

# Healthy Eating Policy

## DONABATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE



This Policy is to be reviewed by the Board of Management every three years.

This Policy was agreed on:

25/3/2025

Signature:

K. J. Farrell

(Chairperson to the Board of Management)

---

## **Donabate Community College**

Donabate Community College is a post primary college, which opened in August 2008 under the Patronage of Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB). The college is co-educational and aspires towards excellence in a caring and supportive environment.

The Board of Management is committed to the successful implementation of recent legislation, in particular the Education Act (1998), the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) and the Equal Status Act (2000). The Board fully subscribes to the principles of partnership, accountability, transparency, inclusion and respect for diversity, parental choice and equality.

## **College Mission**

The Board of Management will promote Excellence. Our aim will be to create, with the assistance of parents/guardians, responsible citizens with pride in their community. The development of the whole person will be based on personal responsibility, inter dependence, respect for people and respect for property. Our college will seek to instill integrity, value discipline and punctuality and facilitate the best in academic and non-academic areas. We will value our culture, our tradition, be inclusive of religious beliefs and will seek to be a caring and compassionate community where justice and truth will be the central elements.

## **Policy Review and Ratification**

Donabate Community College is committed to ongoing policy review to ensure clarity, relevance, and compliance with current legislation and best practices. Where amendments to a policy are of a minor or administrative nature and do not alter its overall meaning, purpose, or intent, the school may proceed to seek ratification from the Board of Management without further consultation with stakeholders. However, where substantive changes are proposed that impact the policy's intent, scope, or application, appropriate consultation with relevant stakeholders will be undertaken before submission to the Board of Management for ratification.

---

## **RATIONALE**

Healthy Ireland Survey (2021) presented the following findings in relation to the diet and health of men and women aged between 15-24 (See Appendix 1):

- Only 38% of the cohort ate the recommended guideline of 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables per day.
- 14% males and 9% females consumed sugar-sweetened drinks at least once a day.
- 51% of the cohort consumed 'unhealthy foods' including sweets, cakes, biscuits, salty snacks, takeaways 2+ times a day. The highest out of all of the age brackets.

Healthy Ireland Survey (2015) established that 1 in 5 secondary school aged children are overweight, moreover 15% of the population aged 15 and over are considered overweight or obese.

Our school acknowledges that maintaining a healthy lifestyle is often more achievable for those with greater financial resources. A 2017 report by Safefood titled "What are the estimated costs of childhood overweight and obesity on the island of Ireland?" notes that obesity prevalence is often higher in lower-income populations due to factors such as limited access to healthy foods and opportunities for physical activity.

Donabate Community College recognises the benefits of healthy eating:

- A healthy diet is essential for maintaining and protecting young people's health, for ensuring they perform to their full potential during the school day (both academically and physically) and for their growth and development.
- Eating a wide variety of foods is one of the best ways to help the body get the nutritional contributions it needs each day.
- Nutrition is central to health and diet can be an important influence on the life of young people now and in the future.
- Eating well at a young age is influential to continuing to do so throughout life.
- Establishing healthy eating habits at a young age is critical because changing poor eating habits in adulthood can be difficult.
- Eating is one of the most powerful ways of enhancing or repairing health.
- Over time the food young people eat will affect their cholesterol levels, weight, blood pressure, insulin regulation, brain function, emotional health and self-esteem.
- Prevents childhood and adolescent health problems such as becoming overweight and obesity, eating disorders, tooth decay and anaemia. These factors on the rise in today's society so it's important to maintain and reinforce healthy eating throughout the school.
- May help prevent health problems in later life, including stroke, cardiovascular disease, and type 2 diabetes and prevent certain cancers.
- Sitting down to eat with other young people is an important part of a young person's social education.

---

Donabate Community College is concerned about the consequences of unhealthy eating:

- Avoiding breakfast can affect a young person's performance in school (intellectually and physically). Hungry young people are most likely to have behavioural, emotional and academic problems throughout school.
- Overweight and obesity is a result of poor eating habits.
- Overweight children are more likely to get bullied more than other groups within the school environment.
- A high percentage of children eat too much fat.
- Many teenagers can be overfed and undernourished.
- There is an awareness that some young people may struggle with disordered eating. This has a knock-on effect on their body due to loss of essential minerals and vitamins, brain functioning and general health.

#### **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

- To promote healthier informed choices regarding food and nutrition among the whole school community.
- To promote and encourage students to follow current healthy eating advice in order to develop life-long healthy eating habits.
- To foster positive attitudes towards healthy eating and healthy food choices with a view to improving overall health, concentration and participation in school.
- To include all members of the school community in the promotion of this policy.
- To promote healthy eating initiatives such as Healthy Eating Week.

