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# What is a Healthy Balanced Diet?

## Food and Nutrition



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# The Importance of a Healthy Diet

A healthy balanced diet means eating a wide variety of foods, in the right amounts, for good health.

This is important for us to get the range of nutrients, vitamins and minerals which are needed for our health, well-being, growth and development.

Eating from all the different food groups and in the right portion sizes can help us to:

- Maintain good health
- Help us feel our best, avoid illness and prevent diseases
- Provide us with the energy we need throughout the day
- Provide us with the nutrients we need for growth, repair and development
- Help us to achieve and maintain a healthy weight

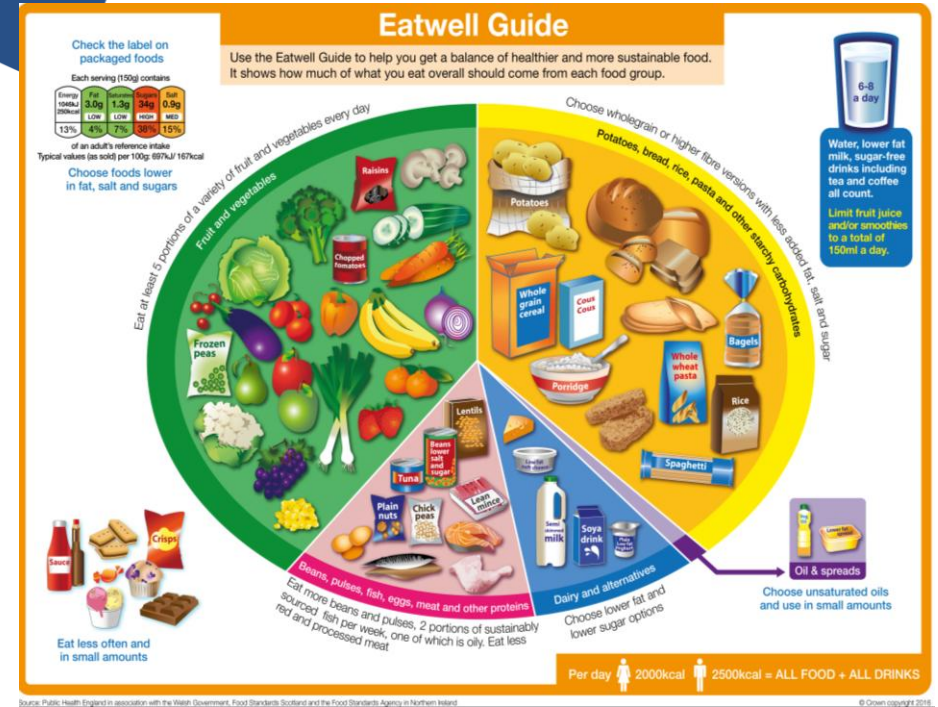


# Eatwell Guide

The Eatwell Guide shows the different food groups that are needed within our diets. It also shows us how much of these food groups should be eaten across the day or a couple of days to achieve a good balance of nutrients. For example: 1/3 of our diets should be fruits and vegetables.

Try to choose a variety of different foods from each of the food groups to help you get the wide range of nutrients your body needs.

The Eatwell Guide can be modified and changed depending on food preferences, allergies and beliefs but the food groups and proportions, will remain the same.



The Eatwell Guide shows us what our diets should look like over the day or even a couple of days - not every plate needs to look like this.

# Fruits and Vegetables

**Most of us are still not eating enough fruit and vegetables. They should make up just over a third of the food we eat each day and are one of the most important parts of our diets.**



Fruits and vegetables are a good source of vitamins, minerals and fibre; eating a variety of different types ensures the body receives the range of essential nutrients we need.

We should aim to eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruits and vegetables each day, and these can be fresh, tinned, dried and frozen. A portion is 80g.

Eating with the seasons can be a cheaper way to consume a variety of fresh fruit. Eating in season can also be better for the planet too.

But don't forget that tinned, frozen and dried count towards your 5 A Day, and are just as nutritious as fresh. They are also economical as they can be stored for longer. Try to choose tinned in juice and vegetables with no added sugar and salt.

# Potatoes, Bread, Rice, Pasta and Other Starchy Carbohydrates

Starchy foods are the main source of carbohydrate and have an important role in a healthy balanced diet.

Starchy food should make up just over a third of the food we eat.

They are the best energy providers for the body and can be a good source of fibre.

Where possible we should try to eat wholegrain or higher fibre carbohydrates such as brown rice or pasta. Even leaving the skin on potatoes can help to increase dietary fibre and nutrients.



# Beans, Pulses, Fish, Eggs, Meat and Other Proteins

These foods are rich in protein which is needed for growth and repair and provide other very important vitamins and minerals such as iron.

Foods from this group should be eaten daily. Eating beans and pulses more often can be beneficial to our health, the planet, and be cost effective too!

Fish is also a great source of protein alongside essential fatty acids and omega 3 which is great for brain growth and development. We should aim to eat fish at least twice per week including one oily fish such as salmon or mackerel.

Red and processed meats such as bacon and ham should be eaten less often as they're often higher in fat, salt, and increase the risk of developing some cancers.



# Dairy and Alternatives



- Milk, cheese, yoghurt and fromage frais are a good source of protein and essential vitamins and minerals within our diets such as calcium.  
Eating foods high in calcium is important for our teeth and bones especially in childhood and later life.
- Fortified and unsweetened (without free sugars or non-sugar sweeteners) almond, oat and soya drinks also count within this food group and are an acceptable alternative for people who do not consume cow's milk.
- Making healthier dairy choices can be done by checking the nutritional information on the label. Try to choose lower fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt options.

# Oils and Spreads

We all need some fat in our diet to stay healthy because they provide energy and essential fatty acids that our body cannot produce. Fats also help with absorption of vitamin A, D and E.

As part of a healthy diet we should choose unsaturated fats where possible and eat in small amounts, these include: olive, rapeseed, sunflower and vegetable oil.

We should try to limit the amount of saturated fat we eat. This includes butter, fatty meats, pastries, cakes, biscuits.

Eating foods high in saturated fat can raise cholesterol levels, which over time can increase the risk of developing heart disease.



# Foods High in Fat, Salt and Sugar



These aren't needed as part of our diet because they do not contain essential nutrients. They should be eaten in smaller amounts and less often.

This group includes chocolate, cakes, biscuits, sugary soft drinks, butter and ice-cream.

Eating too many foods high in saturated fat, salt and sugar can increase the risk of developing cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and other health problems including tooth decay.

# Energy In vs Energy Out

## Energy in

- The food and drink we consume is ENERGY IN.
- We need to make sure we consume enough energy as this powers our bodies.
- Energy helps us to stay active, fight infection and live our daily lives.

## Energy out

- We burn energy in daily living, even through the night when we're asleep this is known as ENERGY OUT.
- We burn more energy when we're active through sports or physical activity.
- Those who are more active physically typically burn more calories.

More IN than OUT over time = weight gain  
More OUT than IN over time = weight loss

Your ENERGY IN and OUT don't have to balance every day. It's about having balance **over time** that will help you maintain a healthy weight throughout your life.

# Undernutrition vs Overnutrition

## Under nutrition

Under nutrition is a serious condition that can happen when your diet does not contain the right amount of nutrients. Symptoms often involve weight loss, reduced appetite, tiredness, irritability, reduced immunity and potential disease.

Causes of undernutrition include:

- Unsuitable dietary choices
- Having a low income
- Difficulty obtaining food
- Various physical and mental health conditions
- Conditions of famine
- Due to war and conflict
- The impact of natural disasters on accessibility.

## Over nutrition

Overnutrition is a form of malnutrition in which the intake of nutrient and energy is oversupplied. Overnutrition happens when you take in more nutrient (or nutrients) and food than you need every day.

While many people think malnutrition means a lack of nutrients, overconsumption is also considered malnutrition because it has negative health consequences and over time can result in rapid weight gain leading to obesity and other health conditions such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some cancers.



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