

# Good eating



**ESSENTIALS  
OF CHOOSING  
HEALTHY FOOD**

**G**ood food tastes delicious, adds pleasure to life and helps us celebrate important social occasions. Most importantly it gives us the energy and nutrients to stay alive and to truly thrive. What you eat can help you stay healthy and feel great! Healthy eating also plays an important role in maintaining your body's health and preventing diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and some cancers.<sup>1</sup> They say "You are what you eat"—so what is good nutrition? And how does choosing to eat healthy foods really make a difference to our lives?

In modern society, with advancing social media and faster wireless internet connections from our smart phones, tablets and laptops, it is not hard to get your hands on an abundance of nutritional information with a simple click of the mouse or swipe of the screen. The latest food trends, fad diets, detox diets and glorified food products are never far from reach and can be tempting in a society that craves instant results. This makes it more and more difficult to dissect fact from fiction. Always be sure to remember that fad diets and extreme approaches to eating do not work long term—which means they don't work. This booklet will not only help you understand why you should eat healthy foods, but how much and what types are most appropriate for you.



## WHY IS HEALTHY EATING IMPORTANT?

Eating a well balanced diet can:<sup>1</sup>

- ✓ Provide all the essential nutrients you need to ensure adequate nutrition
- ✓ Give you vitality and energy
- ✓ Help you maintain your weight
- ✓ Boost your immune system
- ✓ Protect against chronic lifestyle diseases like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, cancer etc.
- ✓ Delay the effects of ageing
- ✓ Build strong, dense bones
- ✓ Improve performance when engaging in physical activity
- ✓ Improve oral health by protecting teeth and keeping gums healthy
- ✓ Boost mood, memory and concentration



## Recommended dietary guidelines<sup>2</sup>

1.

**To achieve and maintain a healthy weight, be physically active and choose amounts of nutritious food and drinks to meet your energy needs.**

- **CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS** should eat sufficient nutritious foods to grow and develop normally. They should be physically active every day and their growth should be checked regularly.
- **OLDER PEOPLE** should eat nutritious foods and keep physically active to help maintain muscle strength and a healthy weight.

2.

- **Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods from these five food groups every day:**
- Plenty of vegetables of different types and colours, and legumes/beans
- Fruit
- Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain and/or high cereal fibre varieties, such as breads, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles, polenta, couscous, oats, quinoa and barley
- Eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds, legumes/beans and if not a vegetarian, lean meats, poultry and fish
- Milk, yoghurt, soft cheeses and/or their alternatives

And drink plenty of water.

3.

**Limit intake of foods high in saturated fat, added salt, added sugars and alcohol.**

- a) Limit intake of foods high in saturated fat such as many biscuits, cakes, pastries, pies, processed meats, commercial burgers, pizza, fried foods, potato chips, crisps and other savoury snacks.
  - Replace high fat foods which contain predominately saturated fats such as butter, cream, cooking margarine, coconut and palm oil with foods which contain predominately polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats such as oils, spreads, nut butters/pastes and avocado.
  - Low fat foods (such as skim milk) are not suitable for children under the age of two years as they are still experiencing high growth and development.
- b) Limit intake of foods and drinks containing added salt.
  - Read labels to choose lower sodium options among similar foods.
  - Do not add salt to foods in cooking or at the table.
- c) Limit intake of foods and drinks containing added sugars such as confectionary, sugar-sweetened soft drinks and cordials, fruit drinks, vitamin waters, energy and sports drinks.
- d) Avoid alcohol. If you choose to drink alcohol, limit intake. For women who are pregnant, planning a pregnancy or breastfeeding, not drinking alcohol is the safest option.

4.

**Encourage, support and promote breastfeeding.**

5.

**Care for your food and prepare and store it safely.**



## *What should I be eating?*

**T**he key to good eating is to enjoy a variety of nutritious foods from each of the five food groups and drink plenty of water. For some people, healthy eating does not come naturally. It takes planning and preparation. Use the information below to help solidify your healthy eating plans.

