Public Health England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

Government Dietary Recommendations

Government recommendations for energy and nutrients for males and females aged 1 – 18 years and 19+ years.

About Public Health England

Public Health England exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. It does this through world-class science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. PHE is an operationally autonomous executive agency of the Department of Health.

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Contents

Introduction

This document provides a concise summary of the government's recommendations for energy and nutrients for males and females aged 1 – 18 years and 19+ years. These are based on recommendations from the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy (COMA) and the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN). These recommendations relate to the general population. It is recommended that anyone with a medical condition who is in search of dietary advice should consult their GP or a registered dietitian.

Further information on the government's healthy eating messages, which are based on COMA and SACN recommendations, can be found at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide.

Index to tables

Table 1 Government recommendations for energy, macronutrients, salt and dietary fibre for males and females aged 1 -18 years[1]

Age (years)	1		2 - 3		4 - 6		7 - 10		11 - 14		15 - 18	
Gender	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**
Energy(MJ/day)	3.2	3.0	4.55	4.2	6.2	5.8	7.6	7.1	10.5	8.4	10.5	8.4
Energy (kcal/day)	765	717	1088	1004	1482	1378	1817	1703	2500	2000	2500	2000
Macronutrients												
Protein (g/day)	14.5	14.5	14.5	14.5	19.7	19.7	28.3	28.3	42.1	41.2	55.2	45.0
Fat (g/day) [Less than]	—	—	—	—	58	54	71	66	97	78	97	78
Saturated fat (g/day) [Less than]	—	—	—	—	18	17	22	21	31	24	31	24
Polyunsaturated fat (g/day)	—	—	—	—	11	10	13	12	18	14	18	14
Monounsaturated fat (g/day)	—	—	—	—	21	20	26	25	36	29	36	29
Carbohydrate (g/day) [At least]	—	—	145	134	198	184	242	227	333	267	333	267
Free sugars (g/day) [Less than]	—	—	15	13	20	18	24	23	33	27	33	27
Salt (g/day) [Less than]	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
Fibre (g/day)	—	—	15	15	15 (4y) 20 (5-6y)	15 (4y) 20 (5-6y)	20	20	25	25	30	30

[1]The figures in this table should be used in conjunction with the following information:

Energy figures were derived from SACN Dietary Reference Values for Energy (2011). Figures for all age groups, with the exception of one year olds were averaged accordingly. Figures for 11 - 18 year olds have been capped at 10.5 MJ (2500kcal)/day for males and 8.4MJ (2000kcal)/day for females to help address issues of overweight and obesity. The figures for energy in this table relate to the general population and individual requirements may vary.

Protein figures were obtained from Dietary Reference Values for Food Energy and Nutrients for the United Kingdom (1991).

Fat figures were calculated using the energy figures from SACN Dietary Reference Values for Energy (2011). The percentages for which to calculate grams per day of fat (35% food energy); saturated fat (11% food energy); polyunsaturated fat (6.5% food energy) and monounsaturated fat (13% food energy) were obtained from Dietary Reference Values for Food Energy and Nutrients for the United Kingdom (1991).

Carbohydrates figures were calculated using the energy figures from SACN Dietary Reference Values for Energy (2011). The percentage for which to calculate grams of carbohydrate per day (50% total dietary energy) was obtained from SACN Carbohydrate and Health (2015).

Free sugars are any sugars added to food or drinks, or found naturally in honey, syrups and unsweetened fruit juices. The figures for free sugars were calculated using the energy figures from SACN Dietary Reference Values for Energy (2011). The percentage for which to calculate grams of free sugars per day (5% food energy) was recommended in SACN Carbohydrate and Health (2015). No recommendation was made for free sugars for those under 2 years of age.

Salt figures were obtained from SACN Salt and Health report (2003). These target salt intakes do not represent ideal or optimum consumption levels, but achievable population goals**.**

Dietary fibre figures were obtained from SACN Carbohydrate and Health (2015). These figures are based on evidence in which the consumption of a variety of foods rich in dietary fibre as a naturally integrated component is associated with beneficial health outcomes [SACN Carbohydrate and Health (2015)]. No recommendations were made for children aged under 2 years, however it is recommended that from about six months of age, gradual diversification of the diet to provide increasing amounts of whole grains, pulses, fruits and vegetables should be encouraged.

