

COUNTRY PANTRY

FACT SHEET 6



Country Pantry Basics

If you are reading this, chances are you're looking for tips and advice to give your kitchen, and the meals you prepare in it, a *Measure Up* makeover.

Small changes are the first step. In fact, small changes like swapping fatty foods with healthy ones and changing how you prepare foods can add up and make a big difference. Just sticking to a few simple guidelines when it comes to shopping and cooking can reduce the toll on your waistline and overall health.

MEASURE UP FOOD FACT:

Limit saturated fat and moderate total fat intake.
Choose foods low in salt.
Consume only moderate amounts of sugars and foods containing added sugars.

Take Time to Read the Labels

Always take the time to read the nutrition information panel on food products so you know exactly what you are buying and what you are eating.

At a quick glance you're looking for the food with the lower kilojoule content and the least amount of saturated fat, total fat and sodium (salt).

By using the "per 100g" column of the nutrition information panel, you can compare which has the lower salt, sugar or fat content and choose the healthier option of two similar products, which means you'll be better informed and able to make better choices.

The Inside Word on

SALT: While we do need a touch of salt in our diet, many Australians overdo it and this can lead to high blood pressure, which increases the risk of stroke and heart disease.

When you're shopping look for reduced salt or no added salt foods and try adding herbs and spices to flavour your meals, instead of salt. Always taste your meal before you reach for the salt shaker – automatically adding salt to everything is a bad habit shared by too many Aussies. Sodium is the component of salt that is listed on the back of a food packet.

SUGAR: A little bit of sugar is OK, but consuming too much can lead to big problems, including obesity and dental decay.

It's important to keep an eye on sugar content, especially in fruit juices and fizzy drinks, which can be overloaded with sugar and make sure you limit other sweet stuff like lollies, cakes, biscuits and pastries.

FAT: When it comes to fat, saturated fats (or 'sat fats') are the real nasties. They increase the level of bad cholesterol in the blood, which increases the risk of heart disease.

Healthier options are monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats.

Better Cooking Methods

Keep in mind the key *Measure Up* guidelines and try your hand at some alternative cooking techniques to lighten up your menu, without sacrificing great taste.

- Instead of **roasting** Sunday lunch in a layer of oil – place the roast on a rack above the roasting dish and place water in the bottom of the pan. That way the meat fats will drip away from the roast and the water will create steam to keep the joint moist.
- When **roasting** your vegies, use an oil spray to reduce the fat you are adding to the meal and sprinkle with dried herbs.
- Instead of frying your fish or chicken in the fry pan, try **poaching** it for something different. Place the fish or chicken (skin removed) in a saucepan containing a little water, add a stock cube and herbs for flavour, place a lid securely on the pan and simmer until the fish or chicken is cooked.
- **Steaming** also works well for fish – try using your vegie steamer or creating your own double boiler – just place the fish in a small pan and then put the small pan inside a larger pan containing some water. Add a secure lid and simmer, allowing the steam to cook the fish. Steamed vegetables, cooked the same way, make the perfect, low-fat accompaniment to every meal.
- **Stir-frying** is one of the best *Measure Up* cooking techniques – just coat a pan with oil spray or a small dash of polyunsaturated oil and throw in meats and vegies – keep moving the lot around with a spatula or spoon, so nothing sticks.
- You can't go past a good old Aussie **BBQ** – just ensure you cook meats over the grill to allow fats to seep away.
- **Microwaving** is another lighter cooking option. You can steam and cook everything from vegies to casseroles in the microwave without the need to add oil – check your microwave manufacturer's instructions for recommended cooking times.
- If you have a **slow cooker**, drag it out of the cupboard and put it to work – you don't need to add oil to slow cookers and they will retain lots of valuable nutrients in your food.
- **Baking** can be a challenge but you can swap butter for margarine or mono or polyunsaturated oil; use juices to sweeten desserts instead of sugar; and opt for skim milk instead of full cream milk. You don't need to coat the baking dish with butter either – use non-stick baking paper instead or a smear of polyunsaturated vegetable oil or oil spray.



For *Measure Up* meal ideas and recipes visit the *Measure Up* website: australia.gov.au/MeasureUp.

How do you measure up



Australian Better Health Initiative

A joint Australian, State and Territory government initiative.

www.australia.gov.au/MeasureUp