

HEALTHY EATING

The general healthy eating message is to eat a variety of high fibre, low fat foods, replacing saturated animal fat with unsaturated vegetable oils, eating five portions of fruit and vegetables and aiming to drink 2 litres of water per day. People who have had a diagnosis of high cholesterol will have been advised to reduce their saturated fat intake and people with high blood pressure to reduce their salt intake. This factsheet will provide the information needed to help with these changes as well.

Variety is the spice of life

Variety is the key to a healthier diet. Food comes in all shapes and sizes, flavours, textures and colours. The best way to make sure you get a bit of everything you need is to eat a variety of foods.

Eating the right amount of the right foods means you get the right amount of energy and nutrients you need to keep your body well. Many of the habits we develop in younger years are the cause of long term health problems in later life. Make some changes; you might be surprised how good they taste.

Fruit and vegetables

Some of the best foods to help us fight diseases are fruit and vegetables.

They contain lots of special nutrients called antioxidants that help protect the cells in our bodies from damage.

You know that you should be eating at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day. But do you know:

- One portion could be a banana, two plums, a couple of broccoli florets, one carrot, a handful of strawberries or two tablespoons of peas.
- All dried, canned and frozen fruit and vegetables also count.
- Fruit juice counts as a serving once a day.
- Beans and pulses also count as a serving once a day. Potatoes do not count, they are carbohydrates.

Disclaimer: Inclusion in this factsheet, is not a guarantee or recommendation by Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland. It has been compiled for your information only.

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See how easy it is:

Meal	Eating suggestion	No.
<i>Breakfast</i>	Breakfast cereal with a couple of spoonfuls of dried apricots or other dried fruit added and semi or skimmed milk.	1
	A glass of orange juice.	1
<i>Lunch</i>	A wholemeal sandwich of your choice with a grated carrot, a sliced tomato or a handful of salad.	1
	A smoothie drink made from fresh fruit and low fat yoghurt or milk.	1
<i>Snack</i>	An apple or a banana	1
<i>Main meal</i>	A couple of broccoli florets and a spoonful of carrots as part of your meal.	2
	A handful of strawberries with low fat yoghurt or ice cream.	1
TOTAL		8

Go the whole way

When there is a choice of white or wholemeal pasta, bread, flour or cereals go for wholemeal. Wholegrain cereals provide important vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre. The difference is that the wholegrain version has not been processed so much and so retains more goodness as well as fibre.

Eat less sugar

Eat fewer cakes, biscuits, chocolate and sweets. Drink sugar free alternatives and try artificial sweetener in hot drinks. Don't add extra sugar to food such as breakfast cereal, fruit and porridge.

Reducing fat

Most of us eat too much fatty food. There are two main types of fat in food, saturated and unsaturated. All are high in calories.

Saturated fat: butter, cheese, meat, meat products, pastry.

Unsaturated fat:

- **Mono-unsaturated fats:** olive oil, rapeseed oil, peanut oil, margarine high in mono-unsaturates, avocados, nuts.
- **Poly-unsaturated fat:** sunflower oil, corn oil, soya oil, reduced fat spreads high in poly-unsaturates.
- **Omega-3:** oily fish, seafood such as clams and prawns, flaxseed oil and spinach.

Checking labels

Labels may list 'fat content and /or of which saturates per 100g.'

Total fat and saturated fat levels

3g is a low fat content.

20g is a high fat content.

1g is a low saturated fat content.

5g is a high saturated fat content.

Lowering cholesterol

If you have a high cholesterol level you will have been advised to reduce the amount of saturated fat in your diet. Reducing saturated fat reduces the amount of LDL or 'bad' cholesterol in our blood stream. This is what contributes to an increased risk of heart disease and stroke.

(Note: eggs, liver and shellfish although rich in cholesterol have only a small effect on blood cholesterol levels.)

For more information ask for the CHSS Cholesterol Factsheet.

How to reduce saturated fat

The aim is to reduce saturated fat in the diet and replace it with unsaturated fat such as oils and fish.

Saturated fat is found in things like red meat, and full fat dairy products such as butter and cream. It is also used a lot in processed foods, ready meals and snacks that have been fried.

- Choose leaner choices of meat such as chicken and turkey instead of beef and ham.
- Use sunflower or olive oil for cooking and for dressings.
- Use oil based or low fat spreads instead of butter.
- Avoid shortening and lard.
- Avoid hydrogenated fat as this is polyunsaturated oils that have been altered in processing to make it solid and saturated. Found in pastries, convenience foods, fried foods, crackers, biscuits and snacks.
- Grill, steam or bake rather than fry.
- Trim all visible fat before cooking.
- Drain fat that comes out of food during cooking on kitchen paper.
- Avoid meat products such as pies, pasties, sausage rolls hamburgers and sausages.
- Choose low fat varieties of yoghurts, milk and cheese.
- Increase the healthy oil we need found in oily fish such as salmon, mackerel and herring.
- Replace snacks such as crisps, cakes and biscuits with fruit or low fat alternatives.
- Check labels for hidden fats in processed and ready made meals.

Eat more fish

Try to eat fish three times a week. Increase omega-3 (poly-unsaturated) fats by choosing oily fish twice a week, such as mackerel, herring, sardines, trout, salmon and pilchards. Canned fish is a popular choice but remember canned tuna does not contain the beneficial types of oil.

The body can also make omega-3 fats from rapeseed oil.

Shake the salt habit

Some people put salt on everything before even tasting it. This is a habit that your taste buds have got used to, but if you gradually reduce the amount of salt you eat they will soon adapt and eventually you will prefer less salty food. Too much salt in your diet can increase the risk of high blood pressure which increases the risk of heart disease and stroke.