Table 2 Government recommendations for energy, macronutrients, salt and dietary fibre for males and females aged 19+ years[2]

Age (years)	**19 - 64**		**65 - 74**		**75+**	
Gender	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**
Energy(MJ/day)	10.5	8.4	9.8	8.0	9.6	7.7
Energy (kcal/day)	2500	2000	2342	1912	2294	1840
Macronutrients						
Protein (g/day)	55.5	45.0	53.3	46.5	53.3	46.5
Fat (g/day) [Less than]	97	78	91	74	89	72
Saturated fat (g/day) [Less than]	31	24	29	23	28	23
Polyunsaturated fat (g/day)	18	14	17	14	17	13
Monounsaturated fat (g/day)	36	29	34	28	33	27
Carbohydrate (g/day) [At least]	333	267	312	255	306	245
Free sugars (g/day) [Less than]	33	27	31	26	31	25
Salt (g/day) [Less than]	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
Dietary fibre (g/day)	30	30	30	30	30	30

[2]The figures in this table should be used in conjunction with the following information:
Energy figures were derived from SACN Dietary Reference Values for Energy (2011). Figures for all age groups were averaged accordingly. Figures for 19 - 64 year olds have been capped at 10.5 MJ (2500kcal)/day for males and 8.4MJ (2000kcal)/day for females to help address issues of overweight and obesity. The figures for energy in this table relate to the general population and individual requirements may vary.
Protein figures were obtained from Dietary Reference Values for Food Energy and Nutrients for the United Kingdom (1991).
Fat figures were calculated using the energy figures from SACN Dietary Reference Values for Energy (2011). The percentages for which to calculate grams per day of fat (35% food energy); saturated fat (11% food energy); polyunsaturated fat (6.5% food energy) and monounsaturated fat (13% food energy) were obtained from Dietary Reference Values for Food Energy and Nutrients for the United Kingdom (1991).
Carbohydrate figures were calculated using the energy figures from SACN Dietary Reference Values for Energy (2011). The percentage for which to calculate grams of carbohydrate per day (50% total dietary energy) was obtained from SACN Carbohydrate and Health (2015).
Free sugars are any sugars added to food or drinks, or found naturally in honey, syrups and unsweetened fruit juices. The figures for free sugars were calculated using the energy figures from SACN Dietary Reference Values for Energy (2011). The percentage for which to calculate grams of free sugars per day (5% food energy) was recommended in SACN Carbohydrate and Health (2015). No recommendation was made for free sugars for those under 2 years of age.
Salt figures were obtained from SACN Salt and Health (2003). These target salt intakes do not represent ideal or optimum consumption levels, but achievable population goals.
Dietary fibre figures were obtained from SACN Carbohydrate and Health report (2015). These figures are based on evidence in which the consumption of a variety of foods rich in dietary fibre as a naturally integrated component is associated with beneficial health outcomes [SACN Carbohydrate and Health (2015)]. No recommendations were made for children aged under 2 years, however it is recommended that from about six months of age, gradual diversification of the diet to provide increasing amounts of whole grains, pulses, fruits and vegetables should be encouraged.

Table 3 Government recommendations for vitamins for males and females aged 1 – 18 years[3]

Age (years)	1		2 - 3		4 - 6		7 - 10		11 - 14		15 - 18	
Gender	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**
Vitamin A (µg/day)*	400	400	400	400	400	400	500	500	600	600	700	600
Thiamin (mg/day)	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.7	1.0	0.8	1.0	0.8
Riboflavin (mg/day)	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.8	1.0	1.0	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.1
Niacin equivalent (mg/day)	5.0	4.7	7.2	6.6	9.8	9.1	12.0	11.2	16.5	13.2	16.5	13.2
Vitamin B_6 (mg/day)	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.2	1.0	1.5	1.2
Vitamin B_{12} (µg/day)	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.8	1.0	1.0	1.2	1.2	1.5	1.5
Folate (µg/day)**	70	70	70	70	100	100	150	150	200	200	200	200
Vitamin C (mg/day)*	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	35	35	40	40
Vitamin D (µg/day)***	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10

