HSC Health and Social Care

Enjoy food ...and be fit for life

Healthy eating is important for people of all ages to maintain good health. This booklet explains how you can have a healthy diet as you grow older

Are you choosing a healthy diet?

Tick the box if you:

- ☐ Have breakfast every day
- ☐ Eat three meals every day
- ☐ Choose at least one of the following starchy foods at every meal: bread, rice, potatoes, pasta, cereals, oats or other starchy foods
- ☐ Choose wholemeal and wholegrain varieties rather than white when having starchy foods
- ☐ Try to eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables each day (fresh, frozen, canned in natural juice or dried)
- ☐ Have two servings of poultry, beans, pulses, fish, eggs or lean meat each day
- ☐ Have three portions of dairy foods each day eg. milk, yoghurt or cheese
- ☐ Drink at least 6-8 glasses of fluid per day (water, lower fat milk and sugar free drinks including tea and coffee all count. Limit fruit juice and/or smoothies to a total of 150ml daily)
- ☐ Eat fish at least twice a week which includes one portion of oily fish eg. sardines, mackerel, pilchards and salmon.

The more boxes you ticked the heathier your diet is! Are there any boxes you didn't tick? Read on to find out how you can make sure what you are eating will help you to be healthy.

Eatwell Guide

Use the Eatwell Guide to help you get a balance of healthier and more sustainable food. It shows how much of what you eat overall should come from each food group.

Check the label on packaged foods

Each serving contains

Energy	Fat	Saturates	Sugars	Salt
1046kJ 250kcal	5g	1.3g	34g	0.9g
	LOW	LOW	HIGH	MED
12.5%	7%	6.5%	38%	15%

of an adult's reference intake

Typical values (as sold) per 100g: 697kJ/ 167kcal

Choose foods lower in fat, salt and sugars

Eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day

Fruit and vegetables

Raisins

Chopped tomatoes

Frozen peas

Choose wholegrain or higher fibre versions with less added fat, salt and sugar

Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates

Potatoes

Whole grain cereal

Cous Cous

Bagels

Whole wheat pasta

Porridge

Rice

Spaghetti

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

Lentils

Beans lower salt and sugar

Tuna

Lean mince

Plain nuts

Chick peas

Eat more beans and pulses, 2 portions of sustainably sourced fish per week, one of which is oily. Eat less red and processed meat

Dairy and alternatives

Low fat soft cheese

Semi skimmed milk

Soya drink

Plain low fat yoghurt

Choose lower fat and lower sugar options

Oil & spreads

Choose unsaturated oils and use in small amounts

Sauce

Crisps

Eat less often and in small amounts

6-8 a day

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.

Per day 2000kcal 2500kcal = ALL FOOD + ALL DRINKS

Source: Public Health England in association with the Welsh government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

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Eat regular meals

Try to eat three meals a day to ensure your body gets a constant supply of energy and nutrients. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are all important.

Include starchy foods at every meal

Try to base your meals on these foods and include at least one serving at each meal.

As a guide aim to include 6 servings daily.

For example one serving is approximately:

- 1 slice of bread, 1 crumpet or ¼ soda farl
- 60g (3 tablespoons) cooked rice
- 60g (3 tablespoons) cooked pasta or couscous
- 1 medium sized potato

- 30g (3 tablespoons) cereal
- Other starchy foods eg. 2 oatcakes, 2 crackers or 2 crispbreads.

These foods are excellent for energy and contain some vitamins and minerals. Choose wholemeal/wholegrain varieties as much as possible as these contain more fibre which helps prevent constipation. Remember to

drink enough fluid with fibre rich foods (see page 11 for more information on fluid). Don't add raw bran to your food as it can reduce absorption of other important nutrients into your body during digestion.

Eat your five a day!

Fruit and vegetables are rich in vitamins and minerals as well as fibre. Eating plenty of these foods will help keep your bowels healthy and may help to prevent obesity, heart disease and some cancers… to name just a few of their health benefits!

Aim to eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables per day. This includes fresh, frozen, dried and tinned fruit and vegetables as well as pure fruit juice.

