



Healthy Eating

'Healthy foods' and 'healthy diets' are commonly used terms, yet many of us are not really sure what they mean. Here in the Pacific we base our advice on the three food groups.

- ⚡ **Body-building foods**
- ⚡ **Protective foods**
- ⚡ **Energy foods**

The key to using the three food groups is remembering the following points:

- ⚡ Variety – eat a variety of foods from each group.
- ⚡ Moderation – too much of any one food is unhealthy.
- ⚡ Local – the best foods are local.
- ⚡ Amounts – eat the right amounts of each of the three food groups.



Starchy energy foods

These foods should make up most of the food that you eat – about half of any meal or snack.

Protective foods

These foods should be included in all meals and snacks. They are high in vitamins and minerals.

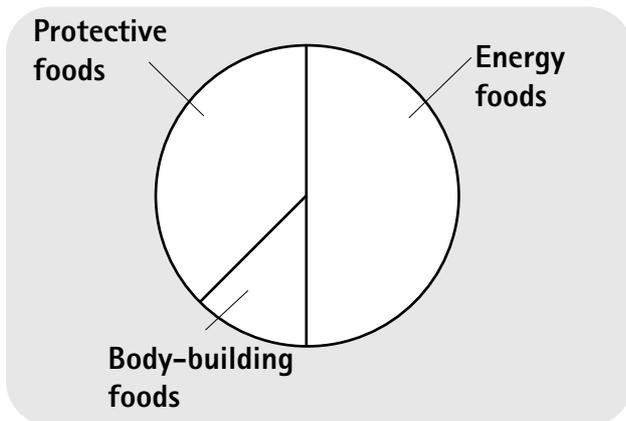


Body-building foods

We do not need large amounts of these foods – but should include a small amount at two meals a day.

Eating the three food groups in the right amounts each day

In the Pacific today, most diets do not contain enough of the protective foods, but have excess amounts of body-building foods. The Pacific Food Guide shows the relative proportions of the three food groups that should be eaten *in a day*.



The key messages are:

- ✦ about half of your food each day should be from the starchy energy food group;
- ✦ about one third of your food each day should be from the protective food group;
- ✦ and the remainder should be from the body-building food group.

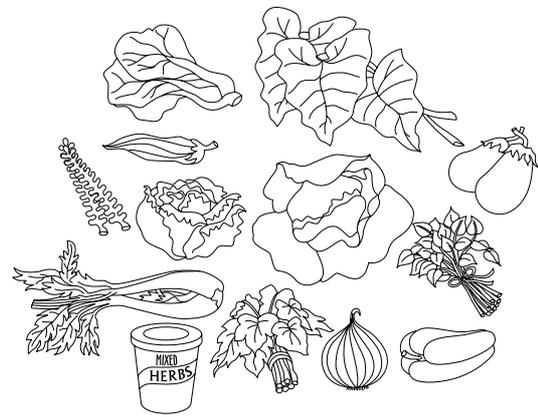
(These proportions were developed during research undertaken in the Pacific region.)

Healthier options within food groups

Another major dietary problem in this region is the high intake of fatty, sugary and salty foods. Often the fat, sugar or salt is 'hidden' in foods. For example, mutton flaps and turkey tails are very high in fat, while corned beef and spam are high in fat and salt.

As well as including a variety of foods from the three food groups in the right amounts, adults should also try to **eat less salt, fats/oils and sugar**.

Fatty foods: Eating too much fat (including oil) can cause weight gain, and increases the risk of



heart disease and certain cancers.

- ✦ Eat less fatty meats such as spam and corned beef.
- ✦ Eat less fried foods such as doughnuts, pancakes and chips, and have less fried meals.
- ✦ Use less margarine or butter on bread, and less oil in cooking – try grilling, boiling or steaming.
- ✦ Use less coconut cream in a week – try some dishes cooked with garlic, chilli or lemon juice instead.
- ✦ Eat less food made with added fat such as cakes, biscuits and cookies.

Sugary foods: Eating too many sugary foods/drinks can lead to tooth decay, particularly if teeth are not kept clean. Eating too many sugary foods can also cause weight gain.

- ✦ Have less cookies, cakes, candies, sweets, sodas, fizzy drinks and sweet drinks and use less sugar in hot drinks.

Salty foods: Eating too much salt and salty foods can cause an increase in blood pressure, which increases the risk of stroke.

- ✦ Use less salt in cooking and avoid adding at the table.
- ✦ Eat less salty foods – soy sauce, ketchup, ramen, potato chips.
- ✦ Cut down on salt and salty foods gradually – we become used to high salt levels and can also become used to less salt, so reduce the amount of salt gradually and it will be easier.

Try different flavours such as lemon juice (great with fish), chilli and onion.

Choosing healthier options from the three food groups

Within each food group, there are foods that are higher or lower in fat, sugar or salt, vitamins or minerals. The table below is divided into three sections – 'eat regularly', 'eat sometimes' and 'try not to eat too often' – based on the amounts of vitamins and minerals present, along with the amounts of fats, sugars and salt added.

	Starchy energy foods	Protective foods	Body-building foods
Eat regularly	Tapioca, yam, taro, plantain, green banana, breadfruit, sweet potato, potato	All fresh fruits and vegetables Frozen fruits and vegetables Fresh coconut juice	Local fish and seafood Meat – e.g., chicken, pork, beef (visible fat removed) Milk, egg
Eat sometimes – these foods are still good, but do not have as many vitamins	Bread, rice, pasta, plain noodles	Tinned fruits (tinned in juice) Tinned vegetables (no added salt)	Tinned fish Evaporated milk
Try not to eat too often – they are high in fat, sugar or salt and lower in nutrients	Ramen, pizza, fried potatoes, potato chips, doughnuts, ice-cream, cookies, cake	Fruits tinned in syrup Tinned vegetables (with salt added)	Turkey tails, spam, mutton flaps, corned beef, hotdogs Condensed milk

Fatty and sugary foods such as candies, sweets, sugary drinks, butter, margarine and oil are high-energy foods, but are not included within the starchy energy food group. They should be eaten occasionally only.