[3]The figures in this table should be used in conjunction with the following information:
Vitamin figures were obtained from Dietary Reference Values for Food Energy and Nutrients for the United Kingdom (1991) and from SACN Vitamin D and Health (2016). Dietary Reference Values for certain nutrients are not available for children below the age of 5 years.
Niacin equivalent and thiamin figures were cacluated using the energy figures derived from SACN Dietary Reference Values for Energy (2011). Niacin equivalent = niacin + (tryptophan divided by 60)
*Vitamins A and C: The government recommends that children aged from six months up to five years of age are given a vitamin supplement of vitamins A and C, often provided in a combined supplement with vitamin D. This is a precautionary measure, to ensure that their requirements for these nutrients are met, at a time when it is difficult to be certain that the diet provides a reliable source. Babies fed infant formula should not be given a vitamin supplement until they are receiving less than 500ml (about a pint) of infant formula a day, because infant formula is fortified with certain nutrients, including vitamins A and C.
**Folate: it is recommended that women of child bearing age take a 400µg folic acid supplement daily until the 12th week of pregnancy. This is to help prevent birth defects of the central nervous system, such as spina bifida, in your baby. If there is a family history of conditions like spina bifida (known as neural tube defects), a higher dose of 5mg of folic acid each day may be needed until the 12th week of pregnancy. This is available on prescription from your GP. Women with diabetes and those taking anti-epileptic medicines should speak to their GP for advice, as they may also need to take a higher dose of folic acid.
***Vitamin D: The Department of Health recommends that breastfed babies from birth to one year of age should be given a daily supplement containing 8.5 to 10µg of vitamin D, to make sure they get enough. Babies fed infant formula should not be given a vitamin D supplement until they are receiving less than 500ml (about a pint) of infant formula a day, because infant formula is fortified with vitamin D. Children aged 1 to 4 years old should be given a daily supplement containing 10µg of vitamin D.
As vitamin D is found only in a small number of foods, it might be difficult to get enough from foods that naturally contain vitamin D and/or fortified foods alone. So everyone, including pregnant and breastfeeding women, should consider taking a daily supplement containing 10µg of vitamin D. Between late March/April to the end of September, the majority of people aged five years and above will probably obtain sufficient vitamin D from sunlight when they are outdoors. So you might choose not to take a vitamin D supplement during these months.
However, some groups of people will not get enough vitamin D from sunlight because they have very little or no sunshine exposure. So the Department of Health recommends that people should take a daily supplement containing 10µg of vitamin D throughout the year if they are not often outdoors, such as those who are frail or housebound; are in an institution such as a care home; usually wear clothes that cover up most of their skin when outdoors. People from minority ethnic groups with dark skin, such as those of African, African-Caribbean or South Asian origin, might not get enough vitamin D from sunlight – so they should consider taking a daily supplement containing 10µg of vitamin D throughout the year.

Table 4 Government recommendations for vitamins for males and females aged 19+ years[4]

Age (years)	**19 - 64**		**65 - 74**		**75+**	
Gender	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**
Vitamin A (µg/day)	700	600	700	600	700	600
Thiamin (mg/day)	1.0	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.7
Riboflavin (mg/day)	1.3	1.1	1.3	1.1	1.3	1.1
Niacin equivalent (mg/day)	16.5	13.2	15.5	12.6	15.1	12.1
Vitamin B_6 (mg/day)	1.4	1.2	1.4	1.2	1.4	1.2
Vitamin B_{12} (µg/day)	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5
Folate (µg/day)*	200	200	200	200	200	200
Vitamin C (mg/day)	40	40	40	40	40	40
Vitamin D (µg/day)**	10	10	10	10	10	10

