve





Chicken Biryani

Serves: 6 | Preparation Time 🕒 60 min

Ingredients

- ✔ **2 kg** of skinless chicken breast (cut into large pieces)
- 2 tsp** of turmeric
- ✔ **2 cups** of basmati rice
- 1 packet** of vermicelli noodles
- 2 onions** (diced)
- 1 cup** of sultanas
- 2 large** carrots (peeled and diced)
- 4** potatoes (peeled, diced and parboiled)
- 2 cups** of peas (shelled)
- 4 tsp** of mandaeen spice mix (cinnamon, clove, black pepper, ginger, sweet paprika, cardamom and nutmeg)
- 1 tsp** of chilli powder
- ✔ **2 tsp** of canola oil

Method

1. Soak rice in water while you preparing the ingredients.
2. Add chicken into a saucepan with small amount of water and bring to boil. Add a teaspoon of turmeric and set aside.
3. In a pan, fry the vermicelli noodles in canola oil and set aside.
4. Dice the potatoes, boil in water and then lightly fry in oil. Set aside.
5. In a pan, stir-fry the diced carrot in canola oil, then add the diced chicken, 2 teaspoons of mandaeen spice mix, 1 teaspoon of turmeric and 1 teaspoon of chilli powder. Mix together until chicken begins turn brown. Chop the onion and add to the mixture. When the onion has begun to cook add the peas, sultanas and a tablespoon of salt. Lastly, add the cooked potatoes.
6. Boil the rice in a large saucepan and when cooked, add the broken fried vermicelli noodles. Stir through and immediately drain and return to the large saucepan, ready to add the combination of Biryani ingredients.
7. Add 2 more teaspoons of the spice mix to the chicken and vegetable mixture. Then pour the mixture onto the rice and mix through.
8. To serve, spoon out the rice and chicken mixture onto a large platter or shallow bowl.

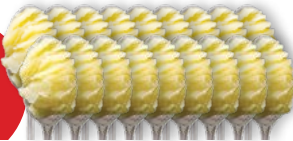


How we reduced the fat content

Original Recipe used chicken with skin and sunflower oil

18

Tablespoons per serve



Modified Recipe uses skinless chicken and canola oil

2

Tablespoons per serve





Maqlouba

Serves: 6-8 | Preparation Time 🕒 120 min

Ingredients

- ✔ **½ cup** of olive oil
- ✔ **2 kg** of lean boneless lamb leg (cut into 3 cm cubes)
- 1** onion (diced)
- 1 tsp** of baharat
- 2** cinnamon sticks
- 4** cardamom pods
- 1 tsp** of ground allspice
- 2** bay leaves
- 2 tsp** of salt
- 2** zucchini (sliced into 6 mm rounds)
- 1** large eggplant (sliced into 6 mm rounds)
- 2 cups** of cauliflower florets
- 2** small tomatoes (sliced into 6 mm rounds)

Method

1. To make the lamb braise:

- Heat a little of the olive oil in a saucepan over high heat and fry the lamb, in batches, until well browned.
- Return all the lamb to the pan with the onion, spices, bay leaves and salt, and stir to combine.
- Cook for 5 minutes until the onion has softened. Add enough cold water to submerge the lamb, bring to the boil, and then reduce heat to a simmer.
- Cover with a lid and cook for 1 hour until the lamb is tender, skimming any scum that rises to the surface and adding more water to the pan if necessary.
- Strain the lamb and reserve the stock.
- Add enough water to the stock to make 1.5 litres.



How we reduced the fat content

Original recipe used un-trimmed lamb and sunflower oil

13
Tablespoons
per serve



Modified recipe uses lean lamb and olive oil

11
Tablespoons
per serve



2. Cook the rice for 20 minutes then spray some oil and line a 26 cm heavy pot and brush it with olive oil.
3. Layer the tomato, zucchini and eggplant in the base of the pot. Scatter over the lamb, then the cauliflower. Add the rice and spread out evenly. Pour in the stock over medium heat.
4. Cook, uncovered, for 5 minutes, then reduce the heat to very low, cover and simmer for 20 minutes until the rice is tender.
5. Turn off the heat and allow to stand for a further 30 minutes without removing the lid.



Okra Stew

Serves: 6 | Preparation Time 🕒 40 min

Ingredients

- 1kg** of green okra (cut in halves)
- 1** large brown onion (peeled and diced)
- ✔ **500g** lean beef (cubed)
- 2 cups** of tomato juice
- 2 cups** of water
- 1 can** crushed tomatoes
- 2 cloves** of garlic (minced)
- 2 tbsp** of lemon juice
- ✔ **1 tbsp** of canola oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

Method

1. In the saucepan, sauté the onion in oil until transparent and soft and add in the minced garlic and stir, heating up for a few minutes.
2. Add in the beef cubes and cook for 10-15 minutes or until cooked through.
3. Add the okra on top of the beef mixture and sauté the okra for 2-3 minutes.
4. Add the tomato juice and crushed tomatoes. Simmer until evaporated and thicker.
5. Add two cups of water and leave it for 30 minutes until the meat is tender. Add two tablespoons of lemon juice and leave for 10 minutes. Enjoy hot.



