

Healthy Eating Summary

Healthy eating is part of leading a healthy lifestyle. In the long term, eating healthily can reduce our risk of:

- type 2 diabetes,
- high blood pressure,
- high cholesterol,
- cardiovascular disease,
- osteoporosis,
- some cancers,



In the short term we might notice a positive change in our energy levels, mood and cognitive function. The more consistently we eat healthily, the more we will benefit.

If you are thinking about making healthy changes, building healthy habits *gradually* into normal daily life will make it easier to manage and over time it will become second nature.

The Eat Well Guide

A practical tool we can use to help us get a healthy balance of foods.

The size of each group shows how much of those foods our body requires. Try to balance this throughout a day or week.

The carbohydrate and the fruit/veg food groups are the largest, followed by protein and dairy. The tiny purple segment is for unsaturated fat.



CARBOHYDRATES: Potato, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates



This food group provides 'slower release' energy – it takes time to digest so the energy is released throughout the hours after we've eaten.

Wholegrain contains more fibre (beneficial for gut health) and help us feel fuller for longer.

Be mindful of what you might add to them e.g. butter on toast, or ghee in parathas.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES



A rich source of different vitamins and minerals, and another source of fibre.

Aim to have at least 5 portions of different fruit/veg every day - fresh, frozen, dried and tinned all count but look for no added salt or sugar.

Limit fruit juice/smoothies to 150ml per day, because the juice contains more sugar than a portion of whole fruit and contains little fibre.

PROTEIN: Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins:



A rich source of iron and zinc and important for muscle growth and repair.

Try to have 2 portions of fish a week – including 1 oily fish such as salmon, sardines.

If you are vegetarian or vegan it is important to carefully plan your protein intake to ensure you get enough.

Processed food can be high in saturated fat and salt and offers less vitamins and minerals. Be careful of the salt/fat content of plant-based processed foods too and check the ingredients to confirm they do contain a protein source.

DAIRY: Dairy and alternatives



Provide calcium which is important for bone health.

Look for lower fat and no added sugar varieties of yoghurt, cheese, milk and dairy alternatives such as soya or oat milk.

Check that dairy alternatives are fortified with calcium and are unsweetened.

OILS AND SPREADS

As you can see from the EWG there is a place for fats as part of a balanced diet. The key is to use it in small amounts, and opt for *unsaturated* fats.

Cooking oils and oil-based spreads are unsaturated and can be beneficial to health, but they are still very high in calories.

You can tell if something is unsaturated because it's liquid/soft at room temperature.



FOODS HIGH IN FAT/SALT/SUGAR



Foods high in saturated fat, salt and sugar such as pastry, cakes, biscuits, jam, chocolate and some condiments sit on the outside of the food groups. They do not offer the health benefits of the other food groups, such as fibre or rich vitamins and minerals. It is strongly recommended that these foods are eaten in moderation.

All food groups have a place in a healthy diet and they all work together to provide our bodies with important nutrients to keep us healthy.

Hydration



Water, lower fat milk, sugar-free drinks including tea and coffee all count.

Limit fruit juice and/or smoothies to a total of 150ml a day.

Staying hydrated is important for general good health. It can improve brain function and help us to feel well.

If you wait until you feel thirsty to drink, you are already becoming dehydrated. Try to build a healthy habit of drinking regularly throughout the day. Signs of dehydration could be: dry mouth, dizziness, headaches, tiredness, and a lack of concentration.

Summary: Top tips to a healthy a diet:

- Have a wide variety of different foods.

The naturally occurring colours of different foods show they have different nutrients that can work together. Eg: Vitamin C helps the uptake of Iron.



'Eat the rainbow'.

- Balance the food groups across a day/week (refer to Eat Well Guide)

- Limit processed food –

such as food in batter, breadcrumbs, pastry. The more processed a food is the farther it will be from its natural form, meaning it will hold less nutritional benefit.

Practical Tips for Healthy Eating

Food shopping:

- Plan meals and snacks in advance.

It may be helpful to imagine the Eat Well Guide when putting a meal plan together, or even have it printed in front of you. Carbohydrates and fruit/veg are the largest, so we can start by choosing what we'd like from those food groups at each meal and then decide a protein and/or a dairy.

- Take the ingredients list with you to the supermarket.

This helps you stick to your good intentions of buying only what you plan to eat.

- Never go shopping when you're hungry –

You'll be more tempted to buy high fat/sugary food.

- Use the traffic light system on packaging.

If a product shows red it means it is very high in that nutrient. Opt for more greens and ambers and less red foods. You can also compare the fat/salt/sugar values between products using the per 100g information, choosing the product with the lowest number.



