



The health benefits of turkey

Turkey is great source of nutrients.

Meat is a valuable source of [protein](#) and other nutrients. But when it comes to a healthy diet, it's important to choose the right kind of [meat](#) and eat the correct portion size. The Australian Guide To Healthy Eating recommends we eat one serving of [meat](#) per day, the equivalent of 65 to 100 grams of cooked [meat](#).

Turkey meat is sold in various forms, including whole, prepackaged slices, breast, thighs, mince, cutlets and tenderloins. Turkeys are not native to Australia (today's domestic turkey is a descendant of the wild turkey native to northern Mexico and the eastern US) and turkey farming is significantly different from other poultry farming. However, turkey consumption is growing. This year each Australian will have consumed an average of 1.7 kilograms of turkey meat, and the Australasian Turkey Federation estimates this will grow to 2.5 kilograms by 2011.

The pros

- Turkey is a rich source of [protein](#).
- Skinless turkey is low in fat. White meat is lower in kilojoules and has less fat than the dark meat. A typical turkey consists of 70 per cent white meat and 30 per cent dark meat.
- Turkey meat is a source of iron, zinc, potassium and phosphorus.
- It is also a source of vitamin B6 and niacin, which are both essential for the body's energy production.
- Regular turkey consumption can help lower cholesterol levels. The meat is low-GI and can help keep insulin levels stable.
- Turkey contains the amino acid tryptophan, which produces serotonin and plays an important role in strengthening the immune system.
- It is also a source of selenium, which is essential for thyroid hormone metabolism. It also boosts immunity and acts as an antioxidant.

The cons

- Turkey can be high in sodium.
- Some meat, particularly prepackaged slices, can be processed and contain other substances.
- Turkey skin is high in fat.
- Research suggests large amounts of tryptophan can make you sleepy.

Turkey tips

- If you can, buy organic. Turkeys raised organically will have been treated humanely and are less likely to contain pesticides and herbicides.
- Look for meat that is supple.
- A turkey roast is cooked properly when it is piping hot all the way through.
- Turkey dries out quickly, so don't overcook it.
- If marinating turkey meat, put it in the fridge straight after you've finished, as it is highly sensitive to heat.
- Store turkey separate from any gravy, stuffing or raw food.
- Refrigerated turkey will keep for about one or two days. If it is already cooked, it will keep for about four days.