



# GUIDE TO HEALTHY EATING



### Eat healthy, live healthy

A good diet is essential for good health. A balanced and varied diet can help to maintain a healthy body weight, enhance general wellbeing and reduce the risk of a number of diseases including heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and osteoporosis.

Starting and maintaining a healthy diet can be challenging but making some simple changes can make a huge difference to your health.



### Quick fact

**Around a quarter of all cancer deaths are caused by unhealthy diets and obesity.<sup>2</sup>**

### The facts

Obesity is one of the most serious public health problems in the UK today. An obese man is:

- five times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes
- three times more likely to develop cancer of the colon
- more than two and a half times more likely to develop high blood pressure – a major risk factor for stroke and heart disease

An obese woman, compared with a healthy weight woman, is:

- almost 13 times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes
- more than four times more likely to develop high blood pressure
- more than three times more likely to have a heart attack<sup>1</sup>

### What is a healthy diet?

A healthy diet is a diet based on breads, potatoes and other cereals and that is rich in fruits and vegetables. A healthy diet will include moderate amounts of milk and dairy products, meat, fish and alternatives and limited amounts of foods containing fat or sugar.

No single food can provide all the essential nutrients that the body needs. So, the key to healthy eating is to eat a wide variety of nutritious foods. This way the body receives the intake of vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre it needs to remain healthy.

### 'The Balance of Good Health'

The Government's Balance of Good Health is a pictorial food guide showing the proportions and types of food that are needed to make up a healthy balanced diet. It is based on 8 guidelines:

- enjoy your food
- eat a variety of different foods
- eat the right amount to be a healthy weight
- eat plenty of foods rich in starch and fibre
- eat plenty of fruit and vegetables
- don't eat too many foods that contain a lot of fat
- don't have sugary foods and drinks too often
- if you drink alcohol, drink sensibly.

The model shows how to eat healthily and outlines the types and proportions of different foods that you should eat over a period of time. Please note, the model does not apply to individuals with special dietary requirements.

Including a variety of foods in the diet is important for health. Of course, there is no need to follow the model at every meal, but rather over a day or two.

Based on the model you should choose a variety of foods from the following four food groups every day:

- bread, other cereals and potatoes
- fruit and vegetables
  - milk and dairy foods
  - meat, fish and alternatives.

Foods in a fifth group, those containing fat and sugar, can be eaten in small quantities as part of a healthy balanced diet. But these should not be eaten often or in large amounts, or instead of foods from the other food groups.



### How much should I eat?

In general, you should eat more from the bigger sections than from the smaller. Most of us should eat more bread, cereals and potatoes and more fruit and vegetables but less food containing sugar and fat. Moderate amounts of milk and dairy foods and meat, fish and alternatives should be consumed. The following can be used as a guide:

#### **Bread, other cereals and potatoes**

This should account for roughly a third of your total food intake and you should aim to include one food from this group at each meal. These foods are high in carbohydrates which are a great source of energy. They are also high in fibre which helps the digestive system to work well, keeping the gut healthy.

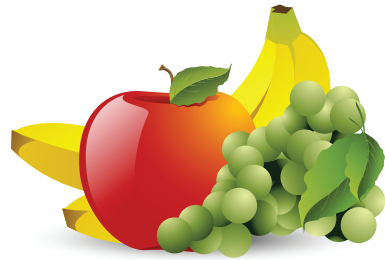


Eating more foods from this food group will help to reduce the proportion of fat and increase the amount of fibre in the diet. Try to choose high fibre versions of this food group such as wholegrain or wholemeal breads and pastas.

#### **Fruit and vegetables**

Aim to have a portion of fruit or vegetables 5 times a day. To help with this look out for the Government's '5 A Day' logo on pre-packed fruit and vegetables (some food manufacturers have their own logos).

Fruit and vegetables are high in antioxidant vitamins which help maintain the immune system. Carotenes, also found in fruit and vegetables, are required for growth and development. These foods are low in calories so you can eat as much as you like! Here are some hints to help you reach the 5 a day total:



- have a salad with your meal
- have plenty of vegetables with your meals
- chop fruit into your breakfast cereal
- have a fruit or vegetable smoothie every day
- choose fruit or chopped vegetables as a snack
- add vegetables to casseroles and stews and fruit to desserts.

