

# Welcome and Introduction

Eating a well-balanced diet is an important factor to keep us healthy.

The nutrition provided by a well-balanced diet provides us with energy to keep us active throughout the day, the right nutrients to stay strong and healthy and helps to prevent some illnesses such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and even some cancers.

This handbook focuses on how to maintain a healthy diet, using the Eatwell Guide, which you can find at the back of this handbook. You will look at the different food groups and how much of each you should be consuming to maintain a healthy lifestyle. This handbook will also highlight how to read labels, plan meals and shop for the best outcome.

## What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a condition in which blood sugar (glucose) levels are too high. In type 1 diabetes this is because the pancreas doesn't produce insulin. In type 2 diabetes the pancreas does produce insulin, but body cells don't respond to its signal properly. This is called insulin resistance. If your blood glucose is higher than normal but hasn't yet reached the level at which diabetes can be diagnosed, you are said to have pre-diabetes. It is important to act now as the risk of developing diabetes, and the complications associated with it, is much higher if you already have pre-diabetes

## My programme

The programme is split into 3 stages

1. Initial assessment:
  - Programme overview, including understanding individual needs and motivations.
  - Assess lifestyle scores.
  - Signposting onto other services.
2. Group sessions:
  - 6 x fortnightly sessions.
  - 7 x monthly sessions.
3. End of programme one-to-one review:
  - Reassess lifestyle scores.
  - Evaluation of progress.
  - Evaluation of service.
  - Signposting onto other services.
  - Goal setting and review.

## Commitments

### Your commitment to us

- To attend as many of the Healthier You sessions as you can. This gives you the best chance of reducing your risk of developing type 2 diabetes.
- To let us know if you are unable to attend or if you no longer wish to continue with the programme.
- To inform us of any changes to your health (including pregnancy) that may impact on your ability to take part in the programme, particularly our physical activity sessions.
- Although we are not clinicians, it is important that we are aware of any changes to your health and wellbeing so we can provide you with the most appropriate support.
- At Xyla, our ethos is to be person centred; Although our team try really hard to deliver the best possible service, we recognise that occasionally we may not get it right. If you are unhappy with any part of our service we would like to know so that we can resolve this for you.

### Our commitment to you

- To provide you with a service designed to reduce your risk of developing type 2 diabetes by offering you a mixture of 1-1 and group sessions focusing on nutrition and physical activity.
- To equip you with the knowledge, skills and tools to make healthier lifestyle changes at each session.
- To support you to set goals which are specific to your health with our team of trained health & wellbeing coaches.
- Ongoing review opportunities.
- To ensure we deliver an effective service which is based on the latest evidence and responsive to your needs.
- To keep any information you share with us secure and only ever share it when updating your GP of your progress or to our programme commissioners (NHS England) for reporting and evaluation purposes. If you opt out of the evaluation, your report details will be reported anonymously.

You can give us your feedback:

- In person speaking to a health & wellbeing coach
- Via our website: [www.preventing-diabetes.co.uk](http://www.preventing-diabetes.co.uk)
- By email: [info@preventing-diabetes.co.uk](mailto:info@preventing-diabetes.co.uk)
- By phone: 0333 577 3010

We will always try and respond to any patient dissatisfaction, quickly and efficiently, however if you are still not happy we will be able to guide you through our complaints procedure.

# Chapter 1: Understanding diabetes

What you can do to reduce your risk This chapter will consider how the foods we eat affects our risk of diabetes. We'll look at how making lifestyle changes may help to reduce your risk of developing type 2 diabetes. We'll also learn some nutrition basics, including the key nutrients and food groups.

By the end of this chapter you should:

- Recognise your diet to be important in contributing to your health and wellbeing.
- Understand that positive changes may reduce your risk of developing diabetes.
- Recognise your risk factors that increase the likelihood of developing diabetes.
- Identify risk factors that can be changed.
- Identify your own lifestyle risk factors.
- Understanding how to increase your motivation and success in making changes.
- Be familiar with the features of successful goals.

## **How can lifestyle changes improve health and reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes?**

You can reduce your risk by taking the following steps:

- Reduce your weight by 5% if you are currently overweight.
- Reduce your intake of free sugars.
- Increase your physical activity level.
- Achieve or maintain a healthy waist measurement.

Other factors, like managing high blood pressure, having a good sleeping pattern and managing stress can also reduce your risk.

## **How does the food we eat reduce our risk of developing type 2 diabetes?**

During digestion, glucose is produced from the breakdown of carbohydrates (carbs), such as starches and sugars. It then passes into the bloodstream, raising blood glucose levels.

Eating too many sugary foods and refined carbohydrates will lead to a rapid rise in blood sugar. Long-term high intakes of these types of carbs can increase your risk of developing type 2 diabetes, as can being overweight.

We also know that a nutritious and balanced diet can help to meet our requirements for important nutrients that help our bodies stay healthy and prevent or repair any damage. Too much or too little of the right nutrients could lead to malnutrition and increase your risk of diseases like type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and even some cancers.

## **Managing your weight:**

Understanding body mass index (BMI)

Body mass index (BMI) is a measure that relates your weight to your height. A healthy BMI of 24.9 or lower means that you are less likely to develop diseases like type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and even some cancers.

If someone is 170cm tall and weighs 82kg, you can see that the lines cross at a BMI of 28, meaning they are overweight. Use the table below to work out whether your weight is healthy.

BMI gives a quick guide that's useful for most people, but it may not be accurate for everyone. For example, if you work out regularly and have very well-developed muscles you may have a BMI greater than 25 but, in this case, it is not unhealthy. There are some medical conditions in which BMI is not a reliable measure, e.g. kidney or liver disease in which case you should seek advice from your doctor.

### **The importance of waist circumference**

Everybody stores body fat differently. If you have a pear shaped frame and gain fat around the hips and thighs you will have a lower risk than someone who tends to deposit fat around the middle. This is because central fat is more likely to interfere with the work of your organs such as the pancreas and liver. Measuring abdominal fat can help determine your risk.

Waist measurements should be less than:

- 80cm (31.5in) for women.
- 90cm (35in) for men of South Asian background.
- 94cm (37in) for other men.

### **Top tip**

A simple way to find out if you need to lose weight around your middle is to use a piece of string.

Simply get someone to measure your height with a length of string, then fold it in half and check whether it fits comfortably around your waist.

If not, you need to lose weight around the middle. This way of measuring your waist is also called your height to waist ratio and is another way to assess your risk for type 2 diabetes.

A great way to find out if you are making progress is by checking whether your waistband is getting looser.

Check the resources section of the Wellbeing Way app for a video demonstration of the string test

### **Monitoring your health**

Tracking your progress is a great way to determine whether the changes you make to your lifestyle contribute to your long-term goals, or whether they need adjusting. Self-monitoring offers a clear picture of your achievements, builds motivation by displaying tangible results, encourages discipline and consistency and creates a sense of accountability for your actions and decisions.

You can track your weight, BMI, steps, blood glucose, blood pressure, waist measurement, resting heart rate and activity minutes in the Wellbeing Way app! Additionally, you can check out the resources section for more information on how to assess your health.

### **Additional resources and further reading**

- [www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/bmi-calculator](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/bmi-calculator)
- [www.bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/heart-mattersmagazine/medical/measuring-your-waist](http://www.bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/heart-mattersmagazine/medical/measuring-your-waist)

## **Motivation and goal setting**

Breaking old habits, overcoming challenges and making positive lifestyle changes take time, effort and perseverance. Let us look at ways to make sure that you experience success and stay motivated along the way.