### *Vegetables, legumes and beans*

Most of us know that vegetables, legumes, and beans are good for us, so why is it that 90% of us don't eat enough vegetables?<sup>3</sup> In 2009/10, Australian households spent an average of \$237 a week on food and beverages. Of this, about \$63 was spent on food prepared outside the home (restaurants and takeaways), and \$32 a week on alcoholic drinks. Meat, fish and seafood collectively accounted for \$30 a week on average.<sup>3</sup> The foods we choose are influenced by many factors such as price, availability, culture, personal preferences, and health and nutrition concerns. Vegetables are cost effective as they provide a high level of nutrients for generally very low kilojoules. They provide an array of vitamins, minerals, dietary fibre and phytonutrients (nutrients naturally present in plants).<sup>4</sup> Different vegetables, legumes, and beans contribute in different ways, making variety crucial to good health.<sup>5</sup>

Choosing different colours is one way to do this, so make sure your plate has at least three different coloured vegetables every day.

Eating a mixture of fresh salads and cooked vegetables is good for a healthy boost in vitamins and anti-oxidants.<sup>6</sup> Cooked vegetables make certain nutrients easier for the body to absorb. For example, beta-carotene and lycopene are better absorbed from cooked carrots and tomatoes than when raw. In fact, adding some olive oil during cooking can further improve their biological availability; but remember to not heat the olive oil beyond its smoke point.<sup>1</sup> Remember to maximise your nutrition from cooked vegetables by cooking them until just tender, don't keep them warm for long periods of time and use minimal water.

Legumes (also known as pulses) are beans, peas and lentils, and can be found dried, canned, cooked or frozen. Examples include soya beans, red kidney beans, chickpeas, red lentils, mung beans, peanuts or split peas. There is consistent evidence from population health (epidemiological) studies that shows that eating legumes can play a role in reducing the risk of chronic disease, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes and becoming overweight, as well as improving gut health.<sup>7</sup> They are nutritional powerhouses filled with phytochemicals (class of natural molecules with multiple health benefits) and dietary fibre. Legumes are low in fat and contain a source of B vitamins, as well as a range of minerals including calcium, potassium, phosphorus and magnesium. They are a source of energy giving carbohydrates, with a low glycemic index rating. Legumes are also low in sodium and naturally gluten-free (great for those with coeliac disease or gluten intolerance).<sup>8,9</sup>

## HOW MANY DO I NEED PER DAY?<sup>2</sup>

The minimum recommended number of serves of vegetables per day can be found on the table below.

	19-50 years	51-70 years	70+ years		
Men	6	5 ½	5		
Women	5	5	5		
Pregnant women	5	-	-		
Breastfeeding women	7 ½	-	-		
	2-3 years	4-8 years	9-11 years	12-13 years	14-18 years
Boys	2 ½	4 ½	5	5 ½	5 ½
Girls	2 ½	4 ½	5	5	5



## WHAT IS A STANDARD SERVE?<sup>2,10</sup>

A standard serve of vegetables is about 75g (100-350kJ) or:

- ½ cup cooked green or orange vegetables (broccoli, spinach, carrot, pumpkin etc.)
- ½ cup cooked, dried or canned beans, peas or lentils
- 1 cup green leafy or raw salad vegetables
- ½ cup sweet corn
- ½ medium potato or other starchy vegetable (sweet potato, cassava, taro etc.)
- 1 medium tomato

# Fruit

Most Australians eat only half the recommended quantity of fruit.<sup>3</sup> However, many of us prefer to drink our fruit in the form of fruit juice. This unfortunately comes with more sugar and less fibre. It is a concentrated source of energy, so is not ideal for weight management. It is much easier to drink a glass of orange juice (freshly squeezed) than it is to eat the four fresh oranges that went into making that juice! Despite recent trends in fruit being labelled a *baddie* in terms of sugar content, it is a natural and nutritious food. It contains little fat, and again is packed with vitamins, minerals, anti-oxidants and fibre.<sup>11</sup> Dried fruit is also a healthy choice. However, it is a concentrated source of energy (with water being removed in the drying process) and should be included in moderation.

