

Ask the expert

"I've heard that I should drink eight glasses of water a day. Does that include other drinks as well or does it have to be just water?" Sarah, Whakatane.

Siobhan says...
drink regularly throughout the day to avoid dehydration.

As a general rule, adults need about six to eight glasses of fluid per day, but this doesn't have to be just water. You can include diluted fruit juices, fresh fruit juice, milk, fruit and herb teas as well as tea and coffee in moderation. The best advice is to drink regularly through the day with meals and between meals. If we don't drink enough we become dehydrated. Typical symptoms include headaches, tiredness, constipation and nausea. Remember that during summer we can become dehydrated more quickly so it's even more important to drink regularly throughout the day.

There has been a lot of debate as to whether tea and coffee should be included in our daily fluid intake. For some people avoiding tea and coffee will mean an overall reduction in daily fluid intake and recent studies suggest that normal tea and coffee drinking in moderation (four or five cups a day) is not harmful. However, water is a good choice because it replaces fluid without adding unwanted calories. You don't have to buy expensive bottled water. You can re-use a water bottle and fill it up with cooled drinking water from the tap.

Fruit juices, although good sources of vitamin C, if taken in large quantities can add unwanted calories. Having one glass of fruit juice per day satisfies our daily vitamin C needs and helps to absorb iron from our food. Milk is a good source of minerals such as calcium. If you have a glass of milk every day, switching from full fat dark-blue top milk to trim green top will cut out 2800g fat over a year - equivalent to nearly six packs of butter!

Fizzy drinks should be kept as an occasional treat and not be a regular feature in the shopping basket.

Questions?

Do you have a question about a particular food or meal, or want to know how to make healthy choices for you and your family? Send a question to Siobhan Miller, a nutrition expert working for Toi Te Ora - Public Health.

Email your question to Siobhan at heha@bopdhb.govt.nz or post your question to:

BOPDHB Communications Team
Tauranga Hospital
Cameron Road
Private Bay 12024
Tauranga 3143



Spreading the healthy eating message



Planting a veggie patch in the garden and involving the kids is a fun way for them to learn about where their food comes from.

Children need to be more involved in learning how to prepare healthy meals, according to dietitian Sarah Tuki. They also ought to understand that vegetables come from soil, not supermarkets.

Sarah is one of two primary health dietitians funded through the Bay of Plenty District Health Board. Sarah is based in Whakatane with counterpart Christine Cheong covering the Western Bay of Plenty.

Sarah says there are a lot of inconsistent messages out there about what's healthy and what's not, and that the primary focus of their role is to support health workers and practice nurses who take food and nutrition messages to the community. "Our role is to build up the knowledge of our community health workers so that people are getting the right advice," says Sarah. "For example, with rising fresh food prices, many people don't realise that frozen and canned vegetables are just as good as fresh. The real need is for people to eat a healthy, balanced diet."

Sarah's back-to-basics approach will be delivered to health workers via interactive workshops. "Health workers are in a great position to pass on consistent practical advice to the public. We have to spread the message as widely as possible, in the classroom and homes so that the new generation grows up with different attitudes," she says.

That includes getting children involved in the preparation of meals. "If a child has helped to prepare an unfamiliar dish they are more likely to

try it," she says.

Sarah sees her job as a two-way relationship. "I am working closely with community health workers so that we can jointly develop educational material and programmes that are consistent and meet local needs."

Christine and Sarah are fully qualified dietitians with a Bachelor of Science and Post-Graduate Diploma in Dietetics from the University of Otago. They were supported by the BOPDHB and the PHOs at the beginning of the year to complete their practicums within a primary health environment.



Primary Health Dietitian Sarah Tuki is spreading simple, consistent messages about nutrition throughout the BOP.

HEHA for health

Healthy Eating Healthy Action (HEHA) is a Ministry of Health campaign to improve nutrition and increase our physical activity. It is a joint approach between the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, and Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC). A variety of projects to meet these goals are going on in the Bay of Plenty. For further information about HEHA visit www.bopdhb.govt.nz and click on the HEHA apple logo.



Simple steps to healthy living



Healthy eating is...

...knowing your weaknesses. Life would barely be worth living if you couldn't have an ice cream over the holiday season, but a balanced approach is needed. Have an ice cream with the family after a walk as an occasional treat. If you have no willpower and chocolate is your weakness, don't buy it at the supermarket. If it's not in the cupboard, you won't be tempted when you fancy a snack. Instead keep a selection of healthy snacks that you enjoy on hand. Healthy snacks include whole-grain crackers, fruits, vegetables, small portions of nuts and seeds and low-fat dairy products.



...keeping an eye on portion sizes.

As a rule of thumb a portion of meat, chicken or fish is the size of your palm while a portion of rice, pasta or fruit is the size of your fist and a serving of extras like cheese is the size of your thumb. Many of us end up making more for dinner than we need. Instead of overindulging or throwing away, save the leftovers to have for lunch the next day.



Healthy action is...

...keeping moving. Don't think of exercise with an all-or-nothing approach. Set realistic exercise goals and if you don't get to exercise as planned, that's okay, just get back on track tomorrow. Remember that many daily activities count as exercise such as walking, climbing stairs, housework, cycling, gardening and dancing. The more you move, the happier and healthier you will be!



...being adventurous.

Try a new activity every month to add more variety to your fitness routine. Fitness can be a lot of fun, so think of new ways to add it to your life. Some ideas are kayaking, tennis, hiking, biking, or Family Olympics. Look on the Internet for local hiking or biking trails in your area. Useful sites include www.tauranga.govt.nz and www.doc.govt.nz.

