

How to make healthy food choices

Using the Eatwell Guide can help you to achieve a healthier, more balanced dietary intake. We will take a look at each section in detail below:



Source: Public Health England in association with the Welsh government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

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Fruits and vegetables

- It's important to eat five (or more) portions of fruit and vegetables every day to prevent heart disease and reduce the risk of some types of cancer.
- Remember that fresh, frozen, dried and canned all count towards your total 5-a-day
- Don't forget to include the vegetables you add to cooked dishes, for example onions in a stew or casserole, tomatoes in a pasta sauce or vegetable soup.
- Try to eat one or two portions with each meal and make fruit or vegetables the first choice for a snack and it will be easy to eat at least five a day.

Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates

- Choose wholegrain varieties of bread, pasta and rice, and whole oats, as these contain more fibre and minerals and helps us feel fuller for longer.
- If you choose pasta, use a flavoursome tomato-based sauce rather than a creamy cheese sauce, which can be high in saturated fats, and serve it with plenty of salad or steamed vegetables.
- Potatoes can be included as part of a balanced diet as long as they are cooked in a healthy way and you are careful with portion size. As a general rule, a portion about the size of your fist is an appropriate meal time portion of carbohydrate.
- Low fat crisps and biscuits are healthier alternatives to the standard varieties but they are still high in calories. Try not to use these foods too often.

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

- Useful sources of protein are baked beans, tinned or dried pulses (lentils, chick peas, quinoa, and kidney beans), tinned fish (sardines, tuna, mackerel and pilchards), lean cuts of meat and mince – remove all visible skin and fat from meat and poultry.
- Quorn, tofu, tempeh or soya are excellent alternatives to animal protein.
- Try fish/chicken/Quorn in breadcrumbs rather than in batter.

Dairy and alternatives

- Dairy foods provide the richest source of dietary calcium, so aim for three portions a day to meet most calcium needs.
- Choose low fat dairy products, such as skimmed or semi skimmed milk, reduced fat cheese or cottage cheese, and low fat yoghurts instead of full fat varieties.
- If you need to avoid dairy foods always choose options that are fortified with calcium.
- Yeast flakes are also great for adding a cheese-like flavour to foods or sauces and a good way to add essential B vitamins to your diet if you are vegan or just cutting down on animal sources.

Oils and spreads

- Choose a 'low' or 'reduced fat' spread rather than butter or margarine, as these contain less saturated fat. Try to choose one labelled 'high in monounsaturated' or 'polyunsaturated' as these are the healthier fats.
- Choose vegetable, sunflower, olive, or rapeseed oil instead of lard or dripping.
- Experiment with different sandwich fillings e.g. with hummus you may not need any kind of spread.
- Remember that **all** cooking oils are high in calories so use sparingly, especially if you are trying to lose weight.

When shopping

- Be mindful when choosing products and check if the product has added salt or sugar to replace the fats. Take some time to become familiar with nutrition information that may be on the front of a product or check the ingredients, especially foods you buy most frequently. Small changes to a healthier option can make a big difference over time.



When cooking

- Use methods which do not need any fats or oils such as boiling, steaming, grilling, microwaving, baking or 'dry roasting'.
- If you need to use oil, use unsaturated oils and only use a small amount. Try a one calorie spray oil or use non-stick pans.
- If you buy ready meals, choose from the healthy or lighter options range in the supermarket and serve with extra vegetables to help you feel fuller for longer.
- Brown meat or mince without adding extra fat, and drain the fat off before serving.
- Skim the fat off from the meat juices, before making the gravy and use corn flour to thicken gravy and other sauces.
- If making chips, use large slices of potatoes as they absorb less fat than thin cut chips. Alternatively use oven chips, or potato wedges cooked in the oven.
- Use a little olive oil, black pepper and skimmed milk instead of butter and whole milk when making mashed potato. Add garlic, chives or chilli flakes for extra flavour.

Changes to recipes

- If you make a pie, only cover the top in pastry. You could also try using filo pastry or mashed potato or sweet potato instead of shortcrust pastry.
- Use unsaturated fat/margarine in baking instead of butter or lard.
- Most recipes will work with less sugar; reduce the amount by up to half.
- Replace half of the usual quantity of white flour with wholemeal flour in recipes.
- Use semi skimmed, skimmed milk or the dairy-alternatives for sauces and puddings.
- If a recipe includes cheese, use one that is strong flavoured, and grate the cheese. This will help reduce the amount you use without missing out on flavour.

When serving food

- Avoid adding butter/olive oil or salt to your meal before serving.
- Use herbs, spices, lemon juice, balsamic vinegar, or freshly ground pepper to flavour food.
- Use low fat mayonnaise, salad cream or low fat salad dressings sparingly.
- If you want to sweeten food, try adding cinnamon, vanilla essence or chopped/pureed fruit.

Eat a range of foods from the main food groups to make sure you have a balanced diet. Most of all – enjoy your food!

Contact details: **Nutrition and Dietetic Services** Tel: (01225) 824398 (RUH)

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Please contact the Patient Support and Complaints Team (PSCT) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital.

Email ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net or telephone 01225 825656.

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