[4]The figures in this table should be used in conjunction with the following information:
Vitamin figures were obtained from Dietary Reference Values for Food Energy and Nutrients for the United Kingdom (1991) and SACN Vitamin D and Health (2016).
Niacin equivalent and thiamin figures were cacluated using the energy figures derived from SACN Dietary Reference Values for Energy (2011). Niacin equivalent = niacin + (tryptophan divided by 60)
*Folate: it is recommended that women of child bearing age take a 400µg folic acid supplement daily until the 12th week of pregnancy. This is to help prevent birth defects of the central nervous system, such as spina bifida, in your baby. If there is a family history of conditions like spina bifida (known as neural tube defects), a higher dose of 5mg of folic acid each day may be needed until the 12th week of pregnancy. This is available on prescription from your GP. Women with diabetes and those taking anti-epileptic medicines should speak to their GP for advice, as they may also need to take a higher dose of folic acid.
*Vitamin D: As vitamin D is found only in a small number of foods, it might be difficult to get enough from foods that naturally contain vitamin D and/or fortified foods alone. So everyone, including pregnant and breastfeeding women, should consider taking a daily supplement containing 10µg of vitamin D. Between late March/April to the end of September, the majority of people aged five years and above will probably obtain sufficient vitamin D from sunlight when they are outdoors. So you might choose not to take a vitamin D supplement during these months.
However, some groups of people will not get enough vitamin D from sunlight because they have very little or no sunshine exposure. So the Department of Health recommends that people should take a daily supplement containing 10µg of vitamin D throughout the year if they are not often outdoors, such as those who are frail or housebound; are in an institution such as a care home; usually wear clothes that cover up most of their skin when outdoors. People from minority ethnic groups with dark skin, such as those of African, African-Caribbean or South Asian origin, might not get enough vitamin D from sunlight – so they should consider taking a daily supplement containing 10µg of vitamin D throughout the year.

Table 5 Government recommendations for minerals for males and females aged 1 – 18 years[5]

Age (years)	1		2 - 3		4 - 6		7 - 10		11 - 14		15 - 18	
Gender	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**
Iron (mg/day)†	6.9	6.9	6.9	6.9	6.1	6.1	8.7	8.7	11.3	14.8	11.3	14.8
Calcium (mg/day)	350	350	350	350	450	450	550	550	1000	800	1000	800
Magnesium (mg/day)	85	85	85	85	120	120	200	200	280	280	300	300
Potassium (mg/day)	800	800	800	800	1100	1100	2000	2000	3100	3100	3500	3500
Zinc (mg/day)	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	6.5	6.5	7.0	7.0	9.0	9.0	9.5	7.0
Copper (mg/day)	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.8	1.0	1.0
Iodine (µg/day)	70	70	70	70	100	100	110	110	130	130	140	140
Selenium (µg/day)	15	15	15	15	20	20	30	30	45	45	70	60
Phosphorus (mg/day)	270	270	270	270	350	350	450	450	775	625	775	625
Chloride (mg/day)	800	800	800	800	1100	1100	1800	1800	2500	2500	2500	2500
Sodium (g/day)‡	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	1.2	1.2	2.0	2.0	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4

[5]The figures in this table should be used in conjunction with the following information:
Mineral figures were obtained from Dietary Reference Values for Food Energy and Nutrients for the United Kingdom (1991). Dietary Reference Values for certain nutrients are not available for children below the age of 5 years.
†Iron: The figures for women aged 11 – 14 and 15 – 18 years may be insufficient for women with high menstrual losses where the most practical way of meeting iron requirements is to take iron supplements.
‡Sodium: These figures were obtained from Dietary Reference Values for Food Energy and Nutrients for the United Kingdom (1991). Maximum salt recommendations for achieveable population goals are presented in Table 1.

Table 6 Government recommendations for minerals for males and females aged 19+ years[6]

Age (years)	**19 - 64**		**65 - 74**		**75+**	
Gender	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**
Iron (mg/d)[†]	8.7	14.8(19-50y) 8.7 (50-64y)	8.7	8.7	8.7	8.7
Calcium (mg/day)	700	700	700	700	700	700
Magnesium (mg/day)	300	270	300	270	300	270
Potassium (mg/day)	3500	3500	3500	3500	3500	3500
Zinc (mg/day)	9.5	7.0	9.5	7.0	9.5	7.0
Copper (mg/day)	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
Iodine (µg/day)	140	140	140	140	140	140
Selenium (µg/day)	75	60	75	60	75	60
Phosphorus (mg/day)	550	550	550	550	550	550
Chloride (mg/day)	2500	2500	2500	2500	2500	2500
Sodium (g/day)‡	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4

[6]The figures in this table should be used in conjunction with the following information:
Mineral figures were obtained from Dietary Reference Values for Food Energy and Nutrients for the United Kingdom (1991).
[†]Iron: The figure for women aged 19 – 50 years may be insufficient for women with high menstrual losses where the most practical way of meeting iron requirements is to take iron supplements.
‡Sodium: These figures were obtained from Dietary Reference Values for Food Energy and Nutrients for the United Kingdom (1991). Maximum salt recommendations for achieveable population goals are presented in Table 2.

References

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