#### **ACTION PLAN**

Curriculum:

- Students are educated about healthy living and healthy eating options in SPHE lessons, Science, Home Economics and Physical Education.
- Extra-curricular sports coaches in school inform students of nutritional needs before and after matches.

Whole School approach:

---

A healthy living week takes place once a year in the first school term, with the aim of promoting a healthy lifestyle. This includes:

- Physical activities at lunch break.
- Special lessons about healthy living and eating take place during that week and will be run by the SPHE teachers for junior classes.
- A cooking competition will be organised for all year groups to make the best healthy school snack and a nutritious, balanced main course dish.
- This competition will be run by the Home Economics teachers, the year heads and will be judged by senior management. Two students from each year will be chosen to cook in the competition with their year head. To win you must design the best healthy snack and main course dish. A prize will be given for the winning year group. This prize will be given to all of the students in that year.
- Students can spectate throughout the day as the competitors cook in the kitchens.

Support and advice to parents/guardians:

- Advice on healthy eating is accessible on the HSE website.
- If a student has been identified as having an eating disorder or possible aversion to food, the school provides parents/guardians with advice on supports outside of the school to help their child.

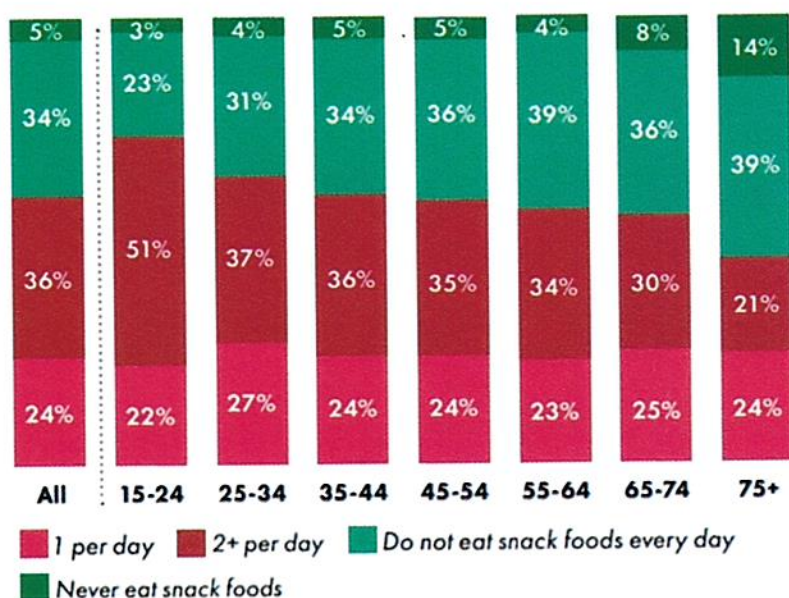
Involvement of the wider community:

- Frequently engage with bodies such as The National Dairy Council, Health Service Executive and Bord Bia to promote healthy eating within in school and receive publications to use for teaching and learning.

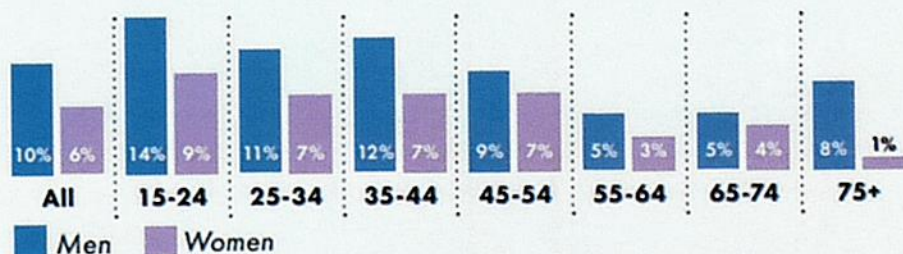
## Appendix 1

### Healthy Ireland Survey (2021) Infographic

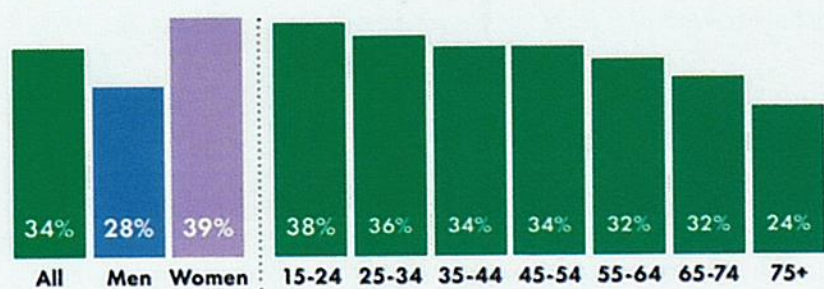
Daily consumption of unhealthy snack foods (by age)



