

Healthy Eating

A good diet is important for good health. Eating a variety of foods can help you manage your weight, improve general wellbeing and reduce the risk of conditions including heart disease, stroke, some cancers, diabetes and osteoporosis (thin bones). All you need to do is eat sensibly, choosing a range of foods in the correct proportions.

Food groups

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) Eatwell Plate is made up of five food groups – simply choose a variety of foods from each group.

2. Five portions - have *at least* five portions of fruit and vegetables each day.

Remember:

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

all count towards your total. Also remember to include the vegetables you add to cooked dishes, for example as onions in a stew or casserole and tomatoes in a pasta sauce or tomato soup.

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.



Department of Health in association with the Welsh Assembly Government, the Scottish Government and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

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In practical terms this means:

1. 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.

3. Variety – eat a variety of different types and colours of fruit and vegetables. This is because different coloured fruit and veg contain their own combination of vitamins and minerals, so try to include a variety of colours in your diet.

“ Choose a variety of foods from each of the five food groups on the eatwell plate. ”

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

should be eaten in moderate amounts. Choose lean cuts of 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, for example: mackerel, trout, sardines, kippers or fresh tuna.

5. Dairy - aim for a pint of milk a day, or the equivalent.

For example the following contain the same amount of calcium as 1/3 pint of milk:

- a small pot of yoghurt
- a small matchbox size piece of cheese
- six and eight cups of tea or coffee, with milk a day

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

6. Sugar and fat should be limited so watch your intake of foods high in fat and sugar, choosing low fat or reduced sugar foods where possible.

When using a spreading fat choose one that is low in saturated fat. Saturated fat increases the low density (LDL) lipoproteins or 'bad' cholesterol in your blood which can lead to heart disease. Instead choose unsaturated fats which contain high density lipoproteins (HDL) or 'good' cholesterol that is beneficial for your body.



Summary

Eat a range of foods from the five 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!

Other Food Fact Sheets on similar topics such as Fruit and Veg – How to Get Five a Day and Cholesterol can be downloaded at www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts

| Saturated fat (BAD) | Unsaturated fat (GOOD) |
|---|---|
| Butter ghee and lard coconut oil and palm oil. | <p>Polyunsaturated fat Sunflower, soya, corn or safflower oil/soft spreads/margarines, and fish oil.</p> <p>Monounsaturated fat Olive and rapeseed oil.</p> |

“ Choose low fat or reduced sugar foods where possible. ”

BDA Food Fact Sheet Food and Mood

Comfort eating
There is a connection between the brain and the gut. The gut is a major source of serotonin, a neurotransmitter which regulates mood. The brain and gut are connected via the vagus nerve. The gut is also a source of endocannabinoids, which are similar to the active ingredients in cannabis. These can affect the brain and mood.

The gut-brain connection
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Caffeine and the 'jitters'
Caffeine is a stimulant. It can increase heart rate and blood pressure. It can also cause anxiety and nervousness. It is best to limit caffeine intake to 400mg per day.

Not having enough glucose in the blood
Glucose is the main source of energy for the brain. If you don't have enough glucose in your blood, you may feel tired, shaky, and have difficulty concentrating. This is because the brain needs a constant supply of glucose to function properly.

The ability to concentrate and focus
The ability to concentrate and focus is essential for many tasks. It is affected by a number of factors, including sleep, stress, and diet. A diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as those found in fish, can help improve concentration and focus.

BDA Food Fact Sheet Cholesterol

Cholesterol
Cholesterol is one of the things many of us have heard of but may not fully understand. After reading this fact sheet, you should know what cholesterol is and how you can manage your diet to help reduce the level in your blood if it is too high.

Types and main sources of dietary fats
There are two main types of dietary fat: saturated fat (BAD) and unsaturated fat (GOOD). Saturated fat is found in animal products such as butter, cheese, and meat. Unsaturated fat is found in plant products such as olive oil, nuts, and fish.

Factors that affect cholesterol levels
Cholesterol levels are affected by a number of factors, including diet, exercise, and genetics. A diet high in saturated fat and low in unsaturated fat can lead to high cholesterol levels. Regular exercise can help lower cholesterol levels. Some people have a genetic predisposition to high cholesterol.

How to manage cholesterol
There are several ways to manage cholesterol. The most important is to eat a healthy diet that is low in saturated fat and high in unsaturated fat. Regular exercise is also important. If you have high cholesterol, your doctor may recommend medication.

Cutting down on saturated fat
Cutting down on saturated fat in the diet and partially replacing some of it with unsaturated fats is an effective way of reducing blood cholesterol.

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