## HOW MANY DO I NEED PER DAY?<sup>2</sup>

The minimum recommended number of serves of fruit per day can be found in the table below.

	19-50 years	51-70 years	70+ years		
Men	2	2	2		
Women	2	2	2		
Pregnant women	2	-	-		
Breastfeeding women	2	-	-		
	2-3 years	4-8 years	9-11 years	12-13 years	14-18 years
Boys	1	1 ½	2	2	2
Girls	1	1 ½	2	2	2



## WHAT IS A SERVE OF FRUIT?<sup>2,10</sup>

A standard serve is about 150g (350kJ) or:

- 1 medium apple, banana, orange or pear
- 2 small apricots, kiwifruit or plums
- 1 cup diced or canned fruit (no added sugar)

Or only occasionally:

- 125ml (½ cup) fruit juice (no added sugar)
- 30g dried fruit (e.g. 4 dried apricot halves, 1½ tablespoons of sultanas)

# Grains

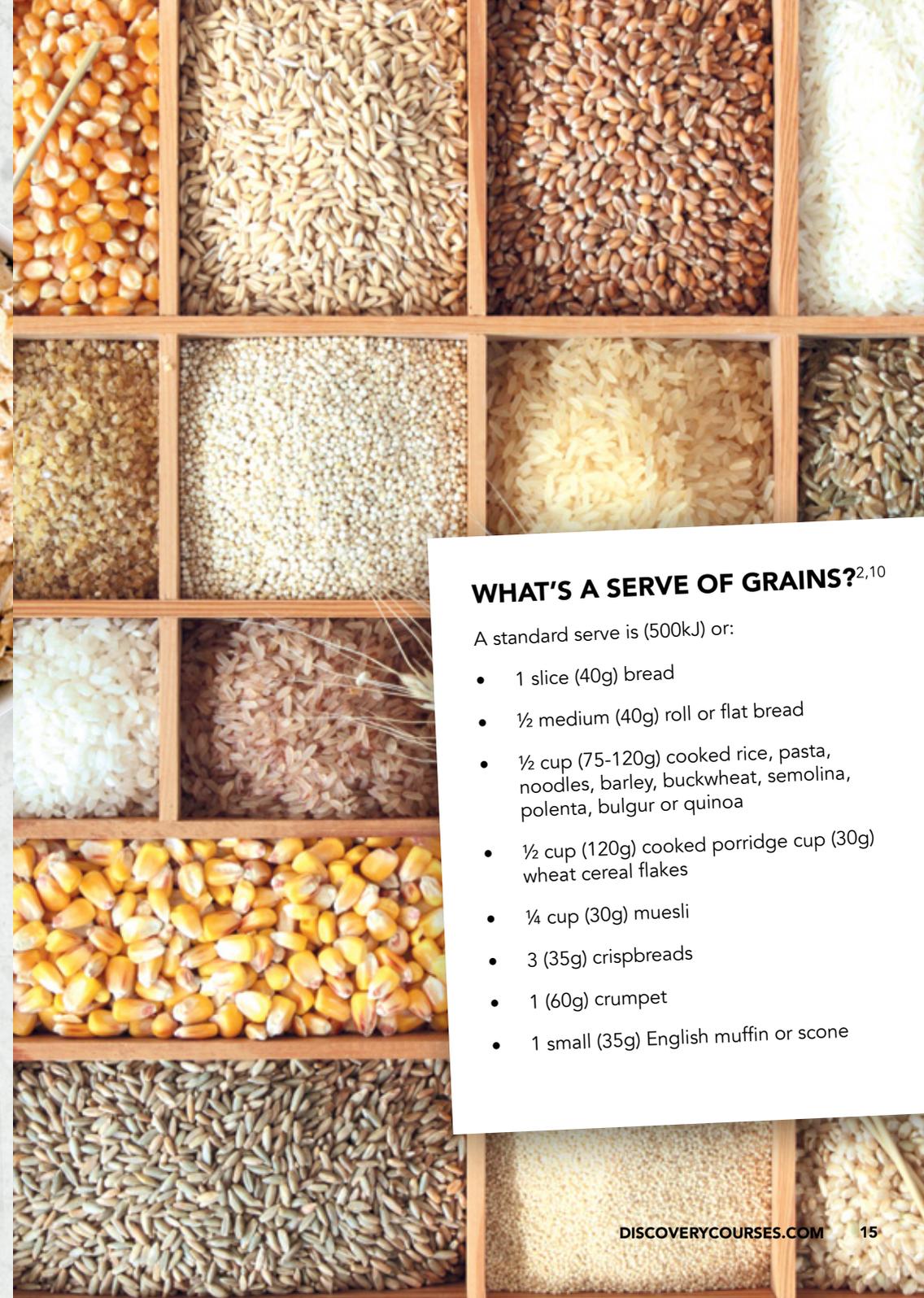
There are a wide variety of grains available which are important for health. Grain foods include wheat, oats, rice, corn, barley, sorghum, rye, millet, amaranth, buckwheat and quinoa.<sup>12</sup> Each of these grains provides a network of nutritional properties including high carbohydrate, low fat, a good source of protein and varying amounts of vitamins, minerals, fibre and glycemic load. Grain-based foods make an important contribution to your nutrient intake. There is more and more emerging evidence supporting not only the role of grains in a healthy diet, but particular links with grains (specifically wholegrains) and disease protection.<sup>13-18</sup> Most Australians consume less than half the recommended quantity of wholegrain foods, but eat too much refined grain (cereal) foods. At least two-thirds of our choices should be wholegrain varieties.<sup>2</sup>



## HOW MANY DO I NEED PER DAY?<sup>2,10</sup>

The minimum recommended number of serves of grain (cereal) foods per day, mostly wholegrain and/or high cereal fibre varieties, can be found in the table below.

	19-50 years	51-70 years	70+ years		
Men	6	6	4 ½		
Women	6	4	3		
Pregnant women	8 ½	-	-		
Breastfeeding women	9	-	-		
	2-3 years	4-8 years	9-11 years	12-13 years	14-18 years
Boys	4	4	5	6	7
Girls	4	4	4	5	7



## WHAT'S A SERVE OF GRAINS?<sup>2,10</sup>

A standard serve is (500kJ) or:

- 1 slice (40g) bread
- ½ medium (40g) roll or flat bread
- ½ cup (75-120g) cooked rice, pasta, noodles, barley, buckwheat, semolina, polenta, bulgur or quinoa
- ½ cup (120g) cooked porridge cup (30g) wheat cereal flakes
- ¼ cup (30g) muesli
- 3 (35g) crispbreads
- 1 (60g) crumpet
- 1 small (35g) English muffin or scone

# Lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs and/or plant-based alternatives

Eating a variety of foods from this group provides many nutrients, including protein, iron, zinc and other minerals and vitamins (particularly those of the vitamin B group). Vitamin B<sup>12</sup> is found mainly in animal-based products.<sup>19</sup>

Lean red meat is high in iron and can be an important food, especially for some groups including women (particularly when pregnant)<sup>20</sup> and athletes. However, regular consumption of larger quantities of red meat may be associated with increased risk of colorectal (bowel) cancer.<sup>21</sup> In fact, the World Cancer Research Fund states that "red or processed meats are convincing or probable causes of some cancers."<sup>22</sup>

Fish is low in saturated fat and high in unsaturated fat and a rich source of iodine.<sup>23</sup> Fish, particularly oily fish such as salmon and tuna, can be a valuable source of essential omega-3 fatty acids. Consumption has been linked with reducing the risk of many chronic diseases and various disorders such as poor eyesight, inflammation, dementia, cardiovascular disease, depression and diabetes.<sup>24-26</sup>

Eggs provide a low cost source of protein and other nutrients, and are quick and easy to prepare.<sup>27</sup> Alternatives to animal foods, including nuts, seeds, legumes, beans and tofu, can provide a valuable, affordable source of protein and other nutrients that are found in meat.