Your baseline measurements (e.g. BMI, smoking status, physical activity levels or HbA1c) are your starting points and will help you decide what lifestyle changes are most important to you.

Knowing what needs to change will help you decide on a long-term goal, or your ultimate destination at the end or even beyond this programme.

Once you know what you would like to achieve, you can break this down into manageable steps. These will be your shortterm goals. They act as milestones to help you measure your progress and give you opportunities to regularly celebrate achievements. This will help you stay motivated.

The way you set your goal is important and is crucial to helping you stay motivated and experience success. We could compare goal setting to planning a trip. If we plan to go on holiday, we need to know exactly where we want to go, when and how long for, who with, what our budget is and so on.

Without these details, we may not even get as far as booking flights, or we may run the risk of losing a lot of time and money.

SMART describes the features of any successful goal. Use it as a checklist to ensure that your goals include these features.

Things that drive motivation

- It is important to you.
- SMART goals.
- Reviewing progress.
- Rewards.

Things that decrease motivation

- Obstacles or challenges.
- High costs of sacrifices.

Increase your motivation by ensuring that drivers or reasons to achieve your goals outweigh any obstacles or restraints.

### **SMART Goals**

SMART describes the essential features of any successful goal. Use it as a checklist to ensure that your goals include these features for maximum success.

S is for Specific

Your goal needs to be clear. 'I want to lose 5 kg' is specific. 'I want to be lighter' is too vague. How will you know when you've got there?

M is for Measurable

This will help you to monitor your progress. 'I will exercise 3 times a week for half an hour' is measurable. 'I want to exercise more' isn't. How will you know if you are exercising more?

## A is for Achievable

The goal must be within your current control and realistic for your circumstances. 'I want to be a millionaire' may not be achievable for most of us. 'I would like to save enough money to go on holiday next year' is more achievable.

## R is for Relevant (or can also be realistic)

Must be relevant to your current needs, values and motivation. E.g. 'I want to get fit enough to run a half marathon' won't be relevant if you hate running. 'I want to go to a dance class once a week' may be more relevant for some. The chances of achieving a goal will increase if the focus is on something you enjoy.

## T is for Timely

Deciding how long it will take to reach your target is important. 'I will lose 5 kg by the end of March' has a clear time frame which helps to boost motivation. Without it, you can drift off course, lose sight of your goal and lose your motivation. It is a good idea to review your goals regularly. Some will be easy to achieve while others may need to be revisited and updated.

## Examples of SMART goals

### Long-term SMART goals

In the next two to three months, I would like to:

- Reduce my risk of developing type 2 diabetes by lowering my HbA1c to below 42mmol/mol so it's within the healthy range.
- Lose 3-6kg (1/2 - 1 stone) in weight.
- Quit smoking.
- Learn more about food and how it affects me, my health and the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.
- Develop an understanding about the impact of foods and their relationship to my health, specifically the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.
- Why?
- For my general health and wellbeing as I want to be able to do the things I enjoy.
- I have a family history of diabetes so I want to reduce my chances of developing type 2 diabetes myself.
- To improve my quality of life and not be dependent on other people.

### Short-term SMART goals

- I will aim to eat 3-5 palm-sized portions of vegetables per day, at least three times a week.
- Reduce my intake of dark chocolate digestive biscuits from 3-4 to 1-2 when I'm having my afternoon cup of tea at least 2-3 times a week.
- Reduce the number of slices of bread I have in the day from 8 to 6.
- I will swap my breakfast cereal from sugar frosted flakes to porridge oats every day.

## Top tips

- Make sure your goals are SMART
- Remember to set smaller short-term targets or stepping stone goals — this will help you appreciate your progress better
- Reward yourself for achieving goals. Choose rewards that will make you feel positive, like a day out, a haircut, going to the cinema or meeting up with a friend
- Don't worry if you don't seem to be achieving your goal. Ask yourself if it's something you really want? If so, do you need to set a smaller short-term goal?
- Try working with someone else to set goals. You can encourage each other and give a fresh perspective
- Focus on one goal at a time so you can give it your full attention without becoming overwhelmed.

Goal setting:

Consider what you have learned today

Can you think of a new goal you could set to help achieve your long-term targets?

## Chapter 2: What is a balanced lifestyle?

In this chapter we will learn more about why, when and what we eat and drink. We'll consider how food intake is influenced by psychological, social, economic and cultural factors. We'll also look at our basic nutrient and fluid requirements and consider the importance of calories and energy balance.

By the end of this chapter you should:

- Understand that many factors influence the food you eat and what it means to you
- Recognise the essential nutrients and their main functions
- Know that adequate fluid and fibre are essential and have a significant impact on appetite and energy intake
- Understand the importance of calories and energy balance

### **What factors influence the way we eat?**

From birth, we begin to learn that food is associated with emotional comfort as well as satisfying hunger. This link continues throughout our lives and we often turn to food to give us temporary relief in upsetting or stressful situations.

Eating is also a very important social activity. In most cultures, special occasions are marked by families and communities getting together and sharing food. Some may also include periods of fasting. Although hunger is the body's signal to obtain essential energy and nutrients, we rarely eat due to pure hunger. However, over the last few years poverty levels in the UK have soared and a significant number of people experience hunger regularly.

### **Why do we eat what we eat?**

Can you think of your own cultural preferences and how these might differ from other cultures you know?

If you are on a tight budget you may struggle to buy nutritious food. If you are struggling to make ends meet you are also likely to be experiencing high stress levels which may lead to comfort eating. If you have a better understanding of your eating behaviour and triggers, it can help you to be more aware when you are eating for comfort, out of habit or to meet other needs unrelated to hunger. You can empower yourself and set relevant and realistic goals by taking these influences into account.

Use these to direct your thoughts, think about your own eating habits and how they affect your health.

- What have you learned about your reasons for eating so far?
- What effect might this have on your goal setting later?
- What do you eat on a typical day?

Include all meals, snacks and drinks. Think about what influences these choices and the frequency of your eating/drinking.

What? - Are particular foods or drinks significant?

When? - Meal times, snacking, social occasions.

Why? - Hunger, boredom, social events, stress.

Where? - At home, on holiday, at work, at events.

How? - Relaxed and focused, at the table, distracted and at your desk, watching a screen.

With? - Alone, family, friends, colleagues.

## **Basic nutrients and fluid**

Our food is made up of nutrients known as Proteins, Carbohydrates and Fats as well as vitamins and minerals. These are essential to maintain life and normal body functions.

### **Protein**

Protein is needed for growth and muscle function, (including our hearts and lungs). It is also vital to many body processes like maintaining or building and maintaining muscle tissue, making hormones and enzymes, and a source of essential amino acids. In the UK we often eat more protein than we need. If this happens our body breaks it down to use as energy or may store it as fat. Too much protein can put an extra strain on our kidneys, so very high protein diets and high protein products claiming to build muscle are not generally recommended.

### **Carbohydrates**

Carbohydrates, sugars and starches are a source of fuel for the body, including supplying the brain with glucose. Fibre is another type of carbohydrate that is important for bowel health and for helping us to feel fuller for longer. Fermentable carbs or FODMAPS (fermentable oligo-, di-, mono-saccharides and polyols) are a group of carbohydrates that can't be digested. They may cause problems for some people who have Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS). If you think you have this condition you should check with your doctor before avoiding any foods that contain these types of carbs.

### **Fats**

Fats are another important source of energy. They also contain essential fatty acids that are required to keep our skin, cells and brain structure healthy.

### **Vitamins, minerals and trace elements**

Vitamins, minerals and trace elements are essential for the formation of healthy bones, red blood cells and a wide range of body functions. They also help our bodies to utilise energy, maintain our immune system, and prevent or repair damage to our cells. Our body cannot produce most of these essential micronutrients, so they have to come from what we eat and drink.

No single food contains all the nutrients we need, so it is important that we eat a wide variety of foods to have the best chance of achieving a healthy balanced diet.

Additional resources and further reading

[www.theibsnetwork.org](http://www.theibsnetwork.org)

[www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/IBSfoodfacts.pdf](http://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/IBSfoodfacts.pdf)

### **Hydration**

Although fluid does not count as a nutrient it is essential for survival. If it is hot, you are very active, or you are ill your requirements may increase. If you drink less than 6-8 glasses of fluid per day, you may become dehydrated. Sometimes people lose the ability to sense that they are thirsty and think that they are hungry.

### **How do I know if I am drinking enough?**

Urine that is dark in colour may indicate dehydration, you are also more likely to feel tired, dizzy or lightheaded, have a headache and dry mouth. Ongoing dehydration could lead to a urinary tract infection and possibly kidney problems.

### **Should I drink tap or bottle water?**

Water is recommended as one of the best fluids to help you to meet your fluid requirements. You don't need to buy bottled water as tap water in the UK is safe. It is also more environmentally friendly and cheaper.

#### **Top tip**

If you are not used to the taste of water, try adding a slice of lemon, cucumber or mint leaves. Unsweetened tea or coffee (and milk if you need to gain weight) will also contribute to your fluid intake. Avoid fizzy drinks, energy drinks, squash, fruit juices and smoothies as they often contain a lot of added or natural sugars.

### **Can I drink caffeine?**

Yes, unless your doctor or healthcare practitioner has advised against this. Unsweetened tea and coffee can count towards your fluid intake. Coffee generally contains more caffeine than tea does. High doses of caffeine can increase anxiety, tension, mood fluctuations and headaches. For this reason it is advised to limit your coffee intake to 3-4 cups of coffee a day. Pregnant women should limit their caffeine intake to 200mg per day which amounts to about 1-2 cups of medium strength coffee. Herbal teas and infusions are good alternatives, or you can choose decaffeinated tea and coffee.

### **What about sugar-free squashes and fizzy drinks?**

If you are replacing sugary drinks with artificially sweetened or diet versions, remember that these are still highly processed and contain additives and may be bad for your teeth. Some fizzy drinks are also high in caffeine. These drinks generally lack any essential nutrients and the sweet taste can keep you craving sugary foods in the diet. There is also some evidence that people who regularly drink artificially sweetened drinks gain weight. We don't yet know why or have enough evidence to advise how much is safe. You can retrain your taste buds to prefer less sweet foods by cutting out these drinks.

Question - How many cups or glasses of fluid did you drink yesterday and what types were they?  
What improvements could you make?

### **Does alcohol count towards my fluid requirements?**

No. Alcoholic drinks have a diuretic effect and are dehydrating. A typical hangover headache is partly due to dehydration. Always try to drink plenty of other fluids along with any alcohol you consume and limit the amount you have.

### **Am I drinking safely?**

Current national recommendations advise limiting alcohol to no more than 14 units per week.

In the UK we have seen a huge rise in alcohol-related illness over the last 30 years. It has harmful effects throughout the body, including the brain, gut and liver. Even a small intake can increase the risk of some cancers and dementia as well as depression and aggressive behaviour. It is also possible to become addicted to alcohol. If we drink too much alcohol it may increase the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, as it is high in “empty” calories.

### **Example of units in common drinks**

- 1 bottle of premium beer (330ml) based on 5% ABV, 1.7 units.
- 1 pint of beer based on 4% ABV, 2.3 units.
- 1 pint of cider based on 4.5% ABV, 2.6 units.
- 1 glass of 25ml measured spirits based on 40% ABV, 1 unit.
- 1 bottle of alcopops (275ml) based on 4% ABV, 1.1 units.
- 1 medium glass of wine (175ml) based on 13% ABV, 2.3 units.
- 1 bottle of wine (750ml) based on 13% ABV, 9.8 units.

### **How many units did you drink last week?**

If you drink alcohol, try using a tracker to complete your own drink diary.

The drinkaware calculator can then be used to calculate the calories consumed.

[www.drinkaware.co.uk](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk)

### **Tips for reducing your risk**

- Know your units and stick to the safe alcohol limit.
- If you regularly drink 14 units of alcohol per week, try to spread these over three or four days and have alcohol-free days in between.
- Buy individual or mini wine bottles, small (330ml) bottles of beer or pre-canned drinks (e.g. gin and tonic).
- Don't keep alcohol at home.
- Order wine by the glass or in small carafes instead of a bottle in restaurants.
- Alternate between alcoholic drinks and water/sparkling water.
- Order half pints instead of full pints.

Additional resources and further reading

[www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support/calculating-alcoholunits](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support/calculating-alcoholunits)

### **Understanding calories and energy balance**

Energy is released by digesting and burning (metabolising) food.

This is measured in kilocalories (kcal) or kilojoules(kJ). In the UK, kcal is most commonly used. Our body uses energy to fuel all our body processes that keep us alive (also known as Basal Metabolic Rate or BMR) as well as giving us energy for any movement like getting dressed, walking to the shops or doing sport.

Did you know that different nutrients release different amounts of energy?

- Protein and carbohydrate both provide around 4kcal/g.
- Fat provides more than twice as much energy, giving 9kcal/g.
- Alcohol is not a nutrient but provides 7kcal/g of energy.

If we want to maintain weight we need to balance the energy (calories) we take in with the energy we use up. If we eat more calories than we need, the extra energy is stored as body fat which will result in weight gain.

Our energy use and requirements change according to:

- Age.
- Gender.
- Body size.
- Metabolic rate.
- Health — some long-term conditions like Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), Parkinson's and kidney disease may increase requirements.

For a stable weight, your energy intake (the energy from what you eat and drink) should match your energy expenditure (the energy your body uses). If you want to gain weight you should eat more calories than you use. If you want to lose weight you should consume fewer calories or use up more energy by moving more.

### **How much energy do I need?**

UK energy recommendations for maintaining a healthy weight are called Estimated Average Requirements (EARs). They differ according to age and gender and range from 1840kcal to 2772kcal per day. It is important to understand that this is just a rough guide and that requirements can vary a lot from person to person.

### **Do I need to count calories?**

Studies have found that people tend to underestimate their daily food intake by as much as 845kcal per day – around a third of their daily requirements or the equivalent of a large burger with chips. Taking charge of your energy balance means that you need to be aware of how much energy you are taking in. One way to do this is to count calories. There are many books, eating plans, trackers and apps available that can help you do this. If you are trying to lose weight you should aim to reduce your calorie intake by about 500-600kcal per day. Similarly, you should aim to consume around 500-600kcal more if you want to gain weight.