How we reduced the fat content

Original recipe used
un-trimmed beef and sunflower oil

2

Tablespoons
per serve



Modified recipe uses
lean beef and canola oil

1

Tablespoons
per serve





Baklava

Serves: 30 | Preparation Time ⌚ 60 min

Ingredients

For Baklava:

- 1 packet** of Filo pastry
- 3 cups** of ground walnuts or pistachio
- ✔ **¼ cup** of canola oil

For Syrup:

- 1 ½ cups** of water
- 2 cups** of sugar
- 2 tsp** of cinnamon
- 2 tsp** cardamom
- 1 tsp** of vanilla
- 2 tsp** of lemon juice

Method

1. To make the syrup

- In a saucepan on medium heat bring the water and the sugar to a simmer and cook until the sugar has dissolved.
- Add the vanilla, cinnamon and cardamom and keep stirring.
- Add the lemon juice and continue to stir.
- Lower the heat and continue to stir until syrup becomes thick.
- Remove from heat and keep to the side to be used later.

2. To make the Baklava

- Pre-heat the oven to 160-180°C.
- In a deep saucepan over low heat, warm the oil.
- Remove pastry from the package. Place 4-5 pastry sheets into an oven dish after brushing with oil.
- Spread some of the ground walnuts/pistachios on top.
- Place another 4-5 sheets and spread the ground walnuts/pistachios over it again. Continue the same process until all pastry sheets and nuts have been used. Finish with layers of pastry on top.



How we reduced the fat content

Original recipe used ghee

20
Tablespoons
per serve



Modified recipe uses canola oil

17
Tablespoons
per serve



- Spread oil evenly over and cut the tray into baklava shape.
- Place in the oven for 30-60 minutes until it becomes golden in colour.
- 3. Take the baklava out of the oven and evenly pour over the syrup, let it cool before serving.



Chicken Shawarma

Serves: 5 | Preparation Time 🕒 40 min

Ingredients

- ✔ **1kg** skinless chicken breast
- 1 large** clove of garlic (peeled and minced)
- 1 tbsp** of ground coriander
- 1 tsp** of black pepper
- 2 tsp** of smoked paprika
- 2 tsp** of salt
- 2 tbsp** of lemon juice
- ✔ **3 tbsp** of olive oil

For the Yogurt Sauce

- 1 cup** of Greek yogurt
- 1 clove** garlic (crushed)
- 1 tsp** cumin
- Juice of 1** lemon
- Salt and pepper to taste

For Assembly

- 1 head** of lettuce (shredded)
- 3** tomatoes (sliced into rounds)
- 3** pickles (sliced)
- ✔ **Wholemeal pita bread**

Method

1. Combine garlic, olive oil, lemon juice, smoked paprika, salt, pepper, coriander in a large bowl.
2. Add chicken to the large bowl and coat with all the ingredients.



3. Combine yogurt sauce ingredients in a separate bowl and refrigerate.
4. On a pan or grill on medium heat, cook chicken for 4 to 5 minutes until slightly charred. Allow to rest for 5 minutes.
5. Create wraps with your fillings, add as many vegetables as you'd like, add yoghurt sauce and enjoy.



How we reduced the fat content

Original recipe used
chicken with skin and sunflower oil

12
Tablespoons
per serve



Modified recipe uses
skinless chicken and olive oil

3
Tablespoons
per serve



Example of One-Day Meal Plan



Breakfast

2 x Pieces of wholegrain toast with avocado,
2 Eggs
1 Apple



Morning Snack

2 cups of cucumber sticks
2 tbsp Hummus



Lunch

1 cup fresh salad
2 cups of okra stew
1 cup of cooked vermicelli and basmati rice



Dinner

Chicken shawarma
+ 2 cups of leafy greens, tomatoes,
and onion + tzatziki



Afternoon Snack

Full hand of mixed nuts
Tea
1 cup of fruit salad



Frequently Asked Questions

1. How do we lose or gain weight?

Energy is the way we measure how much food we are consuming and using each day. It can be written in calories (cal) or kilojoules (kJ). The best way to think about weight loss or weigh gain is through a scale.

- If we regularly consume more kilojoules than our body uses, we will store extra energy as fat and we are more likely to experience weight gain.
- If we regularly eat and drink fewer kilojoules than our body needs, we are more likely to experience weight loss.



2. Which kind of cooking oil is the best?

- The type of oil we use depends on the type of cooking we do as every fat has a different smoking points, which is when the fats we use begins to breakdown and become unhealthy and loses its flavour (American Heart Association, 2018).
- As a rule of thumb, it's good to remember that oils like extra virgin olive oil have a low smoking point, so it is the healthiest option for foods that don't require cooking like salads. Canola oil, sunflower oil or light olive oil is best for general cooking.
- Another thing to consider is how we cook our foods. We should avoid deep frying where possible and swap to baking, air-frying, or stir-frying in a pan instead. We should also try to use a non-sticking pans. This will reduce the overall amount of oil we add to our food, making it generally a lot healthier.



3. Are nuts healthy?

- Nuts are a good source of healthy fats and protein and can be eaten as a snack or an extra topping in our foods. These healthy fats support our hormones, lowers our cholesterol and is generally good for our overall wellbeing.
- However, it's important to remember that nuts contain fats, and eating a large amount of them, even though they are healthy, can be harmful to our health.
- Aiming to have 8-12, or a ¼ of a palm of any nuts as a snack throughout the day provides us with enough healthy fats to support our body and a healthy lifestyle (Baker Heart & Diabetes Institute, 2021).



4. How many eggs can be eaten daily?

- The Australian Heart Foundation states that we should have no more than 7 eggs in a week if you are currently suffering from high cholesterol, have existing heart conditions or have type 2 diabetes. We should limit our intake of eggs to only 7 because of the amount of cholesterol that are in them. Consuming a high amount of cholesterol can increase our risk of developing heart related diseases. (Heart Foundation Australia, 2019)
- However, if you don't have any health concerns, there is no limit to the number of eggs that can be consumed. Eggs are a great source of protein, healthy fats and vitamin D.



5. Does toasted bread have less calories than soft bread?

- No, toasted bread and soft bread have the same number of calories. Cooking our food reduces the level of nutrients but won't change the calorie density of the food.
- When cooking food, we should think about making sure that it isn't overcooked. This will prevent it becoming carcinogenic, which can occur with charred food or oils that are cooked above their smoking point (Knize & Felton, 2005)

6. Is using a microwave a safe way to defrost food?

- Microwaves are a convenient way to defrost food, reheat and even cook foods.
- The microwave works by using controlled radiation rays to cook the food from the inside to outside, meaning there is no harm spread to those around or to the food itself.
- When we need to re-heat food, it's important to follow the Food Standards Australia and New Zealand guidelines that says we should re-heat food to above 60 degrees and only consume it if it has been left outside for less than 4 hours (FSANZ, 2016).
- Remember to refer to your own microwave's manufacturing instruction manual for further information.



7. What are some statistics related to Chronic Disease in Australia?

Over

1.7
MILLION

Australians are diagnosed with Type II diabetes every year (280 people every day).¹

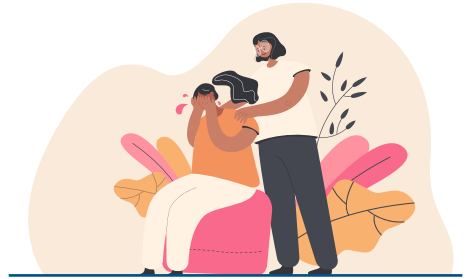


35%

of Australians who develop Type II Diabetes every year are born overseas.²



Cardiovascular disease is the **leading cause of death** amongst CALD populations.⁴



Over

620,000

people are diagnosed with heart disease in Australia every year and it kills more than 52 Australians every day.³



There are over

100

people every day that suffer from strokes.⁵



Appendix: Australian Dietary Guidelines Recommended Serves for All Age Groups

	Age	Vegetables & Legumes / Beans	Fruit	Grain Foods (Cereal foods)	Meats & Poultry (eggs, nuts, tofu, fish)	Dairy (milk, yoghurt, cheese)	Unsaturated Fats & Oils	Water (L)
Boys	2-3	2½	1	4	1	1½	½	1.4
	4-8	4½	1½	4	1½	2	1	1.6
	9-11	5	2	5	2½	2½	1	2.2
	12-13	5½	2	6	2½	3½	1½	2.2
	14-18	5½	2	7	2½	3½	2	2.7
Men	19-50	6	2	6	3	2½	4	2.6
	51-70	5½	2	6	2½	2½	4	2.6
	70+	5	2	4½	2½	3½	2	2.6
Girls	2-3	2½	1	4	1	1½	½	1.4
	4-8	4½	1½	4	1½	1½	1	1.6
	9-11	5	2	4	2½	3	1	1.9
	12-13	5	2	5	2½	3½	1½	1.9
	14-18	5	2	7	2½	3½	2	2.2
	Pregnant (up to 18 years)	5	2	8	3½	3½	2	1.8
	Breastfeeding (up to 18 years)	5½	2	9	2½	4	2	2.3
Women	19-50	5	2	6	2½	2½	2	2.1
	51-70	5	2	4	2	4	2	2.1
	70+	5	2	3	2	4	2	2.1
	Pregnant (19-50 years)	5	2	8½	3½	2½	2	2.3
	Breastfeeding (19-50 years)	7½	2	9	2½	2½	2	2.6

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