### Milk and dairy foods

This food group includes milk, cheese and yogurt. It does not, however, include butter, eggs and cream as these fall into other food groups. You should try to eat 2-3 servings of foods within this group per day.

Ideally you should choose low fat versions like semi-skimmed or skimmed milk and reduced fat yogurts and cheeses. Amongst other things, these foods provide the body with calcium which is needed for the development and maintenance of healthy bones.



They also provide zinc and protein which are needed for growth and tissue repair.

### Meat, fish and alternatives

Aim to include moderate amounts of meat, fish and alternatives in your diet. The Government recommends that we should eat two portions of fish per week, one of which should be oily fish like salmon or trout. Some meat products can be very high in fat so try to choose low fat versions. Alternatives include nuts, tofu and beans.

Foods within this group are high in protein which is a source of energy and needed for growth and repair. Iron, which is needed for healthy red blood cells, is also provided through these foods.

### Foods containing fat and foods containing sugar

As mentioned earlier, most people need to eat less food from this group. It's essential to have a small amount of fat and sugar in your diet however, consuming too much increases your risk of high blood pressure, coronary heart disease and stroke.



Fats can be divided into saturates, monounsaturates and polyunsaturates. Try to steer clear of foods containing saturated fat such as cakes and chocolate and instead opt for monounsaturated and polyunsaturated foods. Nutritional labels on products will help you achieve this.

### What about salt?

Salt is needed for the body to function properly. However, many of us consume much more than is needed, leading to high blood pressure. This in turn can increase the risk of heart disease and stroke. As such, you should try to choose foods that are low in salt and avoid adding salt to foods during cooking and then again at the table.

Bear in mind that salt is often labelled as sodium - to roughly convert sodium to salt simply multiply the sodium figure by 2.5.

The recommended daily intake of salt is no more than 6g (2.5g of sodium).



### Fluids

Besides eating healthily, it's important to drink plenty of fluid throughout the day. You should aim to drink around 1.5 to 2 litres of fluids per day. Try to drink water, sugar-free diluting juice, natural fruit juice, low fat milk or weak tea instead of sugar filled drinks.

#### Did you know?

- Most hunger pangs are signals of thirst.
- Dehydration can cause headaches, dizziness, lethargy, reduced concentration and impaired coordination.

Perhaps not surprising when you consider that more than 60% of our body weight is water and water is essential to the functioning of all body cells.



### Quick fact

**75% of the salt we eat is already in the food we buy.<sup>3</sup>**

### What about alcohol

Drink related problems cost the UK economy £20 billion per year in terms of the NHS, social work, police, emergency services and the wider economic and human costs. Alcohol misuse not only affects the health and welfare of individuals themselves but also has a major impact on family relationships, communities and society as a whole. <sup>4</sup>

Sensible drinking is vital if you're to stay healthy. Small amounts of alcohol may provide some protection against heart disease, but drinking large amounts of alcohol can increase blood pressure and cause damage to the liver and heart.

If you do drink, don't binge drink. Instead spread your drinking over the week. This means a maximum of 3-4 units per day for men and 2-3 units per day for women.

Men should drink no more than 21 units per week (and no more than 4 units in any one day).

Women should drink no more than 14 units per week (and no more than 3 units in any one day). Both men and women should have at least 2 alcohol free days a week. Drinking more than the recommended limits can seriously damage your health. <sup>5</sup>



### Quick fact

Being high in sugar means alcohol contains lots of calories – seven calories a gram in fact, almost as many as pure fat! <sup>6</sup>

**If you manage all this you'll be well on the way to a healthy new you! Just remember to add some physical activity into your daily routine to fully feel the health benefits.**

## Further help and advice

You can also obtain more information from the following websites:

[www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)

[www.nutrition.org.uk](http://www.nutrition.org.uk)

[www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)

[www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/Pages/Livewellhub.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/Pages/Livewellhub.aspx)

[www.drinkaware.co.uk](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk)

### References

- 1 <http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/2012/04/obesityfacts>
- 2 <http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/healthyliving/dietandhealthyeating/?a=5441>
- 3 <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/salt.aspx>
- 4 <http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk/servlets/home>
- 5 <http://www.patient.co.uk/showdoc/23068675/>
- 6 <http://www.drinkaware.co.uk/check-the-facts/health-effects-of-alcohol/appearance/calories-in-alcohol>

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