Counting calories can be useful as a short-term measure to make you more aware of how much you are eating but it can have some drawbacks. The calorie content of foods is based on estimates and therefore not exact. It may also take away much of the enjoyment of eating and cause you to increasingly restrict and limit your diet. Also, calorie counting will not help to ensure that your diet is balanced and varied and could mean that you miss out on essential nutrients.

The Eatwell Guide gives us an easier way of controlling our energy and nutrient intake by helping us to be aware of what to include over the day. It divides foods into groups which approximately match with the main nutrients. Have a look at the back page for more information about the Eatwell Guide sustainable dietary changes.

Additional resources and further reading

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/managing-your-weight/understanding-calories>

### **Setting new SMART goals**

We've looked at the importance of social, cultural, emotional and financial factors that influence our diets. To set realistic and relevant goals we need to take these factors into account to make enjoyable, sustainable dietary changes.

What can I do about my energy balance?

First decide on your weight goal. Do you want to maintain, lose or gain weight?

As a portion guide, we recommend a quarter of your plate is made up of protein, another quarter is made up of starchy carbohydrates, and the remaining half of your plate is made up of vegetables. Use this portion plate as a rough guide for your meals. If you are active or want to maintain a healthy weight, you may need to increase the portion sizes of your starchy foods and be more liberal with healthy fats and snacks in your diet.

Here are some further tips based on your goal:

To lose weight

- Reduce/cut out sugary drinks and alcohol
- Reduce portion sizes. Limit snacks between meals
- Replace sweet and fatty processed snacks with healthy snacks like a small handful of raw, unsalted nuts or vegetables

To gain weight

- Replace sugary drinks with full cream milk
- Increase portions if possible
- Try to include nourishing snacks e.g. cheese and wholegrain crackers, full cream yoghurt, nuts and seeds

To maintain weight

- Replace sugary drinks with water and/or a small glass of low fat milk per day
- Don't change portion size
- Try to include nourishing snack such as cheese and wholegrain crackers

### **24-hour recall**

Completing a 24 hour recall, where you record everything you ate and drank over the last 24 hours, can help you to understand what you're eating and help identify areas you may want to improve. Use your knowledge of the eatwell guide to help you.

In your recall, include the following information:

1. Meal type/time of day e.g. breakfast or afternoon snack

2. Food or drink consumed e.g. sandwich made with butter, cheese and mayonnaise OR coffee made with whole milk and two sugars
3. Amount e.g. 1 sandwich or a small cup of coffee
4. Reason/prompt e.g. hunger, boredom, socialising

**Goal setting:**

Consider what you have learned today.

Can you think of a new goal you could set to help achieve your long-term targets?

## Chapter 3: What is a healthy diet?

In this chapter we will look at how nutrients fit into food groups. We'll also consider how to apply national recommendations for a balanced diet. Additionally, this chapter looks at how different processing techniques may alter the nutritional value of foods.

We'll focus on how added sugar, salt and fat in many processed foods may affect your health.

By the end of this chapter you should:

- Understand the Eatwell Guide and its specific recommendations for each food group.
- Understand the term Glycaemic Index (GI) and the benefits of choosing wholegrain, high fibre and low GI carbs.
- Know how to identify everyday products that contain added sugar.
- Recognise the different types of fats and which are best to include in your diet.
- Understand the effects and health impact of different methods of food processing.
- Know how to apply Eatwell principles to your daily food choices.
- Recognise the importance of rewarding yourself for achieving your goals.

### **Using the Eatwell Guide to improve your diet**

The Eatwell Guide classifies foods into groups according to the most important nutrient contained and gives recommendations on the frequency and proportions of the different groups to include in your diet. It can help you to meet your daily requirements for all nutrients, fibre and fluid.

Just because a food is classified in one group doesn't mean it only contains that single nutrient. Most foods are rich in several nutrients. However, some highly processed foods may contain very few nutrients. For example, white sugar is often referred to as 'empty calories', although it gives us energy it contains no other nutrients.

### **Starchy carbohydrates**

Base your diet on these (to make up about a quarter of each meal) Starchy carbs, like potatoes, wholegrain rice and bread are also a rich source of vitamins, minerals and trace elements.

You should try to include a wide variety in your diet because different starchy foods contain different amounts of carbs and calories (energy). Remember that carbs break down into glucose, so eating large portions of starchy carbs will result in large amounts of glucose in your bloodstream.

If you are prediabetic or insulin resistant, it will take much longer for your body to clear the glucose from your bloodstream.

One portion is:

- About 25g (1oz) raw wholegrains like brown rice, bulgur wheat, quinoa or porridge oats or wholegrain pasta and noodles (or about 3 tablespoons of cooked grain/pasta)
- A small bowl of cereal (choose oats, muesli and other wholegrain cereals)
- 1 standard slice of bread (choose wholegrain/seeded/multigrain types) — aim for your portion of starchy carbs to be roughly the size of your palm In general, the less active (and the older) you are, the less energy you will need. This means you should choose smaller portions.

Depending on whether you want to lose, maintain or gain weight, you should reduce, maintain or increase your portion size.

Check your carbohydrate intake against this guide.

- Are you having more than one type of carb at a meal?
- Are you choosing sugary, highly refined products or wholegrains?
- How big are your portions?

- Can you identify any changes that you could make to achieve your goals?

## **Fibre**

Fibre is a type of carbohydrate that can't be digested. There are two main types: soluble and insoluble.

Both are important for maintaining healthy bowels. Insoluble fibre is found in wholegrains and vegetables. Soluble fibre is found in oats, beans and pulses. It also helps to control your blood glucose (and cholesterol) levels.

Research suggests that as well as helping you to reduce your risk of developing type 2 diabetes, eating plenty of fibre is associated with a lower risk of heart disease, stroke and bowel cancer.

Follow the Eatwell Guide to Include 30g/day

Examples of food containing fibre are:

- Pulses
- Oats
- Beans

Additional resources and further reading - [www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/how-to-get-more-fibre-into-your-diet](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/how-to-get-more-fibre-into-your-diet)

## **Top tip**

If you need to increase your fibre intake, make sure you start slowly and build up gradually, to allow your digestive system to get used to it. Also, make sure you drink plenty of fluid to help the fibre to work properly.

## **Understanding glycaemic index (GI)**

Most carbohydrates are broken down into sugars and raise blood glucose after a meal. The rate of increase is affected by the glycaemic index (GI) of the food. In general, the least processed, highest fibre foods (e.g. wholegrains, oats, beans, pulses, most fruits and vegetables) have lower GI ratings.

This means they are digested slowly, give better blood glucose control and help you to feel fuller for longer.

Food processing, cooking methods, and cooking time can all affect the GI of foods. Additionally the ripeness of fruit can also affect its GI levels. The protein and fat content of a meal can slow down the rate of sugar absorption, so a balanced meal including vegetables and protein foods will control blood glucose better than an unbalanced meal (e.g. two slices of white toast with jam).

Examples of high GI foods include sugar, syrup, nectar, jam, fruit juice, sugary drinks, white bread, crackers, roti, mashed potato

Examples of low GI foods include basmati rice, vegetables, lentils, pasta, wholegrain bread, oats

Practical tips for a high fibre and low GI intake:

- Avoid sugary foods and drinks.
- Choose wholegrain, seeded or stoneground breads, wholegrain cereals and pasta.