As a guide, one portion is:

- 1 medium sized fruit eg. pear or banana
- 2 small pieces of fruit eg. kiwis or plums
- 1 slice of large fruit eg. melon or pineapple

- 1 cup of very small fruits eg. grapes or berries
- 3 heaped tablespoons of fruit salad/tinned fruit
- 1 tablespoon of dried fruit
- 1 glass (150ml) of pure fruit juice (fresh or from concentrate) or smoothie. Note: fruit juice and/or smoothie should be limited to no more than a combined total of 150ml a day
- 3 heaped tablespoons of vegetables
- 1 dessert bowl of salad.

Try to eat a wide variety of fruit and vegetables and don't overcook them as they will lose some nutrients if you do. When buying tinned fruit, go for those tinned in natural juice or water rather than syrup and when buying tinned vegetables, buy those in water rather than brine.

Include milk and dairy foods

These foods are rich in calcium which is needed for healthy bones and are also a source of protein.

These foods include:

- Milk
- Cheese
- Yoghurt
- Fromage frais

- Buttermilk
- Milk pudding eg. custard, rice pudding, semolina etc.

(Butter, eggs and cream are not included as they are not rich in calcium).

Choose lower fat and lower sugar options eg. semi skimmed milk, light or diet yoghurt and low fat cheese.

As a guide aim to have three portions of these foods per day where one portion is:

- 200ml (1/3 pint) of milk
- 30g (1oz) cheese eg. the size of a small match box
- 1 standard carton of yoghurt (125g)
- 1 dessert bowl of milky pudding eg. custard
- 1 mug of milky drink.

Make sure you are getting enough protein and iron

Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, poultry and meat are rich in protein and many are rich in iron. These foods are important to stay healthy and help your body repair itself. Iron rich foods help keep the blood healthy too.

As a guide aim to have two portions of these foods daily.

An example of one portion:

- Raw meat or poultry: 100-150g (4-5oz)
- Raw fish: 150–175g (5-6oz)
- 2 eggs
- Baked beans: 100-150g (4-5oz)
- Dried beans: 50g (2oz).

Nuts are another source of protein but can be high in calories so be careful of your portion size.

Red meat, beans/lentils, nuts and sesame seeds are good sources of iron. If you eat more than 90g of red or processed meat per day, try to cut down to no more than 70g per day. Processed meat refers to meat that has been preserved by smoking, curing or adding preservatives. This includes processed chicken products, sausages, burgers, bacon, ham and salami.

Choose lean meats and cut off any visible fat when you are

preparing your food. Avoid eating the skin on poultry as this is high in fat.

Try to eat fish twice a week, one of which should be oily. Oily fish contain omega 3 fatty acids which can help to keep your heart healthy eg. mackerel, herring, trout, pilchards, salmon, sardines and fresh tuna.

Choose unsaturated oils and spreads

A small amount of fat is an essential part of a balanced diet but eating too much saturated fat can raise your cholesterol and increase your risk of heart disease.

Unsaturated fats are healthier fats and can help to reduce cholesterol in the blood, so it is important to get most of our fat from unsaturated oils eg. rapeseed, vegetable and olive oil. Using lower fat spreads instead of butter can also help reduce your intake of saturated fat.

All types of fat are high in energy so try to limit the amount in your diet. Use cooking methods such as grilling, steaming, stewing and microwaving instead of frying, to avoid adding extra fat to food.

Limit foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar

These foods are high in calories and not essential in the diet. Eating sugary foods frequently can also cause tooth decay. If they are included in your diet, try to eat them less often and in small amounts. Choose lower fat or reduced sugar options where possible. This includes products such as sugary drinks, chocolate, cakes, crisps, butter, cream, ice cream and sauces.

Cut down on salt

Too much salt can increase your risk of high blood pressure. We should have no more than 6g of salt per day but did you know that most of us get around ¾ of this amount from the food we eat even before any salt is added?

Try not to add salt to food during cooking or once served. This includes all salts eg. table, rock, sea and garlic salt and low sodium alternatives. Try to buy lower salt varieties of foods. Avoid eating too many salty snacks like crisps or salted peanuts and avoid too many highly salted foods such as bacon, cheese, smoked fish/meats and gravy.