Daily consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks (by age and gender)



% Report eating 5 or more fruits and vegetables per day (by gender and by age)



---

## Appendix 2

### Current Healthy Eating Guidelines

- All information below is summarised from the 'Healthy eating, food safety and food legislation: A guide supporting the Healthy Ireland Food Pyramid' and 'Health food for Life'
- These guides were developed to support Healthy Ireland's Healthy Food for Life – the Healthy Eating Guidelines and Food Pyramid, which was launched in December 2016 by the Department of Health
- The Healthy Food for Life resources are for the entire population over the age of five and they define the Irish Government recommendations on healthy eating and a balanced diet.
- The guides provide a consistent and evidence-based approach for healthy eating advice.

### Summary of current Healthy Eating Guidelines:

1. **Eat a Variety of Foods:** Eat a wide variety of food, choosing the right amounts from each food group. Consume foods from the four main food groups on the food pyramid (Fruit and Vegetables Group, Wholemeal Breads and Cereals Group, Dairy Group (Milk, Cheese, Yoghurt Group) and Protein Group (Meat, Fish, Poultry, Beans and Alternatives Group)
2. **Avoid foods high in sugar, salt, and saturated fat:** Limit amounts of food and drink from the top shelf of the food pyramid e.g. biscuits, cakes, crisps and sugary drinks. These should not be eaten everyday- maximum once or twice a week.
3. **Increase Fruit and Vegetables:** Eat 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables daily. Eat plenty of different coloured vegetables, salad and fruit. Base all meals on this group and consume at least five servings a day
4. **Use Fresh Ingredients:** Use fresh ingredients and avoid highly processed foods like bacon, sausages, ham and refined cereals.
5. **Smaller Serving Sizes:** Follow recommended portion sizes.
6. **Avoid saturated fats and choose healthy fats:** Try to choose low-fat or reduced- fat alternatives. Opt for unsaturated spreads and oils.
7. **Choose healthy cooking methods:** Grill, bake, steam or boil food instead of frying.
8. **Drink water:** Drink 2-3L of water daily. Replace sugary drinks with water or sugar free alternatives.

## Healthy Food for Life p.2

<https://assets.gov.ie/7649/3049964a47cb405fa20ea8d96bf50c91.pdf>

### Do you want to feel good and have more energy?

Eating a wide variety of nourishing foods provides the energy and nutrients you need every day to stay healthy. Plan what you eat using these tips.



#### Plan and prepare

Take time to plan your meals in advance. This will help you to introduce variety, eat more nutritious foods, save money and rely less on convenience and processed foods.



Prepare your meals using mostly fresh ingredients and choose foods like fruits, salads and vegetables for snacks.



Use healthier cooking methods like grilling and steaming instead of frying or roasting with oil or fat.



Size matters. Use the Food Pyramid as a guide for serving sizes.



Take time to enjoy your meals sitting at a table. Try to avoid eating in front of TV or computer screens.



#### Make healthy choices

From Food Pyramid to Plate.

Base your meals on plenty of vegetables, salads and fruits – up to half your plate or bowl at every meal. Choose a variety of colours.



Choose wholemeal and wholegrain breads, cereals, pasta and brown rice.

Choose wholemeal for most of the bread you eat. Be aware of the calorie difference – some types contain more calories than others.

Swop



for



Choose low-fat milk, yogurt or cheese. Choose milk and yogurt more often than cheese.

Swop



for



Include a small amount of poultry, fish, eggs, nuts, beans or meat at 2 meals. Choose fish up to twice a week – oily fish is best.

Swop



for



Limit chips and takeaway food as much as possible. Most are very high in fat, salt and calories.



Don't eat the following foods and drinks every day:

- Sugary drinks
- Processed salty meats like sausages, bacon and ham
- Biscuits, cakes, desserts, chocolate, sweets
- Salty snacks like crisps

Limit foods and drinks high in fat, sugar and salt to sometimes and only in small amounts. Not every day, maximum once or twice a week.

'Healthy eating, food safety and food legislation: A guide supporting the Healthy Ireland Food Pyramid' p. 3 <https://www.fsai.ie/publications/healthy-eating-food-safety-and-food-legislation>

## Top tips for healthy eating

### Variety:

enjoy a wide variety of food, choosing the right amounts from each food group.