- Choose basmati, brown, red or wild rice, bulgur wheat, quinoa and unpeeled new potatoes or sweet potatoes.
- Eat plenty of vegetables and salads at meals.
- Include beans and pulses and make sure to include some protein at each meal.
- Limit free sugar from sweetened foods and drinks to 30g per day.

Natural sugars, such as glucose and fructose, are found in fruits and lactose is found in milk and yoghurt. These foods are rich sources of essential nutrients so should be included in a healthy, balanced diet.

Free sugars, such as sucrose (table sugar), corn syrup, glucose powder or syrup, maltose, dextrin, and a range of other related products, are added to foods during processing, for example cakes, biscuits and ketchup. Sugary drinks and foods with added sugar increase blood glucose quickly and are high in energy.

Fast foods (like takeaways) as well as convenience foods (like tinned or packet soups, condiments like salad dressing and even baked beans) often contain a lot of invisible added sugar.

#### Top tips

- Replace sweets, biscuits and puddings with fruit.
- Choose unsweetened alternatives e.g. fruit tinned in natural juice instead of syrup.
- Drink water, not sweetened juices, squash or fizzy drinks.
- Replace milk chocolate with one or two squares of dark chocolate (70%+cocoa solids).
- Replace jams, marmalades, chocolate spreads and honey with one heaped teaspoon of peanut butter (no added palm oil, salt and sugar).

#### Protein-rich foods

Include 2-3 portions per day at meals

Meat, fish, eggs, beans, pulses, nuts, seeds, soya products and Quorn are the most important foods that provide us with high quality protein in the diet.

How often and how much:

- Fish: aim to include two portions of fish a week, one of which should be oily e.g. sardines, pilchards, mackerel, salmon, trout, kippers (can be fresh, smoked or tinned in olive oil or spring water). Oily fish is a good source of omega 3 and vitamin D.
- Meat: limit red meat to three portions per week\*. Three portions is equivalent to about 350–500g (about 12–18oz) cooked weight. Try to minimise intake of processed meat\* like ham, bacon, sausage, salami and chorizo if possible. Also choose lower fat cuts e.g. topside of beef, leg of lamb or extra lean mince and drain any fat during cooking. Remove skin and visible fat from chicken and white meat where possible. Include meat-free days.
- Beans and pulses are a good alternative to meat as they are low fat, high fibre, low GI, easy to store and very affordable.

One portion is:

- meat, poultry or fish = palm size serving (100-150g)
- beans or pulses = 3 heaped tablespoons
- eggs = 2 eggs

\*Although red meat is a valuable source of protein, iron and vitamin B12, it is associated with an increased risk of colorectal cancer. The evidence linking processed meat intake and cancer is even stronger, so there is no safe amount that can be recommended. These meats are often high in salt and fat and can increase your risk of high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease. Additional resources and further reading can be found at [www.wcrf.org/dietandcancer/cancerpreventionrecommendations](http://www.wcrf.org/dietandcancer/cancerpreventionrecommendations)

Things to consider:

- Do you include some protein in at least two meals per day?
- How often do you eat red meat in a week?
- Could you make any changes to incorporate the recommendations for protein intake?

### **Fats and oils**

Recommended intake for most people is 70g total of fat per day.

It is important to include some fats as part of a healthy and balanced diet but remember that they are high in calories. Some fats are less healthy and can increase our risk of heart disease.

These are the ones we should aim to cut down on first:

- Trans fats are found in oils that are 'hydrogenated' to hard fats. They may be found in highly processed foods such as pies, biscuits, cakes and pastries, some margarines and baking fats. They are also produced during the repeated reheating of oils used in deep frying.
- Saturated fats are found mainly in animal products such as butter, cream, fat on meat, suet and in processed foods like cakes, biscuits and chocolates. Some plant products also contain saturated fat i.e. coconut milk, coconut cream and palm oil. Guidelines suggest limiting saturated fat to 20g (women) or 30g (men) per day.

### **Replace these with monounsaturated fats, which are the most heart-healthy:**

- Choose olive or rapeseed oil rather than sunflower or corn oil for cooking
- Choose extra virgin olive oil or nut oils for salads
- Include avocados, nuts, nut butters e.g. peanut, almond, cashew, (free from added sugar, salt or palm oil) and seeds, like sesame, pumpkin, chia seeds

### **Omega 3 polyunsaturated fats are important for brain, skin and general health and can reduce the risk of blood clotting:**

- Include at least one portion of oily fish, (e.g. mackerel, sardines, kippers, salmon, trout, and anchovies) a week. One portion is about 140g or roughly the size of your palm.
- If you are vegetarian, choose linseeds, walnuts and omega 3 fortified dairy products e.g. milk and eggs.

If you are vegan, use the link below to find out how to ensure an adequate intake of omega 3.

If you want to lose weight you may want to reduce the frequency and amount of all fat in your diet. Many healthy foods already contain fat (e.g. nuts, seeds, meat, dairy, avocado etc.) so adding oils or spreads to a meal is not always necessary.

### **Additional resources and further reading**

[www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/fish-and-shellfish-nutrition](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/fish-and-shellfish-nutrition)

[www.vegansociety.com/resources/nutrition-andhealth/nutrients/omega-3-and-omega-6-fats](http://www.vegansociety.com/resources/nutrition-andhealth/nutrients/omega-3-and-omega-6-fats)

### **Adding fat - which types and how much should you use?**

For salads:

Choose unprocessed, cold-pressed types – e.g. extra virgin olive oil, walnut, other nut or avocado oils.

#### **For cooking:**

Choose rapeseed oil (most vegetable oil is now rapeseed), peanut (groundnut) oil or small amounts of saturated fats such as lard, butter or coconut oil. Olive oil (including extra virgin olive oil) has a moderately low smoke point which means it starts to deteriorate at lower temperatures on heating. Overheating can also impair its flavour. Light olive oil is suitable for most cooking, including pan frying, but it should not be used for deep frying, or prolonged cooking at higher temperatures (over 180-190°C).

#### **What about cholesterol?**

The cholesterol found in foods such as liver, shellfish and egg yolks has very little effect on cholesterol levels in the blood. Unless you have hyperlipidaemia (an inherited condition), you can include some of these foods as part of a healthy, varied diet. If you have a high blood cholesterol level, you should speak to your doctor for advice.

#### **Additional resources and further reading**

[www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/risk-factors/high-cholesterol](http://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/risk-factors/high-cholesterol)

#### **Dairy products (and alternatives)**

Recommended intake for most people is 2-3 portions of lower fat, high protein and calcium-rich types (milk, cheese, yoghurt)

These dairy foods help you to meet your daily calcium requirements as well as providing protein. If you are on a dairy free or low lactose diet due to allergies or IBS, or you are vegan you should choose naturally calcium-rich or fortified foods.

One portion is:

#### **Dairy**

- one small glass (200ml) of semi-skimmed milk
- a small pot (125g) of natural yoghurt
- a small matchbox-size piece (30g) of cheese
- three heaped tablespoons of plain, unsweetened cottage cheese

#### **Dairy free/low lactose**

- one small glass (200ml) of calcium fortified
- unsweetened soya, rice and oat drinks
- a small pot (125g) of fortified soy yoghurt
- 50g uncooked calcium-set tofu
- three heaped tablespoons of plain, unsweetened quark cheese

- 60g raw almonds
- 90g cooked kale

### **Additional resources and further reading**

<https://www.vegansociety.com/resources/nutrition-and-health/nutrients/calcium>

### **Fruit and vegetables**

Recommended intake for most people is to include five or more portions every day (at least three from vegetables/salad)

A portion is a cupped handful (two handfuls of leafy greens) or a medium piece of fruit or vegetable. Fresh, frozen, dried or canned in juice or water all count towards your five a day.

