



Protecting your ears

Of the five senses, our sense of hearing is one of the most important. From work to socialising, relaxing or enjoying entertainment, we rely heavily on our hearing.

Here are some ways to protect your ears and hearing:

- ▶ **Use earplugs around noise and turn the volume down when using headphones.**
- ▶ **Give your ears time to recover following bouts of loud noise (e.g. concert noise)** – researchers have found that your ears need an average of 16 hours of quiet to recover.
- ▶ **Stop using cotton buds to clean your ears** – inserting anything inside your ear canals risks damaging sensitive organs like your ear drum. Your ears actually have the ability to self-clean, so leave them alone.
- ▶ **Keep your ears dry** – excess moisture can allow bacteria to enter and attack the ear canal. This can cause swimmer's ear or other types of ear infections, which can be dangerous for your hearing. Be sure you gently towel-dry your ears after bathing or swimming.
- ▶ **Regular exercise** – did you know that exercise is good for your ears? Exercises such as walking, running, or cycling gets the blood pumping to all parts of your body, including the ears. This helps the ears' internal parts stay healthy and working to their maximum potential.
- ▶ **Manage stress levels** – stress and anxiety have been linked to both temporary and permanent tinnitus (a phantom ringing in the ears).
- ▶ **Get regular checkups** – recommendations outline 18–45 year olds should have their ears checked every 5 years, 45-60 year olds every 3 years, and 60 years plus every 2 years.
- ▶ **A healthy diet** – foods rich in potassium, folic acid, magnesium, zinc and vitamin B12 have shown to help maintain good ear health.

Here are some things to look out for if you are worried about your hearing, or think someone close to you may have a hearing loss:

- ▶ Often asking people to repeat themselves
- ▶ Following along with conversations in a group is difficult
- ▶ Other sounds are muffled or people seem to mumble
- ▶ It is hard to distinguish sounds in noisy places like shopping centres
- ▶ Friends and family often tell you that you turn the TV or radio up too loud
- ▶ Sometimes missing doorbells or ringing phones
- ▶ There is a constant buzzing or ringing sound in your ears
- ▶ Loud noises cause you more discomfort than before

Our hearing is ingrained in all parts of our lives, and it is essential to protect our hearing and ears. Taking action is important because untreated hearing loss, besides detracting from quality of life and the strength of relationships, has been linked to other health concerns like depression, dementia, and heart disease.



The lowdown on protein

Protein is essential to everyone's diet as it is the main building block of our bodies. Protein helps build lean muscle, improves our immunity, boosts our energy levels and assists in building and repairing tissue.

What is a good amount of protein that should be included in a healthy diet?

The amount of protein an individual needs to consume is dependent upon their age, weight and activity level. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends a consumption of 0.8g of protein per kilogram of body weight per day, with protein constituting between 15-25% of energy.

This amounts to:

- ▶ 56 grams per day for the average sedentary man.
- ▶ 46 grams per day for the average sedentary woman.

This recommendation is for the general population, with increased protein intake for endurance athletes and those with particular fitness goals. To maximise muscle health, spread out your protein intake evenly throughout the day. Most Australians eat far more protein than they actually need, so deficiencies are rare.

What are the risks from too much protein in your diet?

Eating too much protein can be a problem as it puts excess pressure on your kidneys, thereby affecting the absorption of vitamin A and fibre and increases the amount of calcium excreted in the urine, risking bone health in the long-term.

What foods are good sources of protein?

It is important to eat the right types of protein to receive the health benefits. Good sources include:

- ▶ Lean meat, poultry and fish
- ▶ Eggs
- ▶ Dairy products like milk, yoghurt and cheese
- ▶ Seeds and nuts
- ▶ Beans and legumes (such as lentils and chickpeas)
- ▶ Soy products like tofu
- ▶ Some grain and cereal-based products are also sources of protein, but are generally not as high in protein as meat and meat alternative products.

For most healthy individuals, by simply eating quality protein with most of your meals (along with nutritious plant foods) you will meet the recommended intake.

Banana Berry Smoothie

Serves 1

- ▶ 1 banana
- ▶ ½ cup frozen berries
- ▶ 1 cup unsweetened almond milk
- ▶ 1 tbsp natural vanilla protein powder
- ▶ 1 tsp chia seeds
- ▶ 1 cup ice

Add all ingredients in a blender and blend until a smooth consistency is formed. Pour the smoothie into a large glass and serve.

Creamy Avocado Choc Smoothie

Serves 1

- ▶ 1 frozen banana
- ▶ 2 tbsp avocado
- ▶ 2 tsp cacao powder
- ▶ 1 cup baby spinach leaves
- ▶ 1 cup unsweetened coconut milk
- ▶ 1 cup ice

Add all ingredients in a blender and blend until a smooth consistency is formed. Pour the smoothie into a large glass and serve.



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