Taste perception can change as we get older, that's partly why food may seem less tasty. Try using pepper, herbs, spices, garlic or lemon to flavour foods instead of salt.

Drink plenty of fluids

Many of us don't take enough fluid and this can result in headaches, poor concentration, dry skin and feeling unwell. Being dehydrated also increases your risk of constipation, kidney stones and other illnesses.

So how much should you have? The amount of fluid required varies from person to person but most of us should aim to have 6-8 glasses per day (1 glass equals 200ml). This can include water, lower fat milk and sugar free drinks including tea and coffee. Limit fruit juice and/or smoothies to a total of 150ml a day. You should drink extra fluid to avoid dehydration during very warm weather or if you are very active, unwell, have a raised temperature or have vomiting or diarrhoea.

Be sensible with alcohol

Drinking too much alcohol puts your health at risk. As we get older, our bodies break down alcohol more slowly, and we become more sensitive to the effects of alcohol. It is important to be aware of how much we are drinking and perhaps drink less.

If you drink alcohol most weeks, to reduce the risk of harming your health:

- Men and women are advised not to drink more than 14 units a week
- If you drink as much as 14 units a week, spread your drinking over three days or more.

How many units are there in your drink?

Type of alcoholic drink	Amount	Number of units
Lager/beer	Pint	2.3
Premium lager/beer	Pint	2.8
Extra strong lager	1 can	4.5
Cider	Pint	2.8
Spirits	NI 35ml pub measure	1.3
Wine (12% alcohol)	750ml bottle	9

If you wish to cut down the amount of alcohol you are drinking, a good way to help achieve this is to have several alcohol-free days each week. To reduce your health risks during a single drinking session try to drink slowly, drink with food and alternate with water or non-alcoholic drinks.

Alcohol is high in calories so if you are overweight it may be a good idea to cut down. If you have a poor appetite, a small alcoholic drink can help to stimulate your appetite.

Keep active

Regular physical activity is important for good health. We should aim to do at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week in bouts of 10 minutes or more. A little activity every day can make a big difference.

Walking, swimming, dancing, cycling, aerobics, yoga, gardening and even vigorous housework can count!

Exercise at a level that is comfortable for you, you should feel warmer, be able to feel your heart rate increasing but still be able to hold a conversation.

Avoid sitting down for long periods of time during the day and try to include activities that will improve muscle strength, balance and co-ordination, such as lifting weights, climbing stairs or yoga.

If your activity is limited you should be as physically active as your ability allows.

Vitamin D advice

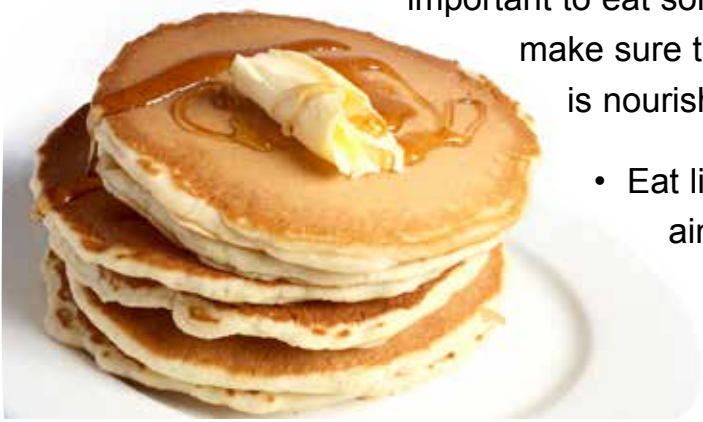
People aged 65 years and over and people who are not exposed to much sun, for example those who are house bound or confined indoors for long periods, are at risk of vitamin D deficiency. This can cause bone pain and tenderness. To prevent vitamin D deficiency and for bone health these groups of people should take a daily supplement of 10 micrograms of vitamin D.

Stop smoking

Smoking is bad for your health and if you smoke you should try to stop. Even if it has been a habit of a lifetime, quitting smoking will greatly benefit your health.

Look after yourself if you are unwell

If you become unwell and your appetite is poor it is still important to eat something and make sure that what you eat is nourishing.