Research shows that fruit and vegetables can help to reduce blood pressure and protect us against heart disease, stroke and some types of cancer but most people in the UK don't eat enough to benefit from these protective effects. You should limit juice intake to one small glass (150ml) per day or have a whole fruit instead. Avoid smoothies and 'fruit juice drinks' as they may contain additives and are high in sugar.

### **How food processing affects the nutritional value of food**

Salting, smoking, bottling and drying are all processing methods that have been used throughout history to prevent food spoilage, the spread of disease and to ensure food availability out of season. Advances in technology and research led to processes like canning, pasteurisation and freezing.

Although these methods can be very valuable, many highly processed foods contain a range of additives such as salt, sugar, trans fat, colourings, stabilisers, emulsifiers and preservatives.

These are used to improve their shelf life and appearance.

Examples of how natural foods are processed:

#### **Example 1**

Natural food = Wheat

Partially processed food = Stoneground wholemeal bread

Highly processed food = Jam Doughnuts

Added ingredients = Sugar, trans fats, salt

#### **Example 2**

Natural food = Apple

Partially processed food = Homemade apple sauce

Highly processed food = Toffee Apple

Added ingredients = Sugar, trans fats

#### **Example 3**

Natural food = Pork

Partially processed food = Canned/tinned meat

Highly processed food = Pork Pie

Added ingredients = Nitrates, preservatives, salt

### **Salt in processed foods**

We need a small amount of salt, but too much can cause high blood pressure and increases your risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke and kidney problems. Most salt consumption comes from processed food. Salt is added in large quantities, not only to savoury dishes where you would expect it, but also hidden in breads, cereals, cakes and biscuits. Recommendations advise that we limit added salt to 6g (1 teaspoon) per day.

Follow these simple tips to reduce your salt intake:

- Use very little in cooking- use more herbs and spices instead
- Steam or boil vegetables in small amounts of already boiling water to preserve the flavour, adding only a pinch of salt
- Do not add salt to food at the table. Use black pepper, lemon juice and vinegar instead
- Limit very salty foods (e.g. processed meat, fish, cheese, olives, salted nuts, foods canned in brine)
- Choose low salt options where possible e.g. baked beans, raw unsalted nuts.
- Check the labels in supermarkets if you are unsure of the salt content.

### **Additional resources and further reading**

- [www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/salt-nutrition](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/salt-nutrition)
- [www.bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/support/healthy-living/healthy-eating/salt](http://www.bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/support/healthy-living/healthy-eating/salt)

### **Reviewing your goals**

Now is a good time to look back and review your short and long-term goals. Celebrate and reward yourself for your successes and revise or add to any goals that you have yet to achieve.

### **What do you reward yourself with, and why?**

Some people have problems with rewarding themselves as they don't think they are worth it. Other people only know how to reward themselves with food. It's important that you start to think about other ways you can reward yourself that are in line with your values and goals. Make a list of suitable rewards that you would enjoy and value e.g. a good book, new clothes or a pamper experience, that could be enjoyed with friends or family or as time out for yourself.

### **Goal setting:**

Consider what you have learned today.

Can you think of a new goal you could set to help achieve your long-term targets?

## Chapter 4: Practical solutions for a healthier you

In this chapter we'll consider practical ways to help you make positive, lasting, enjoyable and affordable dietary changes. We'll consider all the steps involved in preparing meals, including planning, thinking about your shopping habits, increasing your understanding of food labels and how to make food swaps. We'll also look at how you can manage to eat well even on a low budget.

By the end of this chapter you should:

- Understand the importance of meal planning.
- Know how to use shopping lists to reduce waste and shop smart.
- Understand how to use food labels to make healthier food choices.

- Be able to identify misleading marketing and packaging claims.
- Recognise how to make affordable, healthy food swaps.
- Understand how to modify recipes/meals for a healthier balance, whatever your level of cooking skills and budget.
- Know how to prepare and select healthy meals whether at home or eating out.

### **Meal planning**

We can end up spending a lot on our food shops if we don't plan our meals, potentially even buying the wrong ingredients in a rush. This could lead to wasting food due to expiry dates.

By planning meals you can:

- Ensure you have nutritionally well-balanced meals throughout the week.
- Make healthier choices.
- Avoid food spoilage and eat fresher food.
- Save money.
- Save time.
- Reduce stress.

### **Practical tips to get you started**

- Plan according to the number of meals and portions per meal you need to prepare for yourself and anyone you live with.
- Use items that will expire first.
- Check what foods you already have at home and think about how to include these.
- Plan a menu that includes some of your favourite meals.
- Make sure you include:
  - different protein foods each day.
  - a variety of wholegrain low GI carbs.
  - a wide range of fruit and vegetables.
  - a variety of colours and textures to look appealing.
- Think about the quantities you will need. Make sure you have enough 5-a-day fruit and vegetable portions that will keep for the week.
- Use supermarket or other apps for planning meals.

### **Sample weekly menu**

Breakfasts for the week. Pick one of the following:

- Porridge or sugar free muesli with skimmed or semi-skimmed milk or calcium fortified soy milk (no added sugar).
- Wholegrain/multigrain/seeded bread or toast with
  - nut butter (no added sugar, salt or palm oil).
  - or boiled, poached or scrambled eggs.
- Natural yoghurt (or soy yoghurt) with half a banana or a handful of berries, sprinkle of seeds, and oats.

Main meal (may be lunch or evening). Pick one of the following:

- Grilled, poached or oven baked fish (e.g. cod, sardines, salmon) with lemon juice and herbs, fresh seasonal or frozen vegetables and new or sweet potatoes.
- Chicken (or fish/tofu/halloumi/lean lamb) and vegetable kebabs (with peppers, courgettes, tomatoes, onion) and yoghurt marinade with boiled/steamed brown rice.
- Roasted lean beef (or chicken/turkey/nut roast) with seasonal or frozen vegetables and new or sweet potatoes.
- Wholegrain pasta with bolognaise sauce (lean mince/soy mince and, tomatoes, onion, carrot, peppers, mushrooms, oregano and basil) and side salad.
- Stew (or curry/tagine/cassoulet) with lean fish (or meat/chicken and/or beans/lentils) and vegetables with new or sweet potatoes (or brown rice, bulgur or rustic wholegrain bread).
- Stir fry: prawns (or Quorn/tofu/chicken/lean sliced beef) and mushrooms, peppers, bean sprouts, water chestnuts with mixed grain rice or brown noodles.
- Moussaka (using extra lean mince or soy mince, grilled potatoes/aubergine and low fat sauce) and side salad.
- Grilled, poached or oven baked fish (e.g. cod, sardines, salmon) with lemon juice and herbs, fresh seasonal or frozen vegetables and new or sweet potatoes.
- Chicken (or fish/tofu/halloumi/lean lamb) and vegetable kebabs (with peppers, courgettes, tomatoes, onion) and yoghurt marinade with boiled/steamed brown rice.
- Roasted lean beef (or chicken/turkey/nut roast) with seasonal or frozen vegetables and new or sweet potatoes.
- Wholegrain pasta with bolognaise sauce (lean mince/soy mince and, tomatoes, onion, carrot, peppers, mushrooms, oregano and basil) and side salad.
- Stew (or curry/tagine/cassoulet) with lean fish (or meat/chicken and/or beans/lentils) and vegetables with new or sweet potatoes (or brown rice, bulgur or rustic wholegrain bread).
- Stir fry: prawns (or Quorn/tofu/chicken/lean sliced beef) and mushrooms, peppers, bean sprouts, water chestnuts with mixed grain rice or brown noodles.
- Moussaka (using extra lean mince or soy mince, grilled potatoes/aubergine and low fat sauce) and side salad.

