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The role of meat in the diets of Irish adults (18–90 years)

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Meat is a nutrient dense food eaten in a variety of different forms, often being the central food around which meals are based⁽¹⁾. The aim of this analysis was to estimate the intakes of meat and meat products and their contribution to nutrient intakes in Irish adults. Analyses were based on data from the National Adult Nutrition Survey (2008–2010) (www.iuna.net). A 4-day semi-weighed food diary was used to collect dietary intake data from a nationally representative sample of Irish adults aged 18–90 years (n = 1500). Nutrient intake data were analysed using WISP[®] v3.0 based on UK⁽²⁾ and Irish⁽³⁾ food composition tables. For the purpose of these analyses, red meat is defined as unprocessed beef, veal, lamb, pork and venison (including minced or frozen meat). Processed meat is defined as red meat that has been treated with preservatives, excluding salt, but including some cured meat products. Meat intakes from meat products and composite dishes were estimated following disaggregation of the non-meat components (e.g. potatoes, pasta, vegetables, sauces, oils, coatings). Nutrient intakes from meat products and composite dishes (as consumed) were estimated including the non-meat components. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS[®] v24.

	Total		18–35y		36–50y		51–64y		65–90y	
	(n = 1500)		(n = 531)		(n = 437)		(n = 306)		(n = 226)	
	M*	W*	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
Total meat (g)	163	101	175	100	169	98.2	151	108	133	101
Red meat (g)	65.9	38.2	66.0	31.3	69.5	36.5	64.4	46.8	61.0	45.3
Processed meat (g)	42.7	23.9	41.9	23.8	46.3	23.5	41.9	24.9	39.1	23.5
Poultry and game (g)	53.9	39.0	67.5	44.9	53.6	38.2	44.7	36.1	32.5	31.8

Contribution (%) of meat and meat products to total energy and selected nutrient intakes

	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
Energy	19	16	19	16	20	16	18	17	18	16
Protein	43	38	44	39	44	38	42	39	39	38
Total fat	26	21	26	21	27	20	25	22	25	22
Saturated fat	25	20	25	20	25	19	25	22	25	22
MUFA	30	25	30	24	31	24	29	26	30	26
PUFA	23	18	24	18	23	17	20	17	22	20
Thiamin	22	18	21	18	22	18	22	18	24	19
Total Niacin	39	36	39	36	40	36	39	37	38	36
Vitamin B6	25	22	25	22	26	22	23	21	24	21
Vitamin B12	35	28	34	26	39	28	35	29	33	28
Vitamin D	29	22	31	26	32	24	25	19	22	16
Iron	21	16	21	15	22	15	19	17	19	17
Zinc	39	32	39	31	41	31	39	34	35	33
Sodium	29	25	30	26	31	25	28	25	26	25

* M: Men, W: Women

The proportions of adults consuming total meat, red meat, processed meat, and ‘poultry & game’ were 98, 82, 82, and 80%, respectively. Mean intakes of total meat were 163 g/d for men (red meat: 66 g/d, processed meat: 43 g/d, poultry & game: 54 g/d) and 101 g/d for women (red meat: 38 g/d, processed meat: 24 g/d, poultry & game: 39 g/d). Overall, meat and meat products contributed 17% of energy intake. Relative to their contribution to energy intake, meat and meat products contributed greater proportions of protein, mono-unsaturated fat, B vitamins, zinc and vitamin D (most age/sex groups), and similar proportions of iron. However, they also contributed greater proportions of fat (total and saturated) and sodium intakes. These findings show that while meat and meat products are a key contributor to intakes of important macro- and micro-nutrients in Irish adults, they also contribute high proportions of total fat, saturated fat and sodium.

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