It is recommended that everyone should reduce their salt intake to no more than 6g of salt a day.

Understanding salt labelling

Many people find labels confusing. Salt content can be listed as salt or as sodium. However the amounts are not the same. So to be able to compare like for like you may have to convert sodium into salt.

How to convert sodium into salt:

1. Work out the amount of sodium per 100g
2. Multiply by 2.5
3. $1\text{g sodium} / 100\text{g} \times 2.5 = 2.5\text{g salt} / 100\text{g}$

Per 100g and per serving

However you have to also remember that the content has to be worked out for the total amount of food you eat in one serving and not just in 100g.

The label may say 1.3 grams of salt per 100g but if one serving is 300g for example then your intake will contain $1.3 \times 3 = 4$ grams of salt.

Sodium/salt levels

Equal or less than 0.005g sodium is virtually salt free.

< 0.1g sodium is low salt content.

0.2 – 0.4g sodium is medium salt content.

Above 0.5g sodium is high salt content.

If no value is given, then the food has a higher salt content than the above criteria.

Read the label!

It is quite surprising to see the difference between one breakfast cereal and another for example. Not all 'healthy options' are healthy in salt content.

Which foods are the highest salt containing foods?

The highest salt containing foods are processed foods like ready meals, baked beans, soups, processed meat such as ham and bacon, smoked foods, restaurant and takeaway food, some cereals and even bread. It is difficult to avoid eating some of these foods but look for low salt alternatives instead, or eat fresh food which has no added salt.

How to reduce salt in your diet

- Don't add salt at the table or in cooking. Check with your doctor before you use low salt alternatives, as they usually contain potassium, which can also be harmful.
- Use other flavourings such as herbs and spices, lemon and garlic to add interest to your food.
- Avoid processed foods, which contain more than three quarters of the salt hidden in our diet. This includes ready meals, fast foods or convenience foods and many canned foods.
- Avoid bacon, sausages, ham, cheese, pizzas, sachet soups and stock cubes.
- Avoid salted crisps, nuts, crackers or other salty snacks especially when socialising as they will also make you thirsty and encourage you to drink more alcohol.
- Look for products that declare themselves low salt or reduced salt.
- Be aware of other foods that **can** have high salt content such as cereals, mineral water and bread. Even some low fat yogurts and ice-cream can contain hidden salt. Check the labels!

The organisation CASH Consensus Action on Salt and Health has lists of food groups comparing their sodium content.

Drink less alcohol

As a guide, an alcohol intake of up to 3 units a day for men and 2 units a day for women with some alcohol free days is acceptable for good health. Count one unit as a small glass of wine, one measure of spirit or half a pint of beer or lager.

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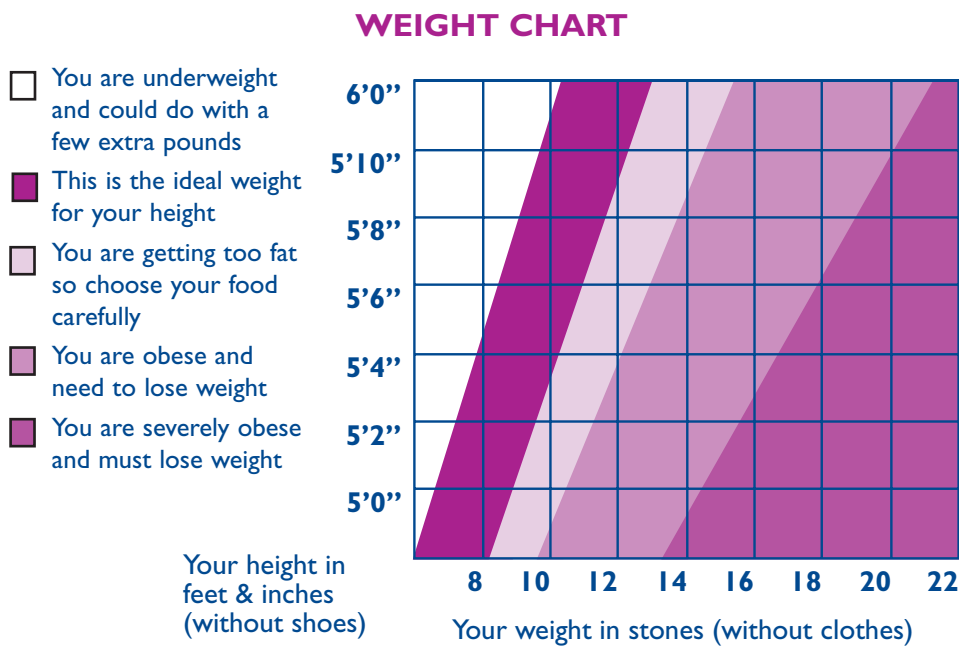
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Watch your weight

Controlling your weight involves finding a balance between the food and drink you take in and the energy you use up.

- If you combine exercise with your diet you will lose weight more effectively.
- The most effective way to lose weight is to do it slowly. Aim for a weight loss of 0.5-1 kg / 1-2lbs per week.
- If you lose weight too quickly you are far more likely to put it back on again.
- Plan your meals and write down everything you eat.
- Rethink your shopping and eating habits; avoid sugary foods that do not satisfy your hunger.
- Replace fat with foods that release their energy more easily such as pasta, rice and potatoes but remember not to use butter or cream based sauces to go with them!



If you would like to speak to one of our nurses in confidence, please call the Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland Advice Line
Monday - Friday 9.30am - 12.30 and 1.30pm - 4.00pm

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