Try creating a table for the week ahead to plan your meals, include a column for the day of the week and a column for each meal that day.

### **Shopping**

Making a shopping list can help you avoid impulse purchases of unwanted or extra (often unhealthy) foods. It can help to use a list that is organised according to aisles or types of items to make your shop easier. Try separating your list into:

- Fresh fruit and vegetable produce
- Meat
- Dairy
- Store cupboard
- Drinks

- Frozen

### Shopping on a budget

It's a common belief that healthy eating is expensive. This is not the case if you plan ahead and are prepared.

If on a budget:

- Plan at least one meatless meal a week, including beans and pulses.
- Avoid recipes that need costly ingredients or adapt them to include more affordable options.
- Use seasonal or frozen foods.
- Use up leftovers.
- Grow your own herbs, fruit bushes (swap seeds/seedlings/cuttings with neighbours/friends) or join a gardening group.
- Buy in bulk, avoid individual sachets and part cooked foods e.g. parboiled rice or instant porridge.
- Choose supermarket own brands/value labels
- Collect and use coupons.
- Pair up with a friend/neighbour to take advantage of multibuy offers.
- Avoid pre-prepared fruits and vegetables (they are more expensive, less nutritious and have a shorter shelf-life).
- Choose cheaper cuts of meat like stewing steak and avoid pre-prepared meat cuts and dishes like breaded fish or chicken or oven-ready roasts with gravy.
- Use a pressure cooker to reduce cooking times.
- Cook extra and freeze some portions.
- Make use of free foods e.g. blackberries, chestnuts, hazelnuts or allotment surplus from your friends or neighbours.
- Consider using a food bank if you are struggling to make ends meet.

### Top tips

- Reduce temptation by making sure you aren't hungry when you go shopping and by not stocking snacks and sugary drinks at home.
- Foods on offer are often unhealthy or close to expiry – only buy them if they are on your list and you will consume them within the 'use by' date.
- Choose smaller packs and avoid multipacks of highly refined snacks.
- Choose small bottles of wine, beer or cider and pre-canned drinks (e.g. gin and tonic) to help with portion control.

### **Label reading**

It's important to read food labels so that you understand what ingredients are in the food you buy and in order to compare products.

### **Nutritional information**

It is a legal requirement for manufacturers to provide a full ingredients list, including any allergens, arranged in descending weight order, e.g. if sugar is the main ingredient it will be listed among the first ingredients.

### Nutritional content table

This gives you information on energy (kJ/kcal), fat, saturates (saturated fat), carbohydrate, sugars, protein and salt content (and sometimes fibre). This information is provided per 100 grams of product, and/or per portion.

Percentages of Reference Intakes (RIs) per 100 g/100 ml and/or per portion of the food item are not compulsory but may be found on the front of the pack. They indicate energy, fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt content and whether the product contains high, moderate or low amounts.

### Information per 100g/100ml of the product

If you want to cut down your sugar intake, eat fewer foods that have over 5g of total sugars per 100g.

### Information per portion traffic light guide

Green indicates healthier choices. The less red and amber appears on the label, the healthier this option might be.

In addition to nutritional information, food labels help us to ensure that the food we eat is safe and of good quality. To reduce the risk of food poisoning, always check 'use by' dates when shopping and follow the storage and usage instructions.

### Reference Intakes (RIs)

It is impossible for labels to give guidance to meet everyone's exact requirements. For simplicity and ease of use, the reference intakes adopt the requirements of an average woman to give us a rough guide to the amount of energy and key nutrients we all need to be healthy.

To try to reduce your waste (and save money) remember:

- Check 'use by' and 'best before' dates in store and choose those with the longest shelf-life.
- Rotate stock when you put it away, placing new products behind those that need using.
- Use up foods approaching their 'use by' date by making soups or stews or by freezing them e.g. grated cheese, separated eggs.
- To avoid sweating and extend shelf-life, remove fruit and vegetables from plastic packaging before storing.
- Keep root vegetables like potatoes, onions and garlic in a cool, dark and well-ventilated cupboard.
- Store oils in a cool dark cupboard. Never leave them standing in sunlight as this causes them to deteriorate and taste stale.

### **Beware of misleading marketing claims**

Terms like 'natural', 'wholegrain' and 'contains antioxidants' may be used to disguise or distract from less healthy ingredients and mislead consumers into buying products.

Some claims to be aware of:

- **'Gluten-free'** is a popular trend at present. Unless you have coeliac disease, you do not need to eat gluten-free foods.
- **'Fat-free'** – just because the product is fat-free doesn't mean it is healthy. These foods may contain a lot of added sugar or salt in order to compensate.

- **'Reduced fat or sugar'** must contain at least 30% less fat or sugar than the standard version but may still be moderate or high.
- **'Diabetic'** foods are unnecessary as those with diabetes can enjoy a normal diet. These products are expensive, still affect blood glucose levels, and may have a laxative effect.
- **'Diet'** products – should be avoided as they are usually highly processed cakes, biscuits, puddings, cereal bars, snacks and ready meals. They may be expensive and lack flavour, so you may still crave the real thing.

Don't get fooled by health claims and marketing ploys and think twice before you buy. Is this food going to help you to get all the nutrients you need? Is it tasty as well as healthy? Will you enjoy eating it and feel satisfied?

Additional resources and further reading

[www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-labelling-terms](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-labelling-terms)

### **Affordable food swaps**

Let's think about which swaps you want to make to reach your own personal health goals.

Try and make meals or recipes that you make regularly healthier by incorporating healthy swaps, for example:

- Wholegrain bread for white or brown
- Open sandwich instead of a full one
- If you usually have cereal and toast for breakfast just have one or the other
- Choose a tomato-based pasta sauce rather than cream
- Serve meals with salad and veg instead of chips or potatoes — replacing potato chips or wedges with oven-baked parsnip, carrot or beetroot chips

### **Cooking**

All of us are different. The idea of cooking may be scary to those who have never learned the basics. Others might have limited time available to make meals and simply want quick and easy ideas. Some might be restricted by a lack of facilities and eat out for main meals. Yet others enjoy cooking from scratch, following recipes and learning new skills.

Whatever your preference, you can apply the healthy eating knowledge and practical tips that you've already learned.