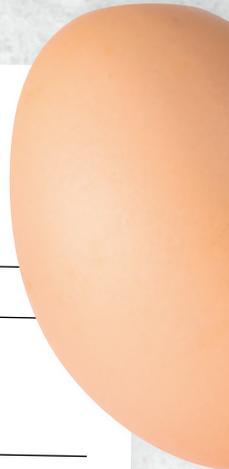
There is increasing evidence that consuming protein from plant rather than animal sources may in fact be one of the reasons why vegetarians generally have a lower risk of being overweight, obese or experiencing chronic disease.<sup>28</sup> Including nuts as a regular component of your diet is recommended, and has been linked with regulating inflammatory processes,<sup>29</sup> improved glycemic control,<sup>30</sup> weight maintenance<sup>31</sup> and cholesterol lowering properties.<sup>32</sup>



## HOW MANY DO I NEED PER DAY?<sup>2,10</sup>

The minimum recommended number of serves of lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds, and legumes/beans per day can be found in the table below.

	19-50 years	51-70 years	70+ years		
Men	3	2 ½	2 ½		
Women	2 ½	2	2		
Pregnant women	3 ½	-	-		
Breastfeeding women	2 ½	-	-		
<hr/>					
	2-3 years	4-8 years	9-11 years	12-13 years	14-18 years
Boys	1	1 ½	2 ½	2 ½	2 ½
Girls	1	1 ½	2 ½	2 ½	2 ½



## WHAT'S A SERVE OF LEAN MEAT, POULTRY, FISH, EGGS AND/OR PLANT-BASED ALTERNATIVES?<sup>2</sup>

A standard serve is (500–600kJ):

- 1 cup (150g) cooked or canned legumes/beans such as lentils, chick peas or split peas
- 170g tofu
- 30g nuts, seeds, peanut or almond butter or tahini or other nut or seed paste
- 2 large (120g) eggs
- 65g cooked lean red meats such as beef, lamb, veal or goat (about 90-100g raw)
- 80g cooked lean poultry such as chicken or turkey (100g raw)
- 100g cooked fish fillet (about 115g raw) or one small can of fish



## Dairy and alternatives

Dairy foods such as milk, yoghurt and cheese are well known for their calcium content. However, they also contain significant amounts of other essential nutrients such as vitamins A and B<sup>12</sup>, riboflavin, phosphorus, potassium, magnesium and zinc.<sup>33</sup> Remember to choose reduced fat and/or reduced salt varieties where possible.<sup>34</sup> Foods such as canned fish eaten with the bones (e.g. salmon), fortified soy milk, green leafy vegetables, nuts such as almonds, tofu, cereals and legumes can also be rich sources of calcium. Sesame seeds and sesame paste (tahini) have also been shown to be rich sources of calcium, particularly in vegetarians.<sup>35</sup>

### HOW MANY DO I NEED PER DAY?<sup>2</sup>

The minimum recommended number of serves of milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives per day, mostly reduced fat, can be found in the table below.

	19-50 years	51-70 years	70+ years		
Men	2 ½	2 ½	3 ½		
Women	2 ½	4	4		
Pregnant women	2 ½	-	-		
Breastfeeding women	2 ½	-	-		
	2-3 years	4-8 years	9-11 years	12-13 years	14-18 years
Boys	1 ½	2	2 ½	3 ½	3 ½
Girls	1 ½	1 ½	3	3 ½	3 ½

