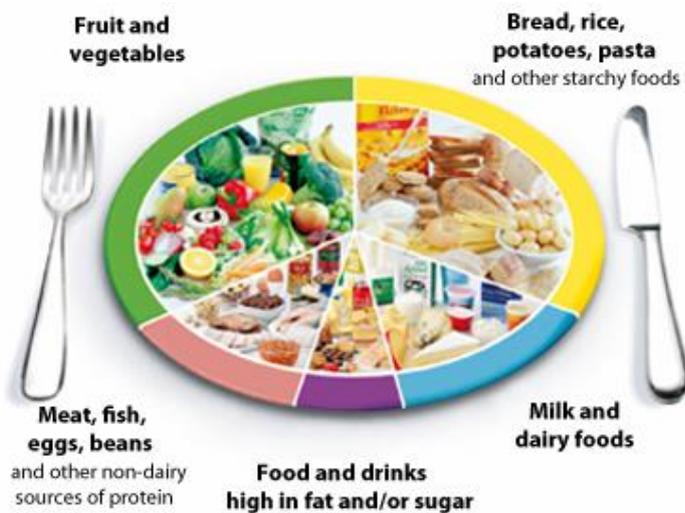


# Healthy Eating



The “eatwell” plate shows the different types of food we need to eat – and in what proportions – to have a well-balanced and healthy diet.

It's a good idea to try to get this balance right every day, but you don't need to do it at every meal. And you might find it easier to get the balance right over a longer period, say a day or a week.

Eating healthily is about eating the right amount of food for your energy needs. Based on the “eatwell” plate, you should try to eat:

- **Plenty of fruit and vegetables**
- **Plenty of potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy foods**
- **Some milk and dairy foods**
- **Some meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein**
- **Just a small amount of foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar**

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The “eatwell” plate applies to most people – whether they're a healthy weight or overweight, whether they eat meat or are vegetarian.

A diet based on starchy foods such as rice and pasta; with plenty of fruit and vegetables; some protein-rich foods such as meat, fish and lentils; some milk and dairy foods; and not too much fat, salt or sugar, will give you all the nutrients you need.

When it comes to a healthy diet, balance is the key to getting it right. This means eating a wide variety of foods in the right proportions, and consuming the right amount of food and drink to achieve and maintain a healthy body weight.

Most people in the UK eat and drink too many calories, and too much fat, sugar and salt, and not enough fruit, vegetables and fibre. It's important to have some fat in the diet, but you don't need any foods from the 'Foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar' group as part of a healthy diet.

## 1. Fruit and vegetables



Fruit and vegetables are a vital source of vitamins and minerals. It's advised that we eat five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables a day.

There's evidence that people who eat at least five portions a day are at lower risk of heart disease, stroke and some cancers.

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Just one apple, banana, pear or similar-sized fruit is one portion. A slice of pineapple or melon is one portion. Three heaped tablespoons of vegetables is another portion. Having a sliced banana with your morning cereal is a quick way to get one portion. Swap your mid-morning biscuit for a tangerine, and add a side salad to your lunch. Add a portion of vegetables to dinner, and snack on dried fruit in the evening to reach your five a day.

## 2. Starchy foods

Starchy foods such as bread, cereals, potatoes, pasta, maize and cornbread are an important part of a healthy diet. They are a good source of energy and the main source of a range of nutrients in our diet. Starchy foods are fuel for your body.



Starchy foods should make up around one third of everything we eat. This means we should base our meals on these foods.

Try and choose wholegrain or wholemeal varieties, such as brown rice, wholewheat pasta and brown wholemeal bread. They contain more fibre (often referred to as 'roughage'), and usually more vitamins and minerals than white varieties.

Fibre is also found in beans, lentils and peas.

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### 3. Meat, fish, eggs and beans



These foods are all good sources of protein, which is essential for growth and repair of the body. They are also good sources of a range of vitamins and minerals.

Meat is a good source of protein, vitamins and minerals such as iron, zinc and B vitamins. It is also one of the main sources of vitamin B12. Try to eat lean cuts of meat and skinless poultry whenever possible to cut down on fat. Always cook meat thoroughly.

Fish is another important source of protein, and contains many vitamins and minerals. Oily fish is particularly rich in omega-3 fatty acids.

Aim for at least two portions of fish a week, including one portion of oily fish. You can choose from fresh, frozen or canned, but canned and smoked fish can be high in salt.

Eggs and pulses (including beans, nuts and seeds) are also great sources of protein. Nuts are high in fibre and a good alternative to snacks high in saturated fat, but they do still contain high levels of fat, so eat them in moderation.

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#### 4. Milk and dairy foods

Milk and dairy foods such as cheese and yoghurt are good sources of protein. They also contain calcium, which helps to keep your bones healthy.

To enjoy the health benefits of dairy without eating too much fat, use semi-skimmed milk, skimmed milk or 1% fat milks, lower-fat hard cheeses or cottage cheese, and lower-fat yoghurt.



