

8 TIPS FOR EATING WELL

These practical tips can help you make healthier choices. The two keys to a healthy diet are eating the right amount of food for how active you are and eating a range of foods to make sure you're getting a balanced diet.

A healthy balanced diet contains a variety of types of food, including lots of fruit, vegetables and starchy foods such as whole meal bread and wholegrain cereals; some protein-rich foods such as meat, fish, eggs and lentils; and some dairy foods.

1. Base your meals on starchy foods

Starchy foods such as bread, cereals, rice, pasta and potatoes are a really important part of a healthy diet. Try to choose wholegrain varieties of starchy foods whenever you can.

Starchy foods should make up about a third of the food we eat. They are a good source of energy and the main source of a range of nutrients in our diet. As well as starch, these foods contain fibre, calcium, iron and B vitamins.

Most of us should eat more starchy foods - try to include at least one starchy food with each of your main meals. So you could start the day with a wholegrain breakfast cereal, have a sandwich for lunch, and potatoes, pasta or rice with your evening meal.

Some people think starchy foods are fattening, but gram for gram they contain less than half the calories of fat. You just need to watch the fats you add when cooking and serving these foods, because this is what increases the calorie content.

Why choose wholegrain foods?

Wholegrain foods contain more fibre and other nutrients than white or refined starchy foods.

We also digest wholegrain foods more slowly so they can help make us feel full for longer.

Wholegrain foods include:

- Whole meal and wholegrain bread, pitta and chapatti
- Whole wheat pasta and brown rice
- Wholegrain breakfast cereals

2. Eat lots of fruit and vegetables

Most people know we should be eating more fruit and veg. But most of us still aren't eating enough.

Try to eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day. It might be easier than you think.

You could try adding up your portions during the day.

For example, you could have:

- a glass of juice and a sliced banana with your cereal at breakfast
- a side salad at lunch
- a pear as an afternoon snack
- a portion of peas or other vegetables with your evening meal

You can choose from fresh, frozen, tinned, dried or juiced, but remember potatoes count as a starchy food, not as portions of fruit and veg.

3. Eat more fish

Most of us should be eating more fish - including a portion of oily fish each week. It's an excellent source of protein and contains many vitamins and minerals.

Aim for at least two portions of fish a week, including a portion of oily fish. You can choose from fresh, frozen or canned - but remember that canned and smoked fish can be high in salt.

What are oily fish?

Some fish are called oily fish because they are rich in certain types of fats, called omega 3 fatty acids, which can help keep our hearts healthy.

How much oily fish?

Although most of us should be eating more oily fish, women who might have a baby one day should have a maximum of 2 portions of oily fish a week (a portion is about 140g). And 4 is the recommended maximum number of portions for other adults.

Examples of oily fish

Salmon, mackerel, trout, herring, fresh tuna, sardines, pilchards, eel

Examples of white or non-oily fish

Cod, haddock, plaice, coley, tinned tuna, skate, hake

Shark, swordfish and marlin

Don't have more than one portion a week of these types of fish. This is because of the high levels of mercury in these fish.

Anyone who regularly eats a lot of fish should try and choose as wide a variety as possible.

4. Cut down on saturated fat and sugar

Fats

To stay healthy we need some fat in our diets. What is important is the kind of fat we are eating. There are two main types of fat:

- saturated fat - having too much can increase the amount of cholesterol in the blood, which increases the chance of developing heart disease
- unsaturated fat - having unsaturated fat instead of saturated fat lowers blood cholesterol

Try to cut down on food that is high in saturated fat and have foods that are rich in unsaturated fat instead, such as vegetable oils (including sunflower, rapeseed and olive oil), oily fish, avocados, nuts and seeds.

Foods high in saturated fat

Try to eat these sorts of foods less often or in small amounts:

- meat pies, sausages, meat with visible white fat
- hard cheese
- butter and lard
- pastry
- cakes and biscuits
- cream, soured cream and crème fra che
- coconut oil, coconut cream or palm oil

For a healthy choice, use just a small amount of vegetable oil or a reduced-fat spread instead of butter, lard or ghee. And when you are having meat, try to choose lean cuts and cut off any visible fat.

