New recommendations for food-based dietary guidelines for healthy eating in Ireland

**1. Introduction**
- Evaluation of Ireland’s food pyramid in 2008-9 highlighted a need for guidance on energy requirements for different age and gender groups and the need for adequate provision of vitamin D³.
- Ireland’s food guide should provide an “optimal” diet for chronic disease and obesity prevention.
- This study aims to do this by making new recommendations for food-based dietary guidelines.

**2. Methods**
- Twenty-two sets of 4-day food intake patterns were developed iteratively with the input of dietitians specialising in pediatrics, geriatrics and public health.
- Portion sizes and categorisation of foods in certain food groups were addressed in consultation with dieticians/nutritionists.
- The patterns met age and gender specific requirements at sedentary and moderate activity levels for energy¹, macronutrients², fibre³, iron⁵, calcium⁶ and vitamin D⁶.
- The food intake patterns were used to develop healthy eating guidance on the number of servings required from each food group for males and females aged ≥ 5 years.

**3. Results**

(i) New recommendations for healthy eating food-based dietary guidelines were devised and are presented in the figure below.

(ii) The new food based dietary guidelines were considered appropriate as:
- Energy levels provided were within 0.04MJ of the energy goals
- Total fat provided 26-35% energy
- Saturated fat provided 8-11% energy
- Non-milk extrinsic sugar intakes were ≤ 10% energy⁷
- Iron levels provided the Estimated Average Requirements (EARs) for all age and sex groups
- Calcium levels provided were adequate except for 9-10 year olds who have a higher requirement (1300mg per day) relative to their energy needs

However:
- Recommended fibre levels provided for women with lower energy requirements (≤ 8.4MJ) did not reach the goal of 25g/day
- Vitamin D levels provided remained inadequate for all age and gender groups

**REFERENCES**

**4. Conclusion**

Newly revised food based dietary guidelines were generated and are proposed for Ireland:
- Enjoy a wide variety of foods from the 5 food groups
- Watch your portion sizes
- Breads, cereals etc., are the best source of calories to fuel the body
- Eat at least 5 fruit and vegetables a day
- Choose reduced-fat milk, yoghurts and cheese more often
- Choose lean meat and poultry
- Use polyunsaturated or monounsaturated spreads and oils sparingly – reduced fat spreads are best
- Grill, bake, steam or boil food instead of frying
- Cakes, biscuits confectionery, savoury snacks etc. – limit these foods to ‘sometimes’ but not everyday
- Limit salt intake
- Drink plenty of water
- Find an enjoyable way to keep physically active everyday
- Everyone should take a vitamin D supplement daily (5µg for 5–50 years, 10µg for 51+ years)
- All women of childbearing age who are sexually active should take a folic acid supplement (400µg per day)
- Breastfeeding should be encouraged and supported