

# Nutrition guide



## Healthy eating

Eating healthily doesn't just make us look and feel great, it also helps reduce our risk of a range of medical problems.

### How many calories do I need?

It is recommended that adult women should aim to have 2,000 calories a day and adult men 2,500 calories a day, including all foods and all drinks. This is the approximate number of calories you need to maintain your weight.

If you want to lose weight, the NHS says that if you're a man you should try reducing your daily calories to 1,900 or 1,400 calories a day if you're a woman. You may also need fewer calories if you're not very active. Or if you do a lot of exercise or have a physically strenuous job, you may even need more.

### How big is a portion?

A portion in most cases is 80g, or roughly the amount you can fit into the palm of one hand. In the case of dried fruit, however, a portion is just 30g, as it has a particularly concentrated amount of sugar. If you're having fruit juice or a smoothie, a portion is one 150ml glassful and only counts as one of your 5 A Day.

### What foods should I eat?

#### Fruit and veg

A third of the food you eat every day should be made up of fruit and vegetables. This means eating at least five portions of fruit and veg a day, which will help you get a good variety of the vitamins and minerals your body needs to stay healthy, as well as plenty of fibre.

Try to eat a variety of different coloured fruit and vegetables every day. Your 5 A Day doesn't have to all be fresh, as frozen, canned, dried or juiced varieties count too.

If your children are fussy eaters and don't like veg, sneak it into a smoothie with some fruit they like.

## Starchy foods

Another third of everything you eat should be made up of starchy foods such as bread, potatoes, rice, oats, pasta, couscous and other grains. Starchy foods are an important part of a healthy diet because they have lots of nutrients, including calcium, iron and B vitamins.

Experts also recommend eating higher-fibre, wholegrain varieties whenever you can and often contain other nutrients too. This means choosing wholewheat pasta, brown rice, whole oats and other wholegrain breakfast cereals plus whole meal or wholegrain bread rather than white processed foods, as well as having potatoes with their skins left on (Note: although potatoes are vegetables, they don't count towards your 5 a day because they are part of the starchy food portion of your meals.)

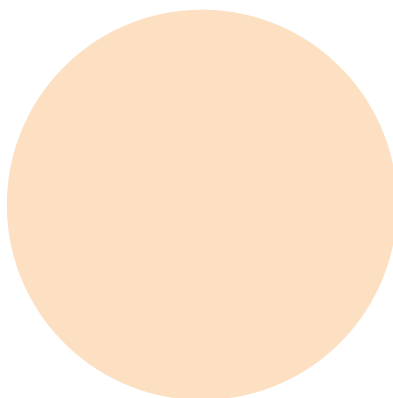
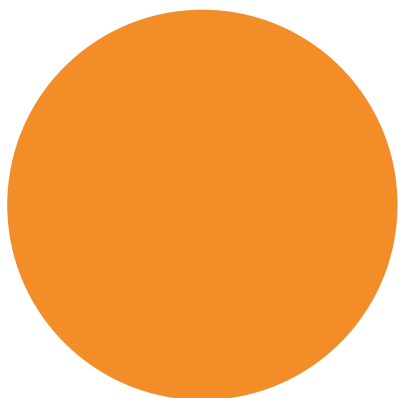
## Protein

Protein foods such as meat, fish, eggs, pulses (beans, peas and lentils) and some other plant-based foods are also an important as protein is essential for the body to grow and repair itself. As well as providing protein, these foods contain vitamins and minerals, so try to have some with every meal. They will also help to keep you feeling full.

Try to choose lean cuts of meat or cut the fat off meat or take the skin off chicken to reduce the amount of saturated fat you eat (see Fats, below). Meanwhile processed meat – such as bacon and sausages – has been linked with an increased risk of bowel cancer, so try to limit these as much as possible.

Plant-based protein such as lentils, chickpeas, beans, tofu or mycoprotein (Quorn) is a good alternative to meat because it's naturally very low in fat and high in fibre, vitamins and minerals.

Aim for at least two 140g portions of fish a week, one of which should be an oily fish. Oily fish are rich in a type of polyunsaturated fat called omega-3 fatty acids, which have been linked to a number of health benefits. Fish and seafood also contain vitamin D, which many people are thought to be lacking, especially during the autumn and winter.



## Dairy foods

Like protein foods, you should also aim to have some dairy foods – or dairy alternatives – every day. These include things like milk, cheese, yoghurt, fromage frais and calcium-fortified dairy alternatives (soya or nut milk, for instance).

As well as being good sources of protein, these foods also supply calcium, which your body needs to stay strong and healthy, as well as vitamins such as vitamin A and B12. However, try to choose lower-fat versions (such as skimmed or semi-skimmed milk instead of whole milk), as they contain just as much protein and calcium but less saturated fat and fewer calories.

## Fats

Foods high in fat contain lots of calories. Use unsaturated fats whenever you can. They are healthier fats that usually come from plant sources and are liquid in form (olive oil, rapeseed oil, sunflower oil etc.). However, while these may be healthier than saturated fats, they are also very high in calories, so keep the amount you eat to a minimum.

Saturated fats can raise your cholesterol and your risk of heart disease so it's best to have them less often. These would include fatty cuts of meat, sausages, butter, cream, cheese, chocolate, pastries, cakes and biscuits.

## Sugar

No more than 5% of the energy (calories) you eat, or drink should come from free sugars so it's a good idea to cut back on things like biscuits, chocolate, cakes and sweetened fizzy drinks if you have a lot of them. 5% of the total calorie intake for a woman is the equivalent of just 5 or 6 teaspoons of sugar, and 7 to 8 teaspoons for a man.

Sugar is also often found in processed foods, even foods that aren't sweet. One way to find out if what you're eating has lots of added sugar is to check food labels when you're shopping. Look out for the following ingredients, all of which are names for types of sugars:

- Sucrose
- Glucose
- Fructose
- Maltose
- Dextrose
- Barley malt
- Invert sugar
- Molasses
- Any syrup
- Hydrolysed starch

Low-fat foods which we think are healthy often contain high amounts of added sugars. For instance, some lower-fat yoghurts can be sweetened with refined sugar, fruit juice concentrate, glucose or fructose syrup.

## Fluids

You should aim to drink six to eight glasses of fluid every day, including water, lower-fat milk, sugar-free soft drinks, tea and coffee. Alcohol, however, contains lots of calories, and currently the government recommends that adult men and women should drink no more than 14 units of alcohol a week.

## Salt

Too much salt can raise your blood pressure. In the UK, the recommendation for salt intake is 6g of salt a day for adults and children older than 11 years – that's about the equivalent of a teaspoon. Younger children should have different amounts of salt depending on their age

- Less than 1g a day for babies less than a year old
- 2g a day for children between one and three years of age
- 3g a day for four-to-six year-olds
- 5g a day for children aged seven to 10



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However, some food labels say the amount of sodium in food, rather than salt (2.4g of sodium is the equivalent of 6g salt).

### What about vitamin supplements?

If you eat healthily all or most of the time you probably don't need to take any vitamin or mineral supplements. However, there may be a reason why you may need a supplement. Some people who are on restricted diets may need extra nutrients in the form of supplements, or your GP may recommend supplements if you have a particular medical condition.

#### Folic acid

If you're pregnant or trying to have a baby, you should take a folic acid supplement. When taken up to week 12 of pregnancy these can help prevent birth defects such as spina bifida. Your GP or midwife can give you more information about folic acid supplementation.

#### Vitamin D

Since sunlight is the main source of vitamin D (the body makes its own vitamin D when skin is exposed to ultraviolet rays), many people in the UK are thought to be at risk of not getting enough during the autumn and winter months.

The Department of Health recommends everyone over the age of five should consider taking a daily vitamin D supplement from the end of September to late March/early April. And if you don't get much sun exposure during the summer – if you're housebound, for instance, or you usually wear clothes or sunscreen that covers most of your skin whenever you're outdoors – the government says you should consider taking a vitamin D supplement all year round.

#### Vitamins A, C and D

It's also currently recommended that all children aged between six months and five years should take a supplement that contains vitamins A, C and D (ask your GP or health visitor for more details).

### What about feeding babies and children?

Babies also need good nutrition to grow into healthy toddlers and children.

#### 0-4 months

Experts believe breast feeding is the best start you can give your baby, though some mums are only able to breastfeed for a short while or may use bottle feeding from day 1

#### 4-8 months

Milk is still the main food, but this is a good time to gradually start introducing solid foods such as baby cereal, finely mashed or pureed fruit and veg.

#### 8-10 months

Start adding a wider variety of fruit and vegetables and other foods such as well mashed up pasta, meat, eggs, cheese and yoghurt. Baby should be having one solid meal a day but will still need their milk.

## 12 months and beyond

By their 1st birthday babies are usually ready for more solid foods they can chew. Cut and chop their food into small pieces and introduce lots more tastes, colours and textures too.

## Fussy eaters

It's quite normal for young children from the age of 2 onwards to refuse to eat or even taste new foods. Experts believe this is their way of asserting their independence. One of the best ways to get them to eat healthily is to set them a good example as experts believe children are influenced by what and how their parents eat. Get them involved in the buying and preparing of food, try not to use food as a reward, praise them when they try something new but don't react if they refuse to eat something.

## Other sources of information

If you'd like to find out more about healthy eating, please check out the following websites:

### British Nutrition Foundation

Information on healthy living and nutrition including nutrition for babies, toddlers and children.

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

### NHS Choices Live Well

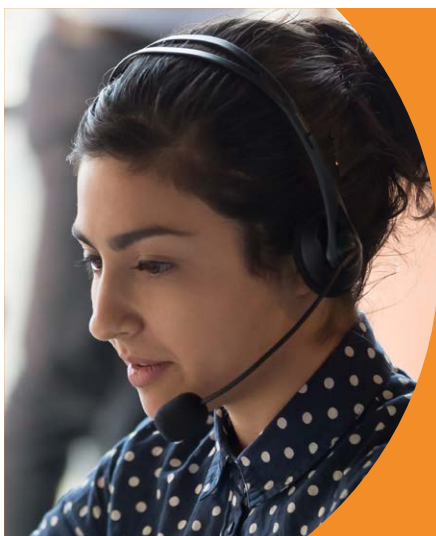
Lots more information on eating a balanced diet, including recipes and tips on eating out

[www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well)

### Change4Life

For healthy eating advice, tips and recipes.

[www.nhs.uk/change4life](http://www.nhs.uk/change4life)



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