How do I know if a food is high in fat?

Look at the label to see how much fat a food contains. Generally the label will say how many grams (g) of fat there are in 100g of the food.

Some foods also give a figure for saturated fat, or 'saturates'.

Use the following as a guide to work out if a food is high or low in fat.

Total fat - what's high and what's low?

High is more than 20g fat per 100g

Low is 3g fat or less per 100g

If the amount of fat per 100g is in between these figures, then that is a medium level of fat.

Saturated fat - what's high and what's low?

High is more than 5g saturates per 100g

Low is 1.5g saturates or less per 100g

If the amount of saturates per 100g is in between these figures, then that is a medium level of saturated fat.

Remember that the amount you eat of a particular food affects how much fat you will get from it.

Try to choose more foods that are low in fat and cut down on foods that are high in fat.

Sugar

Most people in the UK are eating too much sugar. We should all be trying to eat fewer foods containing added sugar, such as sweets, cakes and biscuits, and drinking fewer sugary soft and fizzy drinks.

Having sugary foods and drinks too often can cause tooth decay, especially if you have them between meals. Many foods that contain added sugar can also be high in calories so cutting down could help you control your weight.

How do I know if a food is high in added sugar?

Take a look at the label. The ingredients list always starts with the biggest ingredient first.

But watch out for other words used to describe added sugars, such as sucrose, glucose, fructose, maltose, hydrolysed starch and invert sugar, corn syrup and honey. If you see one of these near the top of the list, you know the food is likely to be high in added sugars.

Another way to get an idea of how much sugar is in a food is to have a look for the 'Carbohydrates (of which sugars)' figure on the label. But this figure can't tell you how much is from added sugars, which is the type we should try to cut down on.

High is more than 15g sugars per 100g

Low is 5g sugars or less per 100g

If the amount of sugars per 100g is in between these figures, then that is a medium level of sugars.

Remember that the amount you eat of a particular food affects how much sugars you will get from it.

Sometimes you will only see a figure for total 'Carbohydrates', not for 'Carbohydrates (of which sugars)', which means the figure also includes the carbohydrate from starchy foods.

5. Try to eat less salt- no more than 6g a day

Lots of people think they don't eat much salt, especially if they don't add it to their food. But don't be so sure!

Every day in the UK, 85% men and 69% women eat too much salt. Adults - and children over 11 - should have no more than 6g salt a day. Younger children should have even less.

Three-quarters (75%) of the salt we eat is already in the food we buy, such as breakfast cereals, soups, sauces and ready meals. So you could easily be eating too much salt without realising it.

Eating too much salt can raise your blood pressure. And people with high blood pressure are three times more likely to develop heart disease or have a stroke than people with normal blood pressure.

How do I know if a food is high in salt?

Check the label to find out the figure for salt per 100g.

High is more than 1.5g salt per 100g (or 0.6g sodium)

Low is 0.3g salt or less per 100g (or 0.1g sodium)

If the amount of salt per 100g is in between these figures, then that is a medium level of salt.

Remember that the amount you eat of a particular food affects how much salt you will get from it.

6. Get active and try to be a healthy weight

It's not a good idea to be either underweight or overweight. Being overweight can lead to health conditions such as heart disease, high blood pressure or diabetes. Being underweight could also affect your health.

Check if you are the right weight for your height using the link below.

If you're worried about your weight, ask your GP or a dietitian for advice. But if you think you just need to lose a little weight, the main things to remember are:

- only eat as much food as you need
- make healthy choices - it's a good idea to choose low-fat and low-sugar varieties, eat plenty of fruit and vegetables and wholegrain
- get more active

It's also important to eat a variety of types of food so you get all the nutrients your body needs.

Physical activity is a good way of using up extra calories, and helps control our weight. But this doesn't mean you need to join a gym.

Just try to get active every day and build up the amount you do. For example, you could try to fit in as much walking as you can into your daily routine. Try to walk at a good pace.

Whenever we eat more than our body needs, we put on weight. This is because we store any energy we don't use up - usually as fat. Even small amounts of extra energy each day can lead to weight gain.

