

MECC Health and Well-being

Making Every Contact Count

Eating a Healthy Diet

When it comes to what we eat, we like food to be quick, tasty and reasonably priced. Add this to a busy lifestyle, looking after children and family and this can often lead us to eating ready-made meals, takeaways and quick snacks.

Calories are a measure of the amount of energy in a food. Knowing how many calories are in our food can help us to balance the energy we put in to our bodies with the energy we use, and that's the key to a healthy weight.

Keep an eye on the amount of calories that you are having each day. You should try to aim for a minimum of 1200 calories each day (this includes any drinks and desserts) this will leave you with a few calories for healthy snacks.

Your metabolism is the chemical processes that occur within your body in order for you to simply be alive (Breathing, beating of your heart, thinking etc) the amount of calories that are used for this will vary from person to person, however if you eat more calories than are required for your body's everyday functions, you will put on weight

An average man needs around 2,500kcal (10,500kJ) a day. For an average woman, that figure is around 2,000kcal (8,400kJ) a day. These values can vary depending on age and levels of physical activity, among other factors

Healthy eating

These practical tips cover the basics of healthy eating, and can help you make healthier choices:

Base your meals on starchy foods

Starchy foods should make up about one third of the foods that you eat such as potatoes, cereals, pasta, rice and bread. You should try to choose wholegrain varieties and eat potatoes with the skins left on whenever you can as they will contain more fibre. Try to include at least one starchy food with each main meal. Some people think that starchy foods are fattening but in fact gram for gram they contain half the calories



Patient Information

compared to fat.

Eat lots of fruit and vegetables

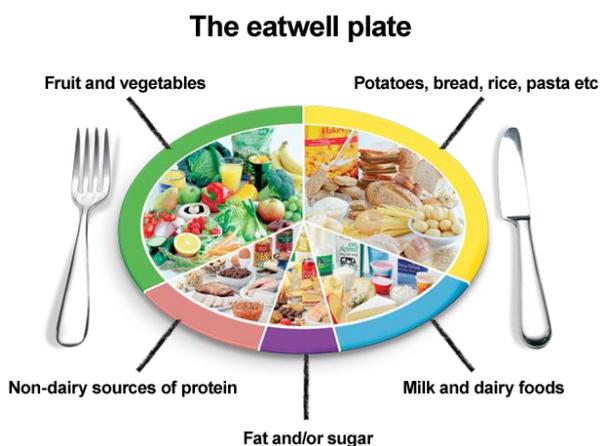
It is recommended that your five a day is split between fruit and vegetables such as, two fruit and three vegetables or one fruit and four vegetables. A glass of 100% unsweetened fruit juice can count as one portion and adding vegetables to other cooked dishes will also count. It is a lot easier than you think to add more fruit to your diet, why not slice a banana on to your cereal or snack on dried fruit instead of crisps and chocolate.

Eat more fish

Fish is a good source of protein and contains many vitamins and minerals. You should try to eat 2 portions of fish each week including at least one portion of oily fish for example salmon, sardines, mackerel. Oily fish is high in omega-3 fats; these can help to prevent heart disease. Remember that canned and smoked fish can be high in salt.

Eat less salt

Even without adding salt to your food, you may still be eating too much. About $\frac{3}{4}$ of the salt that we eat is already in the foods that we buy. Use food labels to help you to cut down. More than 1.5g of salt per 100g means the food is high in salt. Adults and children over 11 should eat no more than 6g of salt each day.



Don't skip breakfast

Some people think that skipping breakfast helps them to lose weight. Research shows that eating breakfast can help you to maintain your weight. A healthy breakfast is an important part of a balanced diet and provides some of the important vitamins and minerals that we need to maintain good health.

Cut down on saturated fat and sugar

We all need some fat in our diet. But it's important to pay attention to the amount and type of fat we're eating. There are two main types of fat: saturated and unsaturated. Too much saturated fat can increase the amount of cholesterol in the blood, which increases your risk of developing heart disease.

Patient Information

Saturated fat is found in many foods, such as hard cheese, cakes, biscuits, sausages, cream, butter, lard and pies. Try to cut down, and choose foods that contain unsaturated rather than saturated fats, such as vegetable oils, oily fish and avocados. For a healthier choice, use a just a small amount of vegetable oil or reduced-fat spread instead of butter, lard or ghee. When you're having meat, choose lean cuts and cut off any visible fat.

Don't get thirsty

Studies have tried to establish a recommended daily fluid intake, but it can vary depending on the individual and factors such as age, climate and physical activity.

A good rule is to drink enough fluid so that you're not thirsty for long periods, and to steadily increase your fluid intake when exercising and during hot weather. Passing clear urine (wee) is a good sign that you're well hydrated.

You should drink plenty of fluid if you have symptoms of dehydration, such as feeling thirsty and lightheaded, or passing dark-coloured urine. It is also important to replace fluid lost after an episode of diarrhoea.

All non-alcoholic drinks count, but water, milk and fruit juices are the healthiest. Try to avoid sugary soft and fizzy drinks that are high in added sugars and can be high in calories and bad for teeth.

Losing weight

If you regularly eat more calories than your body needs and burns off then it is inevitable that you will put on weight. The only healthy way to lose weight is to eat a healthy diet, not go over your daily allowance of calories and increase your physical activity levels. There is a free NHS 12 week weight loss plan on NHS choices website that maybe useful in supporting a weight loss programme.

Further help and support

Speak to your GP for further help and support on eating a healthy diet.

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/Healthyeating.aspx

British Dietetic Association

<https://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts>

MECC Health & Well-being

University Hospital
Clifford Bridge Road
Coventry
CV2 2DX
Tel: 02476 964760

Patient Information

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please ask and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy

Document History

Author	Matthew Dominey
Department	MECC
Contact Tel No	24760
Published	August 2014
Reviewed	October 2015, December 2017
Review	December 2019
Version	2.1
Reference No	HIC/LFT/1798/14