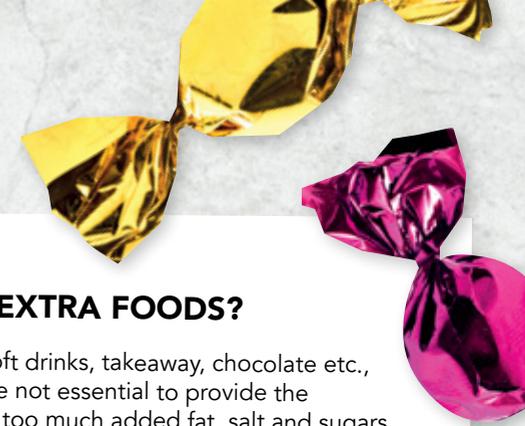


### WHAT'S A SERVE OF DAIRY?<sup>2</sup>

- A standard serve is (500–600kJ):
- 1 cup (250ml) fresh, UHT long life, reconstituted powdered milk or buttermilk
- ½ cup (120ml) evaporated milk
- 2 slices (40g) or 4 x 3 x 2cm cube (40g) of hard cheese, such as cheddar
- ½ cup (120g) ricotta cheese
- ¾ cup (200g) yoghurt
- 1 cup (250ml) soy, rice or other cereal drink with at least 100mg of added calcium per 100ml

The following foods contain about the same amount of calcium as a serve of milk, yoghurt or cheese:

- 100g almonds with skin
- 60g sardines, canned in water
- ½ cup (100g) canned pink salmon with bones
- 100g firm tofu (check the label as calcium levels vary)



## WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER OR EXTRA FOODS?

Some foods such as lollies, crisps, biscuits, soft drinks, takeaway, chocolate etc., do not fit into the main food groups. They are not essential to provide the nutrients your body needs and some contain too much added fat, salt and sugars.

These extra foods can add to the enjoyment of a healthy diet, but should only be chosen sometimes or in small amounts.

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Written by Julie Hoey, Maddison Fox, Dr Darren Morton, Dr Christiana Leimena, & Dr Ross Grant.  
Edited by Christina Hawkins, Lyle Southwell, Sue Robinson, Maddison Fox & Jade Guest.

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health to wellbeing

**Australasian**  
Research Institute

## JULIE HOEY

BSc (Nutrition and Food Science),  
Grad Dip Dietetics, Grad Dip Ed

A qualified dietitian and science teacher, Julie loves reading the latest research into the amazing human body. With her husband and six-year old daughter, she lives on 100 acres of bush in New South Wales, and works at Avondale College of Higher Education.



## MADDISON FOX

BSc (Nutrition), Hons (Dietetics), APD, AN,  
BAppSc (Exercise and Sport Science), Sports Dietitian

Maddison is passionate about healthy food and its interaction with the health of body, mind, heart and spirit. She utilises the latest nutritional science to teach others how to create healthy food, reduce obesity and the risk of disease and chronic conditions.



## DR ROSS GRANT

PhD (NeuroPharmacology), MAppSc (Clin Chemistry)  
BEd (Sc) (Biochemistry/Chemistry)

Dr Grant is a Biochemical Pharmacologist in the School of Medical Sciences University of New South Wales, Clinical Associate Professor at the University of Sydney Medical School and Head of the Australasian Research Institute at Sydney Adventist Hospital.



## DR DARREN MORTON

PhD (Human Physiology), MAppSc (Human Movement),  
BEd (Distinction), Senior Lecturer at Avondale College of Higher Education

Darren is passionate about empowering others to live more. He has delivered hundreds of presentations on lifestyle related topics all over the world, written numerous publications and is a key presenter on the Complete Health Improvement Program (CHIP). He enjoys family time, triathlon and hang gliding.



## DR CHRISTIANA LEIMENA

PhD (Cell Biology and Inherited Heart Disease),  
BSc Hons (Biomedical Science)

As a medical science researcher, Christiana has worked in the field of inherited heart disease for over a decade, and continues to research the latest in medical health. Christiana loves to be active in the outdoors and is passionate in sharing with others on how to live a healthy, abundant life, both physically and spiritually.



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