

Confused about what to eat? Here's a doctor's recommended meal plan

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Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Knowing what makes up a healthy diet can be really confusing. New fads and fast fixes appear weekly. At the same time, the rise of celebrity chefs and TV cooking – while admittedly entertaining – has made preparing food seem complex and often unachievable.

A staggering [95% of Aussies](#) don't eat enough vegetables. Veggies contain fibre and micronutrients essential for gut, brain, heart and skin health, so they should make up the basis of most meals. And consciously thinking of ways to include more veggies might mean you'll eat fewer processed foods which can be high in salt, unhealthy fats and hidden sugars.

When it comes to meat, you don't have to lose it all together. You should aim for once or twice a week in smaller serves, buying the best quality you can afford and wasting none.

Fill your fridge and pantry with whole, unprocessed foods and not products. This helps to avoid added sugar and salt, which are often hidden in processed products with long and complex ingredient lists.

And you should try to eat with others. By turning off our phones and dining with others, we're more likely to [slow our eating](#) and give our stomachs and brains time to sync on whether we're full or not. So we're likely to serve less, eat less and even waste less.

Across the day we need a good mix of fibre and protein for energy and to keep us full. These [recipes](#) are quick, simple and flexible – so feel free to substitute the ingredients for those you love more. Finally, these meals store well. So you can cook it once and eat for the week ahead, packing servings for school or work.

Breakfast

Whole oats are a great source of fibre, protein and sustained energy—and fresh fruit provides flavour without having to add sugar.

Easy Bircher done three ways

PREPARATION TIME: 10 MINUTES, PLUS CHILLING TIME

SERVES: 2

1 cup (90 g) whole rolled oats

1/2 cup (125 ml) milk (whole or almond milk are both great)

1/2 cup (140 g) Greek or plain yoghurt

Combine all the ingredients in a bowl, then cover and chill overnight. Stir through or top with any of these flavour combinations:

- 1–2 grated red or green apples, 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon and a handful of raisins
- 2–3 grated peaches and a touch of finely grated lemon zest
- 2–3 grated pears, a handful of pomegranate seeds and a small handful of linseeds

Lunch

This quick and easy soup contains slow-burning energy, fibre, iron, B vitamins and protein.

Creamy white bean soup with crispy sage and a hint of bacon

PREPARATION TIME: 15 MINUTES

COOKING TIME: 30 MINUTES

SERVES: 4

a few generous splashes of olive oil

2 brown onions, chopped

1 garlic clove, chopped

2 × 400 g tins cannellini beans, undrained

2 × 400 g tins borlotti beans, undrained

1 litre chicken or vegetable stock

10 sage leaves

2 large handfuls of flat-leaf parsley, chopped

sea salt

100 g bacon rashers or pancetta, finely diced—a great veggie alternative is mushrooms

freshly ground black pepper

Heat a generous splash of the olive oil in a large heavy-based saucepan over low heat, add the onion and garlic and cook for 10 minutes or until softened. Add all the beans and liquid from the tins, the stock, two sage leaves and half the parsley and simmer gently for 20 minutes or until the beans are very tender.

Blend with a stick blender until smooth and creamy. Season lightly with salt, remembering that the bacon, pancetta or mushrooms will also add a salty, Umami hit.

Meanwhile, heat a splash of olive oil in a frying pan over medium–high heat, add the bacon or pancetta (or mushies) and remaining sage leaves and cook until crisp. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towel.

Ladle the soup into bowls and top with another splash of olive oil, the crispy bacon and sage leaves. Finish with a grinding of black pepper.

Dinner

With more than [80% of global fish stocks](#) fully exploited or overfished, sourcing and sustainable seafood options has never been more important. As a rule, it's best to stick to local and fresh, as well as smaller and lower in the ecosystem's food chain. Australian wild-caught whiting is a great option. It's easy to cook and available in most parts of the country.

Whole whiting grilled with lemon, parsley and garlic

PREPARATION TIME: 30 MINUTES

COOKING TIME: 15 MINUTES

SERVES: 4

3 medium whole whiting, cleaned, scaled and gutted

1 small lemon, cut into 5 mm thick rounds

1 garlic clove, crushed

2 tablespoons salted baby capers, rinsed and chopped (optional)

good pinch of freshly ground black pepper

a few generous drizzles of olive oil

4 handfuls of flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped

lemon wedges, to serve

Preheat an overhead grill to high. Combine the lemon slices, garlic, capers (if using), pepper, a few good drizzles of olive oil and three-quarters of the parsley in a bowl. Generously rub the fish on all sides with olive oil, then stuff the cavities with the parsley mixture. Wrap each fish in foil to form parcels.

Cook the fish parcels under the grill for 5–7 minutes each side until cooked through. Remove and rest for five minutes before unwrapping. Serve the fish topped with the remaining parsley, with lemon wedges on the side.

Grilled broccolini or asparagus with sea salt and lemon

Packed with vitamins, the best way to cook winter broccolini or springtime asparagus is under the grill. It intensifies the flavour, and is quick and simple. All it needs is a pinch of salt and a splash of good-quality olive oil. I also use this approach with field mushrooms and even green beans.

PREPARATION TIME: 5 MINUTES

COOKING TIME: 10 MINUTES

2 bunches of broccolini or asparagus, with the harder stem ends snapped off

a generous splash of olive oil

2 good pinches of sea salt

lemon halves, to serve

Preheat an overhead grill to medium–high. Place the veggies on a large baking tray and add a good splash of [olive oil](#). Sprinkle with salt and toss them together really well, making sure that the veggies are lightly coated in the oil.

Lay out the spears or stems in a single layer and grill for 10 minutes or until they are tender and starting to brown slightly. Serve hot, warm or at room temperature, with lemon halves to squeeze over.

Snacks

Snacking between meals is a [major source](#) of unwanted sugars, additives and calories. Bought snacks can be full of salt, unhealthy fats and sugars, so it's worth training yourself not to eat them.

Avoiding snacks will improve your appetite for your next meal. Studies show periods without food are important for boosting our metabolism and helping our body regulate blood sugar levels.

My five tips for snacking:

1. You're less likely to crave what you cannot see; keep unhealthy snacks out of sight or out of the house altogether.

2. Drink plenty of water between meals, to keep you feeling full but also to help with digestion, metabolism and everyday health.
3. If you find yourself hungry between meals, keep snacks on hand that are high in fibre and healthy fats, as these will keep you fuller for longer. Think fruit, carrot or celery sticks with hummus, plain yoghurt with berries or raw nuts.
4. Sometimes when you think you feel hungry, you're actually bored. Distract yourself by getting up from your desk, having a stretch, going for a walk or chatting to a colleague, and you might just forget about needing that snack.
5. If you love to nibble or graze, choose bite-sized snacks such as berries, veg or cut melon, which are tasty and full of vitamins and fibre but low on sugar.

These recipes are from Dr. Sandro Demaio's [The Doctor's Diet](#). All author proceeds from the Doctor's Diet go to funding public health and nutrition projects across Australia, with a focus on children.

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