

Healthy eating

A good diet is important for good health.

Eating a variety of foods can improve general wellbeing, reduce the risk of conditions including heart disease, stroke, some cancers, diabetes and osteoporosis (thin bones) and help you manage your weight. You need to eat sensibly, choosing a varied diet from a range of foods, not smoking and keeping active are all great ways to boost your health.

Different types of food

The eatwell plate can help you to understand the different types of food that make up a healthy diet.

It also shows and how much of these foods (as a proportion) you should eat to have a well-balanced and healthy diet. It's a good idea to try to get this balance right throughout the week

The eatwell plate is made up of five food groups – fruit and vegetables; bread, rice, potatoes and other starchy foods; meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein; milk and dairy foods; and foods high in fat and/or sugar. If you choose a variety of foods from the four biggest groups and, if you want to, a small amount from the high fat/sugar group, you can easily achieve this healthy balance.

Read on for some useful tips.

The eatwell plate

Use the eatwell plate to help you get the balance right. It shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group.



1. Five portions – have five portions of fruit and vegetables each day. Remember:

- **fresh**
- **frozen**
- **dried**
- **canned**
- **juices**

all count towards your total 5-a-day. Don't forget to include the vegetables you add to cooked dishes, for example onions in a stew or casserole, tomatoes in a pasta sauce or vegetable soup are included.

2. Plan – your meals/snacks around starchy foods such as bread, chapattis, breakfast cereals, potatoes, rice, noodles, oats and pasta. Aim to include one food from this group at each meal time and eat regularly.

3. Variety – choose a variety of different types and colours of fruit and vegetables. As well as providing vitamins, minerals and fibre the natural colours and flavours of plants add powerful antioxidants to our diet.



4. Meat, fish, eggs and pulses (beans and lentils) –

choose lean meat or remove excess fat and remove the skin from chicken. Avoid frying where possible. Try to include two portions of fish each week, one of which should be an oily fish (darker skinned), for example: mackerel, trout, sardines, kippers or fresh tuna.

5. Dairy – with dairy foods providing the richest and best absorbed source of dietary calcium, try for three portions a day to meet most calcium needs, a portion is:

- a small pot of yoghurt
- 1/3 pint of milk:
- a small matchbox size piece of cheese

Try to choose reduced fat versions where you can – for example semi-skimmed milk, low-fat yoghurt and half-fat Cheddar cheese or Edam.

6. Sugar and fat – are high in calories, so try to cut down on foods and drinks with lots of sugar/fat in such as sweets, cakes, crisps and sugary soft drinks. Choose low fat or reduced sugar foods where possible. When using a fat spread choose a small amount of one that is low in saturated fat made from olive or sunflower oils.

Saturated fat increases the low density lipoproteins (LDL) or 'bad' cholesterol in your blood which can lead to heart disease. Choosing mono-unsaturated spreads (such as those made from olive or rapeseed oils) helps to lower blood levels of harmful LDL cholesterol, and boost levels of 'good' high density lipoproteins (HDL) cholesterol.

Saturated fat (avoid)	Unsaturated fat (alternative)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • butter • ghee • lard • coconut oil • palm oils <p>and foods made from these.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pastries • cakes • biscuits • <p>and other foods made from hydrogenated fats.</p>	<p>Polyunsaturated fat</p> <p><i>oils, soft spreads and margarines including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sunflower • soya • corn • linseed (flaxseed) • safflower <p>and fish oil.</p> <p>Monounsaturated fat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • olive oil • rapeseed oil

Summary

Eat a range of foods from the four main food groups to make sure you have a balanced diet. Eat the right amount of food for how active you are. Most of all – enjoy your food!

Further information:

Food Fact Sheets on other topics including Fruit and Veg – how to get 5-a-day, Cholesterol, Fats and Fluid and Drinks can be downloaded at www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts

