

# HEALTHY EATING

Chest  
Heart &  
Stroke  
Scotland



ESSENTIAL GUIDE

# This Essential Guide is about healthy eating.

## It explains:

- How the food you eat can affect your health
- The benefits of eating well
- How to choose food that is good for you

### **Important:**

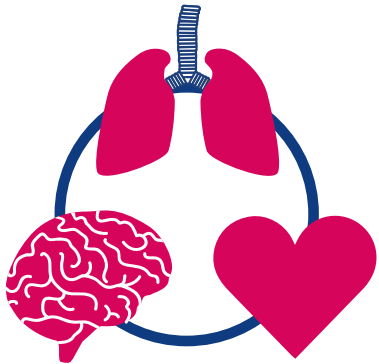
If you are living with a long-term health condition such as diabetes or obesity, speak to your doctor, nurse or dietitian before making changes to your diet.

# Healthy eating

Eating a healthy, balanced diet is good for your health.

By eating the right foods you can reduce your risk of developing serious health conditions like heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

Healthy eating is also good for your immune system. It gives you energy and can help you stay a healthy weight or lose weight if you need to.



# What is a healthy, balanced diet?

## **A healthy, balanced diet:**

- Includes eating a wide variety of foods to give your body all the essential nutrients and energy it needs
- Is a diet that is low in saturated fat, salt and sugar
- Is high in fruit, vegetables, fibre, nuts, whole grains (for example, oats and brown rice) and pulses (for example, lentils and beans)

# How can I eat more healthily?\*

- 1** Base your meals on starchy foods (carbohydrates) like rice, potatoes or pasta (try to choose wholegrain, high-fibre varieties)
- 2** Aim to eat at least 5 portions of different fruit and vegetables a day
- 3** Eat more beans and pulses, and less red and processed meats
- 4** Aim to eat at least 2 portions of fish a week, including 1 portion of oily fish like mackerel
- 5** Limit saturated fat, salt and sugar
- 6** Do regular physical activity
- 7** Drink 6-8 glasses of non-alcoholic fluid each day
- 8** Always eat breakfast

\* Based on NHS Eatwell Guide

# Starchy foods

Starchy foods (or carbohydrates) are foods like **potatoes, bread, rice, pasta** and **cereals**.



Choose **wholegrain** or **high fibre** varieties of starchy foods whenever possible, for example, wholemeal bread and brown rice.



Starchy foods should make up about **one third of the food you eat each day**.



Aim to eat something starchy at **each mealtime**.



# Fruit and vegetables

Aim for at least **5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day** - 2 portions of fruit and 3 portions of vegetables.



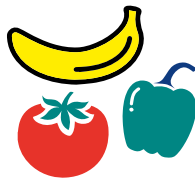
**One portion is about 80 grams** or about the same size as the palm of your hand.



Fruit and vegetables can be **fresh, frozen, canned** or **dried**.



**Eat the rainbow!** Get a good mix of vitamins and minerals from eating different colours of fruit and vegetables.



# Fill up on fibre

Fibre helps to keep your **digestive system healthy** and can help **lower cholesterol**.

Fibre is found in plant-based foods like **fruits, vegetables, beans, lentils, oats** and **grains**.

For more fibre, eat more **wholegrain** and **wholemeal foods** and potatoes with the skin on.





# Dairy and dairy alternatives

Eat and drink dairy or dairy alternatives like soya milk and yogurts to get **protein, calcium** and **vitamins**.

Some dairy such as milk, cream, cheese and butter can be high in sugar, fat and saturated fat.

**Choose lower fat and lower sugar options.**



# Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins

**Beans, pulses, fish, eggs and meat contain protein.** Protein is needed to help build and repair your cells. Protein also helps you to feel fuller for longer.



**Try to eat 2-3 portions of protein each day.** Each portion should be about the size of the palm of your hand.



**Eat at least 2 portions of fresh or tinned fish a week.** This should include 1 portion of oily fish like salmon, sardines, herring or mackerel.



**Try getting protein from non-meat sources** such as nuts, tofu and pulses (for example, lentils, peas, chickpeas).



**Try to eat less red meat and less processed meat** such as bacon and ham.



# Fats

There are 3 main types of fats: unsaturated fats, saturated fats and trans fats. Too many saturated fats and trans fats can increase your risk of heart disease and stroke.

All fats are high in calories. This is important to remember if you are trying to lose weight.

## Unsaturated fats

- There are 2 types of unsaturated fats: monounsaturated and polyunsaturated.
- A small amount of unsaturated fat is good for you.
- Unsaturated fats are found in nuts, seeds, avocado and vegetable oils like olive oil, canola (rapeseed) oil and sunflower oil. It is also found in fish like salmon and mackerel.



## Saturated fats



- Saturated fats are bad for you. Eating too much saturated fat is linked to high cholesterol and can increase your risk of heart disease.
- Foods high in saturated fat include coconut oil, palm oil, butter, lard, cakes, fatty meat, sausages, burgers, hard cheese, pies, chocolate, cream and ice-cream.
- Try to limit how much saturated fat you eat.

## Trans fats



- Trans fats are bad for you and are linked to an increased risk of heart disease and stroke.
- Trans fats are found in foods like takeaways, biscuits, cakes, pastries and fried foods.
- Try to avoid trans fats.

