

Healthy Eating - A Summary

Eating healthily helps to prevent diseases such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, obesity, certain gut disorders, and certain cancers. This leaflet gives a brief summary on healthy eating. There are other more detailed leaflets called 'Healthy Eating' and 'Eat More Fruit and Vegetables'.

Basic principles of a healthy diet

Eat plenty of starch-based foods (complex carbohydrates)

The bulk of most meals should be starch-based foods (such as bread, cereals, potatoes, rice, and pasta), together with fruit and vegetables. Some people wrongly think that starch-based foods are 'fattening'. In fact, they contain about half the calories than the same weight of fat.

Eat at least five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables each day

One portion is: one large fruit such as an apple, pear, banana, orange, or a large slice of melon or pineapple, OR; two smaller fruits such as plums, satsumas, etc, OR; one cup of small fruits such as grapes, strawberries, raspberries, cherries, etc, OR; two large tablespoons of fruit salad, stewed or canned fruit, OR; one tablespoon of dried fruit, OR; one glass of fresh fruit juice (150ml), OR; a normal portion of any vegetable (about two tablespoons), OR; one dessert bowl of salad.

Eat protein foods in moderation

Meat, fish, nuts, pulses, chicken, and similar foods are high in protein. You need some protein to keep healthy, but most people eat more protein than is needed. Choose lean meat. *Oily fish* (such as herring, sardines, mackerel, salmon, kippers, pilchards, and fresh tuna) is thought to help protect against heart disease. Aim to eat at least two portions of fish per week, at least one of which should be oily.

Don't eat too much fat

- Try not to fry much food. It is better to grill, bake, poach, barbecue, or boil food. If you do fry, use unsaturated oil such as corn, sunflower or olive oil. Drain off the oil before eating.
- Choose lean cuts of meat, and cut off any excess fat.
- Try not to add unnecessary fat to food. For example, use low fat spreads, spread less butter or margarine on bread, measure out small portions of oil for cooking, etc.
- Watch out for hidden fats that are in pastries, chocolate, cakes, and biscuits.
- Have low-fat milk, cheeses, yoghurts, and other dairy foods rather than full-fat varieties.
- Avoid cream. Use low fat salad cream, or low-fat yoghurt as a cream substitute.

Don't have too many sugary foods and drinks

These are high in calories, and too much may cause weight gain.

Try not to eat too much salt

Use small amounts of salt with cooking, and don't add more salt at the table.

Don't drink too much alcohol

A small amount of alcohol (1-2 units per day) may help to protect you from heart disease. One unit is in about half a pint of normal strength beer, or two thirds of a small glass of wine, or one small pub measure of spirits. However, too much can be harmful. Men should drink no more than 21 units per week (and no more than 4 units in any one day). Women should drink no more than 14 units per week (and no more than 3 units in any one day).