#### 5. Fat and sugar



Most people in the UK eat too much fat and too much sugar.

Fats and sugar are both sources of energy for the body, but when we eat too much of them we consume more energy than we burn, and this can mean that we put on weight. This can lead to obesity, which increases our risk of type 2 diabetes, certain cancers, heart disease and stroke.

Saturated fat is found in foods such as cheese, sausages, butter, cakes, biscuits and pies. It can raise your blood cholesterol level and increase your risk of heart disease. Most people in the UK eat too much saturated fat, which puts us at risk of health problems.

Unsaturated fats, on the other hand, can help to lower cholesterol and provide us with the essential fatty acids needed to help us stay healthy.

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Oily fish, nuts and seeds, avocados, olive oils and vegetable oils are sources of unsaturated fat.

Try to cut down on foods that are high in saturated fat and have smaller amounts of foods that are rich in unsaturated fat instead. For a healthy choice, use just a small amount of vegetable oil or reduced fat spread instead of butter, lard or ghee. When having meat, choose lean cuts and cut off any visible fat.

Sugar occurs naturally in foods such as fruit and milk, but we don't need to cut down on these types of sugar. Sugar is also added to lots of foods and drinks such as sugary fizzy drinks, cakes, biscuits, chocolate, pastries, ice cream and jam. It's also contained in some ready-made savoury foods such as pasta sauces and baked beans.

## **Vegetarians and Vegans**

If you're a vegetarian or vegan, you should eat a wide variety of foods and have a healthy balanced diet to ensure you get all the nutrients your body needs.

Vegetarians and vegans don't eat any meat, poultry, game, fish, shellfish or crustacea (such as crab or lobster) or animal by-products (such as gelatine).

Vegetarians eat a diet of grains, pulses, nuts, seeds, fruit and vegetables, dairy products and eggs.

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Vegetarians who don't eat eggs and dairy products are called vegans.

Some people who call themselves vegetarians may eat different combinations of these foods. For example, some may have milk but not eggs, while some may eat fish but not meat.

There are three main types of vegetarian:

- **Lacto-ovo vegetarians** eat both dairy products and eggs. This is the most common type of vegetarian diet.
- **Lacto vegetarians** eat dairy products but not eggs.
- **Vegans** do not eat dairy products, eggs or any other animal product.

A vegetarian or vegan diet can be suitable for everyone, regardless of their age. However, you may need to consider specific needs at different stages of life, for example if you're pregnant. If you have any concerns or questions, speak to your GP.

## **The 5 A Day Campaign**

5 a day is based on advice from the World Health Organization, which recommends eating a minimum of 400g of fruit and vegetables a day to lower the risk of serious health problems, such as heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and obesity.

5 A DAY highlights the health benefits of getting five 80g portions of fruit and vegetables every day. That's five portions of fruit and vegetables altogether, not five portions of each.

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- They're a good source of vitamins and minerals, including folate, vitamin C and potassium.
- They're an excellent source of dietary fibre, which helps maintain a healthy gut and prevent constipation and other digestion problems. A diet high in fibre can also reduce your risk of bowel cancer.
- They can help reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke and some cancers.
- Fruit and vegetables contribute to a healthy and balanced diet.

Fruit and vegetables are also usually low in fat and calories (provided you don't fry them or roast them in lots of oil). That's why eating them can help you maintain a healthy weight and keep your heart healthy.

To get the most benefit out of your 5 a day, your five portions should include a variety of fruit and vegetables. This is because different fruits and vegetables contain different combinations of fibre, vitamins, minerals and other nutrients.

Almost all fruit and vegetables count towards your 5 a day. Potatoes and cassava don't count because they mainly contribute starch to the diet. Other vegetables that don't count towards your 5 a day are yams, and plaintain as they are also usually eaten as starchy foods.

The following count towards your 5 A Day:

- Fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Frozen fruit and vegetables.
- Tinned or canned fruit and vegetables. Buy the ones tinned in natural juice or water, with no added sugar or salt.

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- Dried fruit, such as currants, dates, sultanas and figs.
- Fruit and vegetables cooked in dishes such as soups, stews or pasta dishes.
- A glass (150ml) of unsweetened 100% fruit or vegetable juice. Juice counts as a maximum of one portion a day, however much you drink. That's mainly because juice contains less fibre than whole fruits and vegetables.
- Smoothies. A smoothie containing all of the edible pulped fruit and/or vegetable may count as more than one portion but this depends on how it's made. Smoothies count as up to a maximum of two portions per day.
- Beans and pulses. These only count as one portion a day, no matter how many you eat. That's because they contain fewer nutrients than other fruits and vegetables.
- Fruit and vegetables in convenience foods, such as ready meals and shop-bought pasta sauces, soups and puddings. Some ready-made foods are high in salt, sugar and fat, so only have them occasionally or in small amounts. You can find the salt, sugar and fat content of ready-made foods on the label.

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