But crash diets aren't good for your health and they don't work in the longer term. The way to reach a healthy weight - and stay there - is to change your lifestyle gradually. Aim to lose about 0.5 to 1kg (about 1 to 2lbs) a week, until you reach a healthy weight for your height.

7. Drink plenty of water

We should be drinking about 6 to 8 glasses (1.2 litres) of water, or other fluids, every day to stop us getting dehydrated.

When the weather is warm or when we get active, our bodies need more than this. But avoid drinking soft and fizzy drinks that are high in added sugar.

Alcohol

There is nothing wrong with the occasional drink. But drinking too much can cause problems. Alcohol is also high in calories, so cutting down could help you control your weight.

Women can drink up to 2 to 3 units of alcohol a day and men up to 3 to 4 units a day, without significant risk to their health.

A unit is half a pint of standard strength (3 to 5% ABV) beer, lager or cider, or a pub measure of spirit. A glass of wine is about 2 units and alcopops are about 1.5 units.

For good health, it's a good idea to spread your drinking throughout the week and avoid binge drinking. Drinking heavily over a long period of time can damage the liver.

8. Don't skip breakfast

Breakfast can help give us the energy we need to face the day, as well as some of the vitamins and minerals we need for good health.

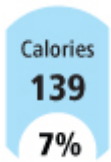
Some people skip breakfast because they think it will help them lose weight. But missing meals doesn't help us lose weight and it isn't good for us, because we can miss out on essential nutrients.

Research shows that eating breakfast can actually help people control their weight. This is probably because when we don't have breakfast we're more likely to get hungry before lunch and snack on foods that are high in fat and sugar, such as biscuits, doughnuts or pastries.

So why not go for a bowl of wholegrain cereal with some sliced banana and a glass of fruit juice for a healthy start to the day?

Guided daily allowance

The What's Inside Guide GDA label features five key nutrients. You'll be familiar with them all. But do you know why it's good to keep below the GDA for salt? Why fat is needed at all? Here are the facts behind the figures...



Calories

There's so much more to calories than something that if eaten in excess can make you put on weight. Calories are important because they help you to replace the energy you use up during the day - energy needed not just for exercise but for everything you do (even breathing and sleeping). So you need to be sure that the energy you use is balanced out by the energy you take in. Obviously then, the more active you are, the more calories you need – and vice versa!

The GDA for calories for an average adult is 2000.



Sugars

Sugar gives the body energy and tastes, well, sweet. The sugars in your diet can come from lots of places: some of them obvious, like sprinkled on corn flakes or stirred into a cup of tea – others where you may not expect them to be, like the naturally occurring sugars found in things like fruit, fruit juice and milk. And while most of us like to have some sugar in our diet to help food taste nice, you should certainly aim to stay within your Guideline Daily Amount.

The GDA for sugars for an average adult is 90g.



Fat

Animal? Vegetable? Saturated? Unsaturated? Time for some facts about fats. You often see two different types of fats on food labels: saturated fats which mainly come from animal sources, and unsaturated fats which usually come from fish or vegetable sources.

A healthy diet should always include a certain amount of fat because, among other things, it provides energy and helps you absorb vital vitamins. Try to eat no more than your Guideline Daily Amount though, and go for unsaturated fats as much as possible – like the ones you find in oily

fish, nuts and seeds, avocado and sunflower, rapeseed or olive oil and spreads made from these.

The GDA for fat for an average adult is 70g.



Saturates

Food that contains lots of saturates like pastries, butter and cream may taste fab but saturated fat, when eaten in excess, can raise blood cholesterol, which can increase the risk of heart disease. So you really should have no more than your Guideline Daily Amount.

The GDA for saturates for an average adult is 20g.



Salt

It's not just slugs who need to be wary of salt! Many of us are regularly eating around 9g of salt a day – which is 50% more than our GDA. Too much salt in our diet has been linked to problems like high blood pressure and heart disease, so a diet that stays under our Guideline Daily Amount is something we should all be aiming for.

The GDA for salt for an average adult is 6g.