### Physical activity:

find enjoyable ways to be physically active every day. Balancing food intake with active living will protect against disease and prevent weight gain.

### Serving sizes:

be aware of 'supersize' portions which can distort the perception of what's needed. Learn about healthy portion sizes in each of the food groups.

### Vegetables, salad and fruit:

eat plenty of different coloured vegetables, salad and fruit. Base all meals on this group and consume at least five servings a day.

### Healthy weight:

wholemeal breads, cereals, potatoes, pasta and boiled rice are important for providing calories to maintain a healthy weight. Follow recommended portion sizes.

### Low-fat dairy:

low-fat milk, yogurt and cheese are best. Choose low-fat milk and yogurt more often than cheese.

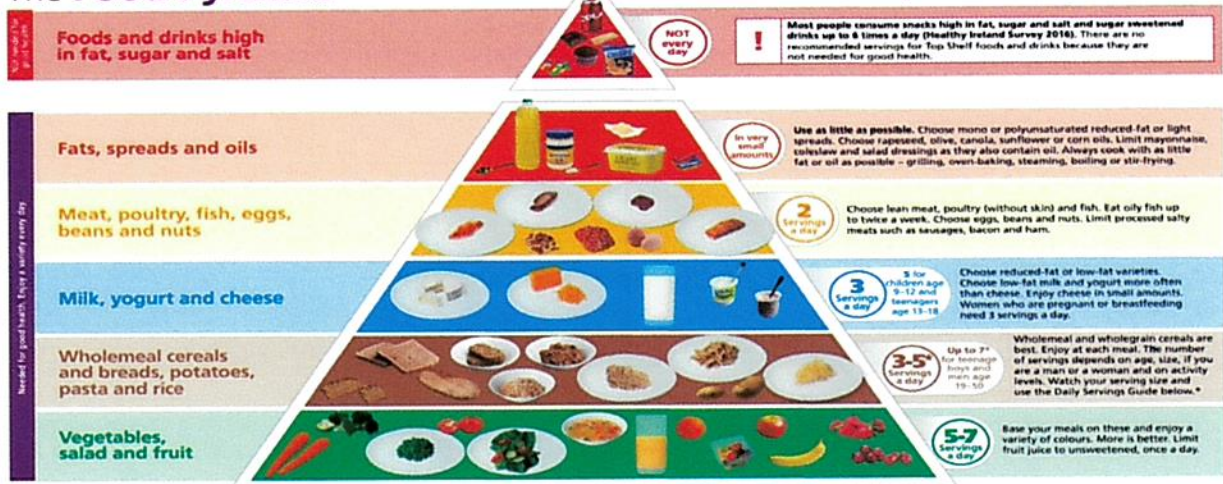
### Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans and nuts:

choose lean meat and poultry and include fish (oily is best). Remember that eggs, peas, beans and lentils are good alternatives.



# The Food Pyramid

For adults, teenagers and children aged five and over



\*Daily Servings Guide – wholemeal cereals and breads, potatoes, pasta and rice

Active	Children			Adults		
	Child (5-12)	Teenage (13-16)	Adult (18-50)	Teenage (13-16)	Adult (18-50)	Adult (51+)
♂	3-4	4	4-5	3-4	3	3
♀	3-5	5-7	5-7	4-5	4-6	4

There is no guideline for inactive children as it is essential that all children are active.

Average daily calorie needs for all foods and drinks for adults

♂ Active 2000kcal	♂ Inactive 1800kcal	♀ Active 2500kcal	♀ Inactive 2000kcal
-------------------	---------------------	-------------------	---------------------

### Serving size guide

- Cereals, cooked rice and pasta, and vegetables, salad and fruit**  
Use a 200ml disposable plastic cup to guide serving size.
- Cheese**  
Use two thumbs, width and depth to guide serving size.
- Meat, poultry, fish**  
The palm of the hand, width and depth without fingers and thumb, shows how much you need in a day.
- Reduced-fat spread**  
Portion packs found in cafes can guide the amount you use. One pack should be enough for two slices of bread.
- Oils**  
Use one teaspoon of oil per person when cooking or in salads.
- Drink at least 8 cups of fluid a day – water is best**
- Get Active!**  
To maintain a healthy weight adults need at least 30 minutes a day of moderate activity on 5 days a week (or 150 minutes a week), children need to be active at a moderate to vigorous level for at least 60 minutes every day.

Source: Department of Health, December 2016.