**Healthy Food for Life**

It won’t come as a shock to HSE staff to hear that excess consumption of saturated fats, sugars and salt (especially from foods and drinks on the top shelf of the food pyramid) and low consumption of fruit and vegetables are major problems in the Irish diet. Alarmingly, in 2018, the Healthy Ireland Survey found that 42% of the population were eating six or more portions daily of ‘top shelf’ products, including biscuits, cakes, confectionary, crisps and sweetened drinks.

National and International reviews of the current scientific evidence identify that a healthy dietary pattern is high in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, moderate in low fat milk, cheese and yogurt, fish, beans and lentils; lower in processed meats. It should contain very small amounts of unsaturated reduced fat spreads and oils and a low intake of sugar-sweetened and foods with added sugars (not every day).

Consumers are confused about nutrition. This is hardly surprising, given the daily myraid of nutrition messages delivered via traditional marketing media, social media and food packaging. We have thousands of foods to choose from, and hundreds of willing ‘experts’ to tell us what we need to consume.

Our new national nutrition guidelines have three main messages to limit this confusion:
1. Limit high-fat, sugar, salt foods (HFSS) and drinks from the top shelf of the food pyramid.
2. Eat more vegetables, salad and fruit - up to seven servings a day.
3. Size matters – use the food pyramid as a guide for serving sizes.

To help people translate the information on the food pyramid into “real life”, sample daily meal plans for a range of age groups have been prepared.

### What Resources are Available?

- Food pyramid poster for health professionals and educators - these include details of serving sizes.
- Food pyramid for consumers
- Six fact sheets – one for each shelf of the food pyramid
- Seven daily meal plans with examples for different target ages and lifestyles
- Serving sizes, alcohol, and physical activity infographics
- Five infographics on Alcohol, Getting Active, Dairy, Serving Sizes and Wholemeal Cereals and Breads, Potatoes, Pasta and Rice
- Food Pyramid Information leaflet
- Top tips and mythbusters
- Rationale document
- FAO document
- Food pyramid PowerPoint presentation
A Food Guide outlining in detail the Healthy Eating Guidelines will be available for Health Professionals and Catering Services early in 2017. This guide is being developed by the FSAI in conjunction with the Department of Health Technical Nutrition Sub-group. This Food Guide will form the basis of training for health professionals delivered by the HSE and supported by all stakeholders.

The above are available to download from www.hse.ie/healthyeating. Posters and Food Pyramid Information leaflet can be ordered from www.healthpromotion.ie

### STAFF IN GALWAY EAST PRIMARY CARE CENTRE LAUNCH NEW FOOD PYRAMID

To celebrate Ireland’s Nutrition and Hydration Week, Senior HSE Dietitian Valerie O’Connor and her colleagues working in the Galway East Primary Care Centre in Doughiska, Galway, unveiled the new food pyramid model which will be on display in the health centre for viewing by patients, visitors and staff to the health centre.

A new food pyramid display was launched there as part of Ireland’s Nutrition and Hydration week which was running in hospitals and health centres all over Ireland.

This is a global initiative and is run nationally by registered HSE dietitians all around the country to promote healthy nutrition and hydration for all the age groups.

The mission of Nutrition and Hydration Week is to create a global movement that will reinforce and focus, energy, activity and engagement on nutrition and hydration as a fundamental element of maintaining the health and well-being for all. www.nutritionandhydrationweek.co.uk.

In December, the Department of Health launched the updated and revised food pyramid guide for health eating for members of the public.

Staff in Doughiska Primary Care Centre felt that a visual representation of the food pyramid including the various food models would be of interest to the public and would remind people of the food pyramid’s guide to healthy eating and the importance of healthy eating for health and well being at each stage of our life cycle.

The roll out of Nutrition and Hydration Week nationally was seen as an opportune time to launch this initiative.

“I would like to thank all my colleagues for their support and in particular, Maria O’Toole in St Francis Primary Care Centre for her wonderful assistance in making this project happen and also to the talented maintenance staff in Shantalla Health Centre,” she said.