

A GUIDE TO NUTRITION AND DIET FOR PITUITARY HEALTH



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Most of us know that a balanced, healthy diet is important for our wellbeing. However, given how pituitary conditions can affect overall health, diet and nutrition can be particularly important for people with pituitary conditions.

There is no specific diet recommended for all people with pituitary conditions. That's because each condition affects the body in different ways. For example, some pituitary conditions may increase risk of various conditions such as obesity, osteoporosis, cardiovascular disease, and type 2 diabetes.

While each pituitary condition is unique, there are some common dietary recommendations which will promote good health.

GENERAL NUTRITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Australian Dietary Guidelines provide advice on eating to promote health and wellbeing and to reduce the risk of diet-related conditions and chronic diseases. They have been developed based on scientific research and consultation with experts in food, nutrition and health from around the world.

FOODS WE SHOULD ENJOY

The Guidelines recommend we enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods from these five groups every day:

- Plenty of vegetables, including different types and colours, and legumes/beans
- Fruit
- Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain and/or high cereal fibre varieties, such as breads, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles, polenta, couscous, oats, quinoa and barley
- Lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds
- Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or their alternatives, mostly reduced fat.

We should also drink plenty of water.

FOODS WE SHOULD LIMIT

Foods high in saturated fat

These include biscuits, cakes, pastries, pies, processed meats, fast food, fried foods, potato chips, crisps and other savoury snacks.

Swap butter, cream, cooking margarine, coconut and palm oils which are high in saturated fats, with healthy fats such as oils, spreads, nut butters and avocado.

Salt

Many foods and drinks contain added salt so read food labels and choose products that contain lower amounts of sodium (another name for salt). Try to avoid adding salt to food when you're cooking or at the table.

Added sugars

Foods high in added sugars include confectionary, sugar-sweetened soft drinks and cordials, fruit drinks, vitamin waters, energy and sports drinks. Avoid adding sugar to beverages such as tea and coffee.

Alcohol

If you choose to drink alcohol, limit how much you drink. Women who are pregnant, planning a pregnancy or breastfeeding, are advised to avoid alcohol completely.

DIET AND NUTRITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPECIFIC CONDITIONS

Of course, some pituitary conditions can increase the risk for other conditions, and it may be necessary to pay particular attention to some areas of your diet. For example, some pituitary conditions can cause weight gain while other conditions may increase the risk of heart disease or osteoporosis.

While there is no one-size-fits all solution, these principles are recommended.

Managing weight gain

Weight gain is a common problem in people with pituitary conditions which may be a result of their condition or medication. Tips that may help include:

- eat at least three regular meals a day
- aim to eat protein with every meal
- incorporate green salads and vegetables with every meal
- if you need to snack, keep it small and avoid processed foods high in fat, salt and sugar
- eat fresh foods over processed foods
- flavour meals with herbs and spices instead of sauces
- eat homemade meals where possible as these are likely to be more nutritious
- drink plenty of water.

Osteoporosis

Some people with pituitary conditions may have a higher risk of poor bone health and osteoporosis. Dietary tips include:

- ensure adequate calcium intake by eating dairy products – ask your specialist how much you should aim for each day
- ensure adequate vitamin D by exposing yourself to sunshine every day and eating foods rich in vitamin D such as fatty fish, eggs, and mushrooms
- include leafy greens and foods fortified with calcium and vitamin D in your diet.
- Some people may benefit from a calcium or vitamin D supplement but you should ask your doctor first.

Heart disease

If your condition increases your risk for heart disease:

- follow a heart-healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins
- limit sodium (salt) intake
- avoid foods high in saturated fats
- eat foods containing healthy fats such as fatty fish, avocados, nuts and seeds.

Diabetes

If you're at risk of, or have type 2 diabetes, it's recommended you:

- eat a healthy balanced diet
- choose unprocessed and whole foods over processed foods
- follow your specialists advice on carbohydrate intake
- choose healthy fats over saturated fats
- maintain a healthy weight through diet and exercise.

Healthy eating for your condition

Of course, the above information is a guideline only. Nutritional needs may vary depending on the specific pituitary condition, symptoms, and current treatment plan, so it's important to work closely with your healthcare team and follow their advice.

You should always consult with your specialist or registered dietitian before making significant changes to your diet, especially if you have a pituitary disorder. You should also check with them before you take any vitamin or herbal supplements as these may interfere with the effectiveness of medication.

While nutrition plays an important role in managing pituitary health, it should be part of a comprehensive treatment plan developed in consultation with your medical team.



MORE INFORMATION

The Australian Pituitary Foundation provides social support for patients and carers, and has published a range of patient resources on pituitary conditions and treatments.

For more information, please visit our website: www.pituitary.asn.au

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