Be portion wise:

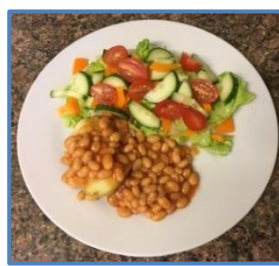
Plates and bowls have gotten bigger over time so are no longer an accurate representation of healthy portion size. Consult the product packet for suggested serving sizes or use your hands.

As a general guide a balanced meal will have:

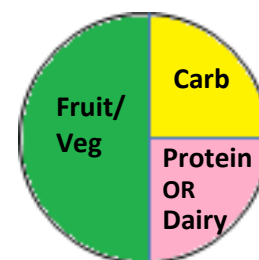
- ✓ half a plate of **salad or vegetables**,
- ✓ some **carbohydrate** and
- ✓ some **protein** and/or **dairy**.

Our own clenched fist is roughly the size of our stomach, which can stretch about 4 times its size. So, about 4 handfuls of food on our plate should fill our stomach and help us get the balance right.

For example: jacket potato, beans, salad:



General plate proportions:



- Vegetable** - Half a plate of salad (2 handfuls of a mixture of different veg)
- Carbohydrate** – potato (size of fist, this may mean cutting a potato in half)
- Protein** - 1/2 tin beans (as suggested portion on the label)

Record keeping can help you know where you are starting from and keep track of progress and motivate you. e.g. noting how many portions of fruit and veg you are having a day.

Eat regularly - 3 meals and up to 2 healthy snacks a day. Fruit and veg make perfect ready to eat snacks. Alternatively, plain popcorn, fruit bread or a portion of nuts can help tide us over to our next meal and give our body a nutrient boost. Remember to start the day with a balanced breakfast.

If you drink alcohol, moderate your intake. Alcohol is high in calories and may dissolve your good intentions. Try to stick below the recommended 14 units a week, spread throughout the week.



Limit sweet, fatty and salty snacks and drinks. It might help to portion yourself something out and leave the rest in the cupboard, rather than leaving an open tin of chocolates, or packet of biscuits in the room you spend most time in.

Emotional eating:

Mindless eating - avoid eating at the same time as doing something else (eg. when working, reading or watching TV) as this can cause you to overeat. Ask yourself - am I eating for hunger, habit or boredom?

Take your time with meals, concentrate on and really taste the food you eat. It takes time for your brain to know your stomach is full so wait twenty minutes before deciding you need more food. Don't forget to have a drink too!



Myths / FAQ:

Do I need an energy drink to help me during my work-out?

Sports drinks can be useful for high-level endurance sports as they are high in calories. Unless you're taking part in endurance sports such as triathlons, water is the healthier choice and the best way to replace fluids lost through exercise.



Should I take protein shakes?

Whether you want to tone, build, or maintain your muscle mass, for the general population eating a balanced diet should give your body enough protein for muscle growth and development.

Will skipping breakfast will help me lose weight?

No. Skipping meals encourages poor food choices later and means you miss opportunities to take in much needed nutrients to keep you functioning throughout the day and maintain health. The key is to have a balanced breakfast in the right portion for you.

A balanced breakfast will include: **carbohydrate**, **fruit or veg** and a **protein** or **dairy**.

Eg: **low sugar cereal** with **banana** and **milk** or **Egg** and **cooked tomatoes** on **toast**.

Limit high fat foods such as croissants or sugary cereal such as granola.



Will an 'anti-inflammatory diet' benefit me?

Maintaining a healthy weight and eating a well-balanced diet can help. Specifically, replacing saturated fat with unsaturated fat in moderation and having 1 or 2 portions of oily fish (salmon, pilchards, sardines and mackerel) a week may give some benefit to inflammatory conditions. If you have a medical condition you think might be improved with diet, speak to a GP or a registered dietitian.

Should I be taking supplements?

It is likely that you will get all the nutrients you need from eating a variety of different foods from within the Eat Well Guide. It is important that supplements are not taken as a substitute for a poor diet – they are intended to supplement a balanced diet where appropriate. There are some instances where a supplement may be recommended for people diagnosed with specific health conditions. If you're unsure whether you could benefit from taking a supplement, please speak with your GP or registered dietician.

Summary:

There is a lot of misinformation about diet. **The only thing for sure is that eating a variety of different foods from each of the food groups is beneficial to health.** Be careful where you go to find information and keep away from online forums or chat rooms. Unfortunately there is no 'quick fix' when it comes to making meaningful lifestyle changes. The more consistently you make small changes over time, the more you will benefit and it will get easier as you settle into a 'new normal'.