

MEDIA RELEASE

Embargoed until 6am Monday 13 February 2017

Dietitians: We're surrounded by food porn, but let's tap into our Dietary Guidelines

It's not exactly news that, as a nation, we're trying our luck with fad diets, but a new survey reveals just how few of us have turned to our country's Australian Dietary Guidelines to help us eat better.

The survey of more than 1,300 Australians found half (47 per cent) had used a specific 'diet' in the past year in an attempt to lose weight, but just 20 per cent had referred to the Australian Dietary Guidelines to help them improve their eating habitsⁱ.

The results sound alarms bells among dietitians, who will this week launch Australia's Healthy Weight Week (AHWW) (13-19 February), and are urging Australians to go back to basics by following the Australian Dietary Guidelinesⁱⁱ.

"We're constantly exposed to new diet trends, programs and books, especially with many of us connected 24/7, and these are all telling us what us to eat, so it's really hard to know what to try. But the truth is that there are many ways to have a healthy diet,' said Nicole Dynan, spokesperson for the Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA).

Dr Andrew Rochford, an ambassador for AHWW, said the Dietary Guidelines advice focuses on dietary patterns that promote health and wellbeing rather than suggesting you eat, or completely avoid, specific foods – and they steer clear of promoting 'one true way' of eating over all others, as everyone is different.

"Often, it's about getting back to basics – the type of advice your grandmother might give – things like eating enough veges, cooking at home more often, eating the right portions, and cutting back on foods like cakes, pies, potato chips, sugary soft drinks, and fried or fatty take-away foods," said Ms Dynan, an Accredited Practising Dietitian.

She said 'quitting sugar' is trendy at the moment, but 'avoid too much sugar' has been a Dietary Guideline in Australia since 1979 – suggesting that as a nation the key is in heeding this advice.

"It may come as a surprise to some people that discretionary or 'junk' foods, containing added sugar, along with saturated fat and salt, but not much else, make up around 35 per cent of the kilojoules we eat and drink.

"But the great thing about our Dietary Guidelines is they're really clear in their advice to pull this right back, and they give us practical ways on how to go about it," said Ms Dynan.

According to DAA, many Aussies would also feel better by boosting their vegetable intake, with the Dietary Guidelines suggesting doable tweaks like serving vegetables or salad as a side dish when eating meals like pasta, lasagne or risotto.

The Dietary Guidelines provide recommended numbers of serves from the Five Food Groups to make it easier to plan meals and snacks.

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Sydney-based Eda Medeiros dos Santos, a 47-year-old lawyer and mother of one, has invested in her health, getting familiar with the Dietary Guidelines and seeking support from an Accredited Practising Dietitian, and she's never felt better – dropping 12kg along the way.

“I've made a lot of small changes, which are making a big difference. I am feeling beautiful and incredibly younger. I'm more energetic and I don't need to sleep as much as I used to. I've now got a consistent plan to eat well, and I know that the changes I'm choosing are for my entire life,” said Ms Medeiros dos Santos.

“Following the healthy dietary patterns suggested by the Dietary Guidelines will mean you'll take in the right balance of nutrients, which will help you feel your best – making a world of difference to your energy levels and your mood, and helping to ward off 'kilo creep' and health problems down the track,” said Dr Rochford.

He said Australia's Healthy Weight Week (healthyweightweek.com.au), which starts on 13 February, is a great time to start making small changes that are in line with the Australian Dietary Guidelines and fit with your lifestyle, so they become permanent habits over time.

ENDS

For further information or to organise an interview with Nicole Dynan, contact Maree Hall (Mon-Wed) 0408 482 581 or Sally Moloney (Thurs & Fri) 0428 916 425.

Background

Australia's Healthy Weight Week (AHWW), run by the Dietitians Association of Australia from 13-19 February 2017, is the perfect time to kick-start healthy eating habits.

In 2017, dietitians will be educating Australians that there's a healthy weight that's right for them, whilst raising awareness of the support that Accredited Practising Dietitians can offer in inspiring good health.

The week will focus on getting Australians cooking more meals at home and eating the right foods, in the right portions, as smart ways to help achieve the best weight possible.

Award-winning celebrity cook, Callum Hann, and Accredited Practising Dietitian, Themis Chryssidis (both from Sprout), are supporting AHWW in 2017. Sprout will be urging all Australians to be healthy and confident cooks in their own kitchen. Dr Andrew Rochford, medical expert and media personality, is also an ambassador of AHWW.

For more information, including the AHWW Instagram Cooking Challenge and the new bumper edition AHWW cookbook, plus nutrition tips, recipes, event details and a social media toolkit, see the AHWW website at healthyweightweek.com.au and follow AHWW at www.twitter.com/DAA_feed and use #AHWW2017.

AHWW 2017 will kick-off with a launch event in Sydney on Monday 13 February.

Note: Australia's Healthy Weight Week 2017 is proudly supported by Meat and Livestock Australia, Healthy Food Guide, CanPrint, Australian Mushroom Growers Association, Australian Chicken Meat Federation, Xyris, McKenzie's Foods, and Almond Board of Australia.

Australian Dietary Guidelines (www.eatforhealth.gov.au)

Note to Editors: The Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) is the professional body representing dietitians nationally. Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) is the only national credential recognised by the Australian Government, Medicare, the Department of Veteran Affairs and most private health funds as the quality standard for nutrition and dietetics services in Australia. For more information visit www.daa.asn.au. For the Media section on the DAA website contains DAA's media releases and position on topical nutrition issues in the media.

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When it comes to diet and nutrition, there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach. The evidence-based Australian Dietary Guidelines (ADG), which were developed by independent experts in nutrition, working with the National Health and Medical Research Council, provide a framework for healthy eating. Health professionals, including Accredited Practising Dietitians, support these recommendations for the healthy population. Their development involved the review of more than 55,000 studies. The latest ADG were released in 2013.

Sample meal plan for women aged 19-50 years, based on the ADG:

<https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/food-essentials/how-much-do-we-need-each-day/sample-meal-plan-women>

ⁱ Ompoll survey (September 2016) of 1,033 Australians aged 18-64 years, commissioned by the Dietitians Association of Australia.

ⁱⁱ Australian Dietary Guidelines. Available at: www.eatforhealth.gov.au