Healthy Eating In Australia

Eating in Australia

People from many different cultures live in Australia. This means food from all parts of the world is available. Most Australians eat three main meals in a day. They eat food at home in the morning (breakfast), take lunch to school or work to eat in the middle of the day, and eat the evening meal (dinner) at home.

Buying food in Australia

Most Australians buy food from supermarkets or grocery stores. Small items can be purchased from convenience stores like 7-Eleven, but these are not common away from the city. Fresh food markets are not common in Melbourne, but some do exist.

Fruit and Vegetables
Fruit and vegetables can be bought in supermarkets or smaller greengrocers (fruit and vegetable stores). There are also a small number of fresh food markets. Asian fruits and vegetables can be bought in Asian grocery stores.

Bread, breakfast cereals, rice, pasta, noodles
These foods can be bought in supermarkets. Bread can be bought at a local bakery or milk bar. Asian noodles can be bought at some supermarkets or from Asian grocery stores.

Meat, Fish, Chicken
Fresh meat, fish and chicken are available in supermarkets or from a butcher. Canned and processed meats can be bought at a delicatessen (deli), which is mostly found inside a supermarket.

Milk, Cheese, Yoghurt
Milk can be bought at a local milk bar, convenience store or in supermarkets. Cheese and yoghurt can be bought mostly in supermarkets.

Herbs and Spices, Sauces and Other Ingredients
These are mainly found in a supermarket

Nuts, biscuits, cakes and other snack foods
These are mainly found in a supermarket, or fresh snacks can be bought at a bakery.
Nutrition and health when eating in Australia

Living in Australia allows people to choose from a large variety of foods. However the main pattern of eating in Australia is similar to the USA and the UK. In general Australians do not eat enough fruit and vegetables, and eat too much breads and cereal grains, meat, fish and chicken, snack foods and take away foods. The problem with this pattern of eating is that it can often cause weight gain, and increase the risk of heart disease, diabetes, arthritis and many other illnesses.

In Australia take-away and snack food are often much cheaper than in other countries. But because they are cheaper does not mean they are healthy. The Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend that the majority of your diet should come from vegetables and fruit, as well as bread and cereal grains, with smaller amounts from meat, fish and chicken and low fat milk, yoghurt and cheese. Take away foods, snacks and convenience foods should only be eaten occasionally.

Australians also tend to eat large amounts of food in a meal. This is because bowls, plates, cups and glasses in Australia are much larger than in other countries. If you are buying bowls, plates and cups, try to buy the same size that you used before moving to Australia. If you do buy takeaway foods, choose the small meals rather than the large sizes. The large size may seem better value, but it often causes people to gain weight.

Watch your weight in Australia

Many students from overseas notice that they gain weight when they move to Australia to study. This is probably due to an increase in the amount of dairy products, meat, fish and chicken and take-away foods that they eat. You should try not to eat more of these foods then you did before moving to Australia. Some students also find they walk less in Australia. This is another reason that they might gain weight.

To help avoid weight gain, try the following suggestions:

- Eat at least 2 pieces of fresh (or canned) fruit every day.
- Include 2 cups of vegetables in at least 2 meals each day.
- Avoid very large pieces of meat, fish and chicken. Aim for no more than 2 pieces that are the size of the palm of your hand each day. Take the skin off chicken and cut off the fat (white part around the outside) on meat.
- Avoid eating take away and fried foods at more than 3 meals each week.
- Try these ideas for snack foods. If your weight is increasing, try to have only 1 of these snacks between each meal.