## Tips for reducing bad fats in your diet



- Steam, boil, grill or poach instead of frying in oil.
- Swap butter, lard and ghee for canola (rapeseed) oil, olive oil or sunflower oil.
- Cut down on baked and fried foods and takeaways.
- Cut down on processed and packaged foods. Try making meals from scratch using fresh ingredients.
- Choose lean meats (meats that don't have much fat) like chicken and turkey.
- Remove the fat and skin from meat before cooking.
- Skim off fat that rises to the top of liquid when cooking.
- Choose reduced-fat dairy foods.

# Salt

Too much salt is bad for you. It can increase your risk of high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke.



You should have no more than 6 grams of salt a day. That's about 1 level teaspoon.

Salt is often hidden in the food we eat. Bread, ready meals, processed meat, tinned soup, sauces and some breakfast cereals can all be high in salt.

Try not to add salt to your cooking or your plate of food.

Use herbs, spices, chilli and lemon to flavour your food instead of using salt.



# Sugar

Sugar is high in 'empty calories'. These provide you with energy but none of the vitamins, nutrients or minerals you need.



Sugar can lead to weight gain and increase your risk of Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke and tooth decay.

Fruit and milk contain natural sugars. These foods form part of a healthy diet.

Sugars called 'free sugars' are bad for you. Free sugars are sugars that have been added to food or drinks, and sugars found in honey and syrups. Free sugars include sugars from fruit that has been turned into juice or smoothies.

Foods like cakes, biscuits, sweets, fizzy drinks and some cereals are all high in free sugars.



Other names for sugar include: dextrose, fructose, glucose, high-fructose glucose syrup, honey, maple syrup, agave syrup, invert sugar, maltose, molasses and sucrose.

A healthy adult should have no more than **30 grams of free sugars** per day. That's about the same as 7 teaspoons.



Can of  
Coke =



**x9**  
teaspoons of sugar



Tin of  
beans =



**x5**  
teaspoons of sugar



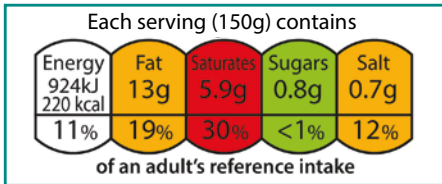
Pasta  
sauce =



**x9**  
teaspoons of sugar

# Traffic light nutrition label

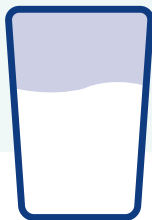
Lots of packaged foods have a colour-coded 'traffic light' nutrition label. This helps you to choose foods low in saturated fat, salt and sugar. The values are per serving or per 100g of the food. Check the label and aim to eat more foods that are colour-coded green or amber.



You can also **check the ingredients** list. Ingredients are listed in weight order and start with the biggest ingredient going down to the smallest. If things like oil, butter, cream, margarine, sugar or salt are listed in the first few ingredients, you know the food may not be a healthy choice.

# Water and other drinks

Try to drink at least 6-8 glasses of water or other non-alcoholic fluid each day. Speak to your GP if you are on a fluid-restricted diet.



The best drinks to choose from are water, low-fat milk, sugar-free drinks, herbal or fruit teas and decaffeinated tea or coffee.

**Remember:** what you drink can include a lot of sugar and fat. This can affect your health just as much as the food you eat.

# Alcohol

Too much alcohol is bad for your health and can increase your risk of heart disease, stroke and other serious health conditions.

**Alcohol is high in 'empty calories'.** These provide you with energy but none of the vitamins, minerals or nutrients you need.

To keep health risks from alcohol to a low level it is safest not to drink more than 14 units a week on a regular basis. If you do drink as much as 14 units a week, spread them out over 3 or more days.

For advice on how to reduce your alcohol intake go to **[www.drinkaware.co.uk](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk)** or phone Drinkline for free on **0300 123 1110**.

Call our Advice Line FREE on 0808 801 0899

## One unit is the same as:



**218ml**

Standard  
4.5% cider



**76ml**

Standard  
13% wine



**25ml**

Standard  
40% whisky



**250ml**

Standard  
4% beer



**250ml**

Standard  
4% alcopop

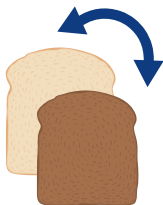
# Making changes to your diet



Break big goals down into smaller ones.



Set small, achievable targets. For example, don't try to cut out chocolate, takeaways, alcohol, fizzy drinks and pies all at once.



Be specific. Instead of saying 'I want to eat more fibre', think about how you will do this. For example, 'I'm going to swap white toast for wholemeal toast in the morning'.

Get support from a friend, family member or group.



Look for different signs of progress. For example, changes to your weight and waist size, how tightly your clothes fit, how much energy you have, how much activity you are able to do or how you feel about yourself.



Don't give up! Everyone slips up every now and again. If you do, accept it and try to get back on track as soon as possible.



Our publications are available for free to anyone in Scotland who needs them. Go to [www.chss.org.uk/publications](http://www.chss.org.uk/publications) for all our resources, including other Essential Guides in this series.

For free, confidential advice and support from our **Advice Line nurses**, call: 0808 801 0899 (Mon-Fri 9.30am-4pm), text: NURSE to 66777 or email: [adviceline@chss.org.uk](mailto:adviceline@chss.org.uk).

Across Scotland, over one million people – that's one in five of us – are living with the effects of a chest, heart or stroke condition. We are here to help everyone who needs us. But we need your support to do this. Go to [www.chss.org.uk/supportus](http://www.chss.org.uk/supportus) to find out how you can help more people in Scotland.

**If you would like this resource in an alternative format, please contact our Advice Line nurses.**

**Chest  
Heart &  
Stroke  
Scotland**



**NO LIFE HALF LIVED**

**E3**

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