



HEALTHIER EATING

Healthy Eating involves eating a balanced diet ensuring that the body is getting enough nutrients. Food choices affect both short term and long term health and a healthier eating diet can help prevent illnesses such as diabetes, obesity, heart disease, stroke and some cancers.

Why is Healthy Eating Important?

There are many important nutrients found in food and they all have different functions within the body:

Carbohydrates: This is the body's main energy source and is essential for all bodily functions.

Protein: An energy source used for growth and repair of body tissues.

Fat: High in energy this nutrient helps store important vitamins within the body.

Vitamins and Minerals: There are many types of vitamins and minerals which are all needed in varying amounts. They have different functions and therefore a diet including a variety of vitamins and minerals is recommended.

Fibre: This is the indigestible part of carbohydrate foods which helps to keep the digestive system healthy. It is also known to help control blood cholesterol levels and blood sugar levels.

What is a Balanced Diet?

Eating a wide variety of foods will ensure that the body has all the important nutrients. The Eatwell Guide illustrated by the Food Standards Agency should be used as a guide for what a balanced diet consists of (see illustration overleaf).

Healthy eating guidelines cont.

Dairy and alternatives

A good source of protein and calcium but the following advice should be followed.

Use semi-skimmed or skimmed milk in cooking.

Low fat options should be preferred e.g. lower fat cheese, yogurt and spreads.

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

Choose lean meats and remove skin and visible excess fat.

Choose less processed meats, meat pies and pastries.

Add beans, peas and lentils to stews, curries and casseroles.

Ensure provision of white and oily fish.

Foods high in fat and sugar

Fat reduction

Foods within this group which are high in saturated fat should be reduced such as butter, cheese, cream, pastry, cakes and biscuits.

Unsaturated fats should be used instead e.g. olive oil and rapeseed oil.

Sugar reduction

Reduce the amount of sugar added to dishes and recipes.

Choose lower sugar desserts e.g. low sugar jellies, yogurts, fruit based desserts.