

# THE WHAT, WHY, AND HOW OF NCDs

## WHAT ARE NONCOMMUNICABLE DISEASES?

Noncommunicable diseases, or NCDs, are conditions that are not infectious or contagious. This means you cannot catch them from someone else or spread them to others. NCDs can damage your health throughout your lifetime. Things like age and genes can affect whether NCDs develop, but certain lifestyle choices, like what you eat and how much physical activity you get, can also increase your risk of developing a chronic illness. Some examples of NCDs are type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO LEARN ABOUT NCDs?

Noncommunicable diseases cause 41 million deaths a year globally.<sup>1</sup> With the right education and changes in behaviour, there is an opportunity to reverse that trend. Healthy habits can last a lifetime, especially when they are established early. The earlier your family can learn about the causes of NCDs and how to reduce their risk of developing them, the sooner they can begin to build a healthier future.

## HOW CAN I REDUCE MY FAMILY'S RISK OF DEVELOPING NCDs?

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the best way to reduce your family's chance of developing NCDs is to reduce the major risk factors.<sup>2</sup> The following list of recommendations can help your family make the healthiest choices possible.

- ❑ Make nutritious food choices.
- ❑ Be active.
- ❑ Don't smoke.
- ❑ For those over 18 years of age, if you drink alcohol, always drink responsibly and in moderation. Never drink and then drive.

Need more information about nutrition and activity guidelines? Check out the [Family Webpage \(www.FutureWellKids.com/Families\)](http://www.FutureWellKids.com/Families)!

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/noncommunicable-diseases>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.who.int/activities/preventing-noncommunicable-diseases>

# NUTRITION GUIDELINES

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the best way to reduce your family's chance of developing noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) is to reduce the major risk factors.<sup>1</sup> One of those major risk factors is lack of proper nutrition.

The Department of Health recommends fitting your food choices into the five food groups of The Food Pyramid<sup>2</sup>. You can explore The Food Pyramid website with your family to discover new ways to support your health! A few examples of each food group include:

A noncommunicable disease (NCD) is any disease that is not contagious and cannot be spread to others, like the flu.

- **Shelf 1:** Vegetables, Salad and Fruit (at least 5 to 7 servings a day). Base your meals on these and enjoy a variety of colours. More is better. Limit fruit juice to unsweetened, once a day.
- **Shelf 2:** Wholemeal Cereals and Breads, Potatoes, Pasta and Rice (3 to 5 servings a day, up to 7 for teenage boys and men aged 19 to 50). Wholemeal and wholegrain cereals are best.
- **Shelf 3:** Milk, Yoghurt and Cheese (3 servings a day and 5 from the age of 9 to 18). Choose reduced-fat or low-fat varieties. Choose low-fat milk and yoghurt more often than cheese.
- **Shelf 4:** Meat, Poultry, Fish, Eggs, Beans and Nuts (2 servings a day). Choose lean meat, poultry (without skin) and fish. Eat oily fish up to twice a week. Choose eggs, beans and nuts. Limit processed, salty meats, such as sausages, bacon and ham.
- **Shelf 5:** Fats, Spreads and Oils (in very small amounts). Use as little as possible. Choose mono or polyunsaturated reduced-fat or light spreads. Always cook with methods that use as little fat or oil as possible, such as grilling, oven-baking, steaming, boiling or stir-frying.

However, it is not just about what you try to put *on* your plates. It is also about what you try to keep *off* your plates! The WHO also recommends limiting the following<sup>3</sup>:

- Added sugar
- Salt
- Saturated and trans fats

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.who.int/activities/preventing-noncommunicable-diseases>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/70a2e4-the-food-pyramid>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/healthy-diet>

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the best way to reduce your family's chance of developing noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) is to reduce the major risk factors.<sup>1</sup> One of those major risk factors is lack of physical activity.

The Department of Health reports regular physical activity can help reduce the risk of developing NCDs. They recommend 60 minutes (or more!) of moderate to vigorous activity each day for children and young adults.<sup>2</sup>

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- **Children and young people (2-18):** All children and young people should be active, at a moderate to vigorous level, for at least 60 minutes every day.
- **Adults (18-64):** At least 30 minutes a day of moderate activity on 5 days a week or 150 minutes a week
- **Older people (65+):** At least 30 minutes a day of moderate activity on 5 days a week, or 150 minutes a week. Focus on aerobic activity, muscle strengthening and balance.
- **Children and adults with a disability** should aim to be as active as their disability allows and aim to meet the guideline for their age group if possible.
- You can count even shorter bouts of activity towards the guidelines. These bouts should last at least 10 minutes.

The following checklist can help your family incorporate physical activity into your daily lives. Talk about it with your family and mark your favourites. Feel free to add to the list!

- Take a long walk
- Have a family dance party to your favourite music
- Go for a bike ride
- Do jumping jacks during the ad break of your favourite TV show
- Play a game of football as a family
- Swim laps
- Train for and run a race, like a virtual/in-person 5k

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.who.int/activities/preventing-noncommunicable-diseases>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/o6de8b-be-well/#physical-activity-guidelines>