- Eat little and often, aiming for three small meals and snacks in between meals

such as a scone, pancakes, wheaten bread, crackers and cheese, some biscuits, a yoghurt, rice pudding or custard

- Try to take some milky drinks which will give you energy and help keep you hydrated eg. milk, hot chocolate, malt drink, milkshake etc.
- Have some bread, potatoes, pasta, cereals, rice or oats at each meal. As a guide have meat, chicken, fish, beans, lentils or well cooked eggs twice a day and include small portions of fruit and vegetables
- Choose easy to prepare meals such as cheese on toast, boiled eggs on toast, pasta with tuna and a cheesy sauce and handy snacks such as a scone, pancakes, a yoghurt or some unsalted nuts. Ready meals can be kept in the freezer and heated in the microwave or oven
- If you have family, friends or a neighbour who could help you prepare meals, let them know that you are unwell
- Enquire about local restaurants and businesses who deliver chilled meals to your door
- If you are unwell for more than a short period of time and you feel you may be losing weight, you should see your doctor who may refer you to a registered dietitian.

Save time, energy and money

If you are on a tight budget, it's important to make sure you are still eating a balanced diet. There are ways to make shopping and preparing meals easier too.

- Plan meals in advance, make a shopping list of what you need and stick to it
- Choose fruits and vegetables that are in season as these can often be cheaper
- Look out for special offers on items that are on your list. Sometimes these can save money, although just be sure to check that the offer really is a good deal!

- Frozen and tinned vegetables (without added salt or sugar) are as healthy as fresh and can be cheaper. They are also very handy as they keep longer and can be heated in the microwave
- Look out for money off coupons

- You can save money by buying larger sized packets of various food items. Foods like meat, fish, many fresh foods and dairy can be frozen in individual portions and used later. If you have storage space, you can buy large quantities of dried foods such as pasta and rice and keep them in the cupboard
- Local shops may be able to deliver to your door if you are unable to get out to the shops or consider using the internet to shop online for your groceries
- Try cooking an extra few helpings of dinner and freezing them in portions. This is a great way to save energy and time. Food can be reheated thoroughly in the microwave/ oven or soups and sauces on the hob
- Your body keeps warm by burning the food you've eaten, so make sure to have regular hot meals and drinks throughout the day and keep active in the home if you can.

Keep an emergency store cupboard

It is always a good idea to have some emergency items in your cupboard. These can come in handy during severe weather or if you are unwell and unable to get out to the shops. Keep an eye on the best before dates and replace any items that you use.

Here are some ideas of what to keep:

- Tinned meat/fish eg. ham, corned beef, tuna, sardines or salmon
- Tinned or packet soups and sauces
- Instant potato or tinned potatoes
- Pulses eg. baked beans, tinned or dried peas and lentils
- Breakfast cereals, porridge oats, pasta and rice
- Biscuits and crackers
- Dried milk powder or UHT long life milk
- Tinned milk puddings eg. custard, rice pudding
- Dried or tinned fruits and vegetables
- Drinking chocolate or malt drinks.

Using your freezer

- Frozen mince, chicken and fish, and products made from them
- Frozen fruit eg. summer fruits or fruit salad mix
- Frozen vegetables eg. stir-fry mix or mixed vegetables
- Frozen mashed potatoes, baked potatoes and chips
- Ready meals
- Bread
- Milk, yoghurts, cheese and ice cream.

Some meal and snack ideas

Main Courses	Light Snacks
• Chicken casserole made with vegetables/lentils/ beans and served with rice • Cauliflower cheese with grilled tomato and baked potato • Shepherd's pie with vegetables • Fish and potato pie with vegetables • Irish stew • Jacket potato with grated cheese and baked beans	• Omelette made with cheese, vegetables and ham, chicken or bacon, served with bread and salad • Sandwiches eg. ham salad, chicken and peppers or tuna and sweetcorn • Baked beans on toast • Soup eg. leek and potato, lentil or vegetable broth with bread or a roll • Ham/bacon/chicken with tomato and bread/roll • Sardines on toast with salad

If you'd like to improve your cooking skills and learn more about eating well on a budget look out for practical cooking programmes in your area like 'Cook it!'. For more information contact the Community Nutrition and Dietetic Service in your local Health Trust.

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