

# The Benefits of Cooking at Home

*Diabetes Counselling Online "Dine In For Diabetes" © Fact Sheet 1*

There are many benefits of preparing healthy home-cooked meals. Besides the satisfaction that comes from creating an entire meal from scratch, and the pride experienced when somebody tells you how delicious it is, here are some more reasons why you should put down the takeaway menu and head back into the kitchen for dinner.

## **It's much better for your health!**

People who regularly eat takeaway meals have a poorer diet quality, which means they eat fewer vegetables, fruit, wholegrains, and low fat dairy, but more fat, salt and soft drinks. Replacing regular takeaway consumption with home cooked meals is important because:

- Takeaway meals are high in fat, particularly saturated fat. Fat contains more than twice as many kilojoules as carbohydrates and protein so it is important to be mindful of how much fat we eat when we are watching our weight. Some fats in particular can cause high cholesterol levels and lead to heart disease
- Takeaway meals are also high in salt. Too much salt in our diet can lead to high blood pressure, which in turn increases the risk of heart disease and stroke
- When you cook a meal at home you are able to control the amount of fat in it by trimming meat, selecting low fat ingredients and managing the amount of added fat in the dish. It also makes it easier to select heart-healthy oils, such as olive or canola oil, and avoid unhealthy saturated fats. The amount of salt can be controlled in a similar way.
- It is also easier to control the amount of food we eat when we cook it at home. Takeaway foods are often served in fixed-sized containers, even though each of us needs different amounts of food depending on our gender, age, size, and level of activity or exercise. Despite this, many people finish them anyway and are at risk of overeating and weight gain. At home, it is easy to adjust the size of each persons meal to suit them when it is being plated.
- While some of the larger fast food companies do publish nutrition information, usually on their websites, this is not the case for small restaurants because it is not a legal requirement. Choosing your own ingredients can help you make healthier choices as all packaged supermarket goods will be marked with nutrition information, with a few exceptions such as fresh fruit and vegetables.

## **Meals at home = happier families**

Preparing and sitting down to eat a home cooked meal with other people encourages discussion and a sense of belonging. This also applies to families with children. Studies show that children who sit down to a meal with their family regularly are more likely have good social skills and table manners, and are more likely to try new foods.

## **Cooking at home is better for the environment!**

Consumers are becoming increasingly interested in the impact their lives have on the environment, and are making lifestyle choices with this in mind. These choices are not limited to the transport we use and the recycling we do, but can also involve

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the food we consume. Takeaway foods are not only harming your health but also the environment because:

- Takeaway businesses often use overseas sourced ingredients. Large amounts of energy are invested in the transport and storage of these ingredients.
- Takeaway meals are also packaged individually. Ordering food for a family of four from the local Chinese shop can result in 6-8 containers for mains and side dishes. Adding this to their own packaging and food waste, takeaway dishes generate more rubbish than cooking a meal at home.

Supermarket goods (even fresh fruit and vegetables) are required to show their country of origin, so home cooks can show their concern for the environment by selecting and cooking locally produced food.

### **It will save you money**

Cooking a healthy meal at home can also be cheaper than buying it from a takeaway outlet. This is because besides the ingredients, businesses have to pay for electricity, rent, staff, and still make a profit. Simple ways to make home cooked food even cheaper are to buy ingredients in bulk, and concentrate on seasonal fruit and vegetables.

There are many reasons to reduce the amount of takeaway you eat and switch to cooking healthy meals at home. It could improve your health, happiness, budget and the environment, so why not give it a try.

[Click here for ways to make your favourite takeaway foods at home!](#)