

New Nordic Nutrition Recommendations: Focus on quality and the whole diet

The main conclusions from the new edition of the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations (NNR) are published on October 3. The NNR form the basis of the national dietary recommendations in the Nordic countries and is a corner stone in academic teaching on nutritional science in the region.. For the first time ever, the NNR will also be available as an e-publication as well as a free download.

The new edition of the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations (NNR 2012) is the result of the work of more than one hundred experts led by a working group under the Nordic Council of Ministers. In most cases, the new evidence does not give any reason to revise recommendations, but rather strengthens the existing ones. The NNR 2012, however, has a stronger focus than previously on the whole diet and emphasize the quality of our food and the specific sources from which we get our various nutrients, not just the quantities of e.g. fat and carbohydrates we eat.

- It can be difficult to find your way through the jungle of advice on which food is best for us. But the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations give a scientific basis for formulating dietary guidelines and is an excellent example of what the Nordic countries can achieve when they work together, says Secretary General of The Nordic Council of Ministers Dagfinn Høybråten in connection with the launch.

- This effort also forms part of the overall Nordic action plan *A better Life through Diet and Physical Activity* and it can actually be seen as an expression of the Nordic model, with its focus on an inclusive and holistic approach to society and the welfare of its citizens, added Høybråten, who is a former Minister of Health in Norway.

The Nordic Nutrition Recommendations are the main reference point for the various national dietary recommendations in the Nordic countries and the major tool to evaluate the adequacy of dietary intakes in the population. The NNR also form the basis of the Nordic Keyhole-label, advising consumers on best available options on the retail market from a health point of view.

The Nordic countries have similar dietary patterns so working together makes it possible to perform the thorough review necessary to provide scientifically based recommendations. It is also more cost effective and provides a strong policy tool internationally for the Nordic countries

For more information on the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations see also www.norden.org/nnr

Recommendations for a better health

The NNR 2012 – the fifth of its kind – looks at a number of factors involved in achieving an overall good health and preventing diet-related diseases.

It focuses on dietary patterns and sets recommended nutrient intakes, with an emphasis on the quality of food that provide fats and carbohydrates. It furthermore gives recommendations for adequate physical activity that will contribute to the prevention of lifestyle-related diseases.

Typical features of a healthy dietary pattern as described in NNR 2012 include plenty of vegetables, fruit and berries, pulses, regular intake of fish, vegetable oils, wholegrain, low-fat alternatives of dairy and meat, and limited intake of red and processed meat, sugar, salt and alcohol.

Recommendations include the following:

- Recommended intake ranges for cis-Monounsaturated fatty acids has been changed from 10-15 percent of the total energy intake (E%) to 10-20 E%.
- Ranges for other fatty acid categories remain, i.e. intake of saturated fatty acids should be < 10 E%, and cis-Polyunsaturated fatty acids should be 5-10 E%, including at least 1 E% as omega-3 fatty acids. Trans-fatty acid intake should be kept as low as possible.
- Population range for total fat intake has been adjusted to 25-40 E%, compared to 25-35 E% in NNR 2004, which is based on the sum of the ranges for the main fatty acid categories

- Recommended intake for dietary fibre is at least 25-35 g/d (>3 g/MJ) from foods naturally rich in dietary fibre foods such as wholegrain, fruit and berries, vegetables, and pulses. A limitation of added sugars to less than 10 E% is recommended.
- For total carbohydrates the population range has been changed to 45-60 E% compared to 50-60 E% in NNR 2004, as a consequence of the ranges for other macronutrients and also in line with studies on dietary patterns and health outcomes
- For protein, the recommendations are given both as population ranges expressed as E% (10-20 E%) and as a recommended intake in g/kg BW per day.
- The Recommended Intake (RI) for vitamin D is increased from 7.5 microgram to 10 microgram per day for children above 2 and adults and to 20 microgram per day for elderly \geq 75. Also, the RI for selenium (i.e. in adults) is increased from 40 to 50 and 50 to 60 microgram per day (females and males, respectively) and from 50 to 55 microgram per day (pregnant and lactating women).
- For physical activity, recommendations are given for time spent at moderate-intensity (\geq 150 min/week) or vigorous intensity (\geq 75 min/week) for adults and at least 60 min/day moderate- and vigorous intensity, equally distributed, for children.

Background

The work on the NNR 2012 is part of a fruitful Nordic co-operation under the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The Nordic Nutrition Recommendations (NNR) have been published every eight years since 1980. The Nordic countries have thus collaborated on setting guidelines for dietary composition and recommended intakes of nutrients for several decades.

The Nordic Nutrition Recommendations furthermore form the basis for the Nordic "Keyhole"-label, used widely in the retail sector to designate healthy food choices.

The 4th edition of NNR was published in 2004. The NNR 2012 is thus the 5th edition of the NNR.

How is the NNR made?

The work has been led by a Nordic working group. More than 100 scientific experts have been involved and an evidence-based approach has been used, assessing associations between dietary patterns, foods and nutrients and specific health outcomes.

Systematic reviews (SR), covering the years 2000–2012, have been applied for selected nutrients/topics, including a quality assessment of all pertinent studies and a grading of the overall evidence. A less stringent update has been done for some nutrients/topics.

Peer reviewers have also been engaged in the process to read and comment on the SRs and the updates conducted by the expert groups. All drafts were also subject to an open public consultation.

Via the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Nordic governments fund the extensive scientific effort behind the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations as a means to better guide public decisions and inform the debate on which diet ensures the best possible health for the population at large. This effort forms part of the Nordic action plan "A better life through diet and physical activity".

The Nordic Council of Ministers will formally approve the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations during the fall of 2013 and the new edition will be published in full after that.

The NNR2012 will be available as a pdf free of charge, but the individual chapters can also be bought in a value added version at a very low cost. Finally, the NNR 2012 will be available in its entirety as an e-book. The first three chapters of the new NNR will be on sale from October 3. Subsequent chapters will be published during Autumn 2013.

See www.norden.org/nnr for all information on the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations.