



Healthy eating

A balanced diet is important for good health and needs to be varied as no single food provides all the essential nutrients a body needs to maintain a healthy weight, enhance general wellbeing and reduce the risk of a number of diseases including heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and osteoporosis.

A healthy diet is one based on bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods and is rich in fruits and vegetables. It should also include moderate amounts of milk and dairy foods, meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein and limited amounts of foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar.

The Food Standards Agency's Eatwell Plate shown below is a model of how to eat healthily and is based on the eight guidelines for a healthy diet and shows the types and proportions of different foods that should be eaten over a period of time. The Eatwell Plate comprises of the five food groups and we should aim to achieve this balance every day, although it is not necessary to achieve it at every meal:

- Fruits and vegetables
- Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods
- Milk and dairy foods
- Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein
- Foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar

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.



The Eatwell plate applies to all healthy individuals over two years of age, vegetarians, pregnant women those who are healthy weight as well as those overweight for their height, **but individuals with special dietary requirements that require medical supervision need to check with their doctors/dieticians if this would be appropriate.**

Eight guidelines for a healthy diet

- Base meals on starchy foods;
- Eat lots of fruit and vegetables
- Eat more fish
- Cut down on saturated fat and sugar
- Try to eat less salt – no more than 6g a day for adults
- Get active and try to maintain healthy weight
- Drink plenty of water
- Don't skip breakfast

(Source: Food Standards Agency)

Fruit and vegetables



What counts?

Fresh, frozen, dried and canned fruit and vegetables all count. Also, 100% fruit or vegetable juice and pure fruit juice smoothies count (although only as one portion per day).

How much should you eat?

Most of us should **EAT MORE!**

Choose a wide variety and aim to eat at least 5 different portions a day. A portion is approximately 80g (e.g. 1 medium apple, a cereal bowl of salad or 3 heaped tablespoons of peas). Servings of fruit juice, vegetable juice or smoothies can only count as one portion per day no matter how much you drink. Beans and pulses (i.e. haricot, kidney, baked, soya and butter beans, chickpeas and lentils) can also count once a day towards the 5-A-Day target although they belong to a different food group.

Look out for the Government's 5-A-Day logo on pre-packed fruit and vegetables; some food manufacturers have their own logos.



Tips to increase fruits and vegetables

- Choose fruit or chopped vegetables as a snack
- Add dried or fresh fruit to breakfast cereals
- Have a salad with sandwiches or with pizza
- Add vegetables and/or pulses to casseroles and stews and fruit to desserts
- Try not to eat the same fruits and vegetables every day, eat a variety



Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods

What counts?

This food group, sometimes referred to as 'starchy carbohydrates', includes bread, potatoes (including low fat oven chips), yams, breakfast cereals, pasta, rice, oats, noodles, maize, millet and cornmeal.

How much we should eat

Base a third of your food intake on foods from this group, aiming to include at least one food from this group at each meal, e.g. potatoes with fish and vegetables, a chicken salad sandwich, stir-fried vegetables with rice, or porridge oats for breakfast. Potatoes, yams, plantains and sweet potato fall into this group, rather than fruit and vegetables, because they contain starchy carbohydrates.

Healthy eating tips

- Base your meals around foods from this group
- Opt for wholegrain or wholemeal breads, whole wheat pasta, brown rice and wholegrain breakfast cereals which contain more fibre and other nutrients than white or refined starchy foods
- Choose low fat oven chips rather than fried chips (oven chips fall into this food group but fried chips don't)
- Eating more foods from this group will help to reduce the proportion of fat and increase the amount of fibre in the diet
- Avoid frying or adding too much fat to these foods

Milk and dairy foods



What counts?

This food group includes milk, cheese, yogurt and fromage frais. Calcium fortified soya alternatives to milk can also be included. This group does not include butter, eggs and cream as these fall into other food groups.

How much should you eat?

EAT MODERATE AMOUNTS

You can get all the calcium your body needs from around 3 servings a day. A serving of milk is a 200ml glass, a serving of yogurt is a small pot (150g), a serving of cheese is 30g (matchbox size). Choose lower fat versions whenever you can, such as semi-skimmed milk, low fat yogurt and reduced fat cheese.

Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein



What counts?

This food group includes meat, poultry, fish, eggs and alternatives (see below). Meat products include bacon, salami, sausages, beef burgers and pâté. Fish includes frozen and canned fish such as sardines and tuna, fish fingers and fish cakes.

How much should you eat?

EAT MODERATE AMOUNTS