Top tips:

- Choose lower fat, salt and sugar foods using your label reading skills
- Cut down on the amount of salt, oil/fat and sugar in recipes and use a teaspoon to measure when adding fat or oil
- Reduce cheese in recipes by choosing a stronger flavour type e.g. extra mature cheddar or parmesan in place of mild cheddar (and add mustard to enhance the flavour)
- Use smaller amounts of grated cheese rather than sliced
- Instead of making sauces using butter and flour to thicken, try mixing milk, stock or cooking juices with cornflour
- Replace some or all the mince in recipes with soy mince. For best results pre-soak with a stock cube the night before
- Control your portions before and after cooking by measuring and freezing leftovers

## **Eating out and takeaways**

Often, eating out and takeaways can be less healthy than cooking from scratch. When people go on weight loss diets they often avoid eating out. This can cause the diet to fail, as eating out with friends and family is an important way to maintain our social and cultural connections. Instead of avoiding these situations, we need to embrace them, confident that we can make healthy decisions.

See the examples below to help you make healthier choices when eating out:

### Breakfasts:

- Ask for poached or grilled rather than fried foods.
- Limit to one rasher of bacon (and cut off the fat and rind) or sausage.
- Choose beans, mushrooms and tomatoes instead of hash browns or potato waffles.
- Opt for one slice of toasted wholegrain bread rather than fried white bread and omit the butter.

### Light meals:

- Check the labels on ready-made sandwiches and choose lower energy, fat, sugar and salt.
- Choose salads with separate dressings and pick lower energy, fat, sugar and salt options.
- Choose smaller portions.
- If choosing jacket potatoes, choose lower fat fillings and omit the butter or margarine. Choose a smaller size or half a large potato.
- Take care with meal deals – choose water, tea or coffee as a drink and fruit as the snack option.

### Main meals:

- Have no more than two courses and omit the bread basket.
- If having two courses, choose a starter, small plate or children's portion as a main.
- Only choose one portion of carbs with a meal e.g. bread or rice or potatoes/chips.
- Choose salad or vegetables instead of rice, chips or garlic bread as a side dish.
- Order wine by the glass and order halves instead of full pints of beer, lager or cider.
- Alternate between alcoholic drinks and water and avoid sugary drinks, smoothies, juices, milkshakes, lassi or ayran.
- Check the menu in advance and pre-plan your choices.

### Goal setting:

Consider what you have learned today. Can you think of a new goal you could set to help achieve your long-term targets?

## Chapter 5: Know your health- making healthy eating a way of life

In this chapter we will examine common myths and misconceptions about healthy eating. We'll also consider a variety of different diet and lifestyle approaches. Finally, we'll explore how and from where you can get support and gain confidence, so that you can sustain and enjoy a healthy, active social life and achieve your long-term health goals.

By the end of this chapter you should:

- Understand the contribution of different fluids to energy intake and how to modify this to meet your requirements.
- Recognise nutrition myths and fads.

- Understand some of the different diet and lifestyle approaches and how they may help in achieving goals.
- Know how to get further support to maintain the lifestyle changes you choose.
- Know how to continue to revise and develop your personal goal.

### **Common myths about foods and other diets you might read about**

#### **'Eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince, and supper like a pauper'**

This is a common belief and there is also some evidence to support this theory. We also know that shift workers and those who regularly experience jet lag are more likely to suffer from sleep disruption and weight gain related to body clock disturbances. None the less, there is not enough evidence available to be able to clearly state that there is a right and a wrong time to eat. Aim for three regular and balanced meals a day and don't eat directly before going to bed so that your body has time to digest and use up the energy from your meal.

#### **'Red wine is good for you'**

Red wine contains a substance called Resveratrol. Some studies suggested this might help to protect against cardiovascular disease and cancer. However, this has since been questioned. Also, the alcohol in red wine is as harmful as in any other alcoholic drink.

Resveratrol and other antioxidants are also found in grapes, peanuts and dark chocolate, so following a varied and balanced diet will ensure that you benefit from the protective effects of antioxidants.

#### **'I must buy superfoods to have a healthy diet'**

All fruits, vegetables, raw seeds, nuts, high protein dairy, fish, oats, beans and pulses and even some herbs and spices are packed full of a wide range of essential nutrients, so all could be considered superfoods.

Chia seeds and goji berries contain some valuable nutrients but so do other seeds (e.g. sesame, pumpkin and poppy) and berries (e.g. redcurrants, strawberries and raspberries).

Blueberries are claimed to be particularly rich in antioxidants (anthocyanins and other flavonoids) but all red and purple/black berries are packed full of these. Blackcurrants contain higher levels than blueberries and are found in frozen berry mixes (a good all-year round and economical choice). Wild blackberries and bilberries are a great free source in summer.

#### **'Vegan diets are healthier'**

Veganism is becoming very popular. However, for most people, cutting out all animal products involves major dietary changes that may be difficult to keep up. Also, some vegan options are highly processed (e.g. vegan burger patties or sausages or vegan cheese). Without careful consideration and planning, the diet may lead to nutritional deficiencies (such as vitamin B12, omega 3, iron, iodine and calcium). For many people it may be more realistic to make smaller, gradual changes e.g. to have one or two meat free days per week or to become vegetarian rather than vegan. By reducing animal products and increasing fruit, vegetables, nuts, seeds, beans and pulses we can reduce cardiovascular disease, cancer and other health risks.

### 'The best diet to lose weight is the low carb plan'

Several studies suggest that following a low carbohydrate diet can help you to lose weight. Reducing total and especially refined carbs can help you to reduce calorie intake and insulin resistance, helping you to meet your weight loss and blood glucose control goals. Some people find reducing highly refined carb intake can also help to reduce food cravings. However, these refined products are often also high in unhealthy fats and should be reduced whether following a low carb diet or not. By following the Eatwell Guide, many people significantly reduce their total carbohydrate intake and achieve a better dietary balance. If you are still struggling to maintain a healthy weight, a further slight reduction in carbs may work for you, provided you can still maintain a healthy, active social life.

**Additional resources and further reading** - [www.vegansociety.com/resources/nutrition-and-health](http://www.vegansociety.com/resources/nutrition-and-health)

### Other types of weight-reducing diets you may come across

#### Very low-calorie diets (VLCD)

There has been a lot of media coverage about very low-calorie diets (VLCD) recently. They are usually drinks or shakes that you take instead of some or all meals. VLCD provide around 800kcal and need to be medically supervised for safety. They can lead to rapid weight loss in the short-term and can help to boost motivation. However, long-term, they may not be very palatable and can even be associated with significant weight regain. You may also struggle to enjoy a normal social life or feel empowered and confident to make healthy, nutritious food choices.

#### Intermittent fasting (two-day/5:2 diets):

The two-day diet is a nutritionally balanced version of intermittent fasting. Like any successful diet, it helps people to lose weight because their overall energy intake is reduced. It has also been shown to reduce signs of inflammation, which can help to reduce health risks. The two-day diet recommends basing your intake on the Mediterranean diet and eating to your requirements for five days a week. On partial fasting days, which can be consecutive or split, your food intake is calorie restricted. It is flexible, nutritionally balanced and can be adapted to fit your personal weight goals (i.e. you can reduce the frequency of fasting to fortnightly or monthly once you reach your goal and want to maintain a balanced social life).

Additional resources and further reading - [www.penguin.co.uk/articles/2019/feb/why-the-2-day-diet-works.html](http://www.penguin.co.uk/articles/2019/feb/why-the-2-day-diet-works.html)

### The Mediterranean diet

The Mediterranean diet is a holistic and thoroughly researched lifestyle approach, that also involves sitting down to eat, enjoying meals with the family, taking time to eat and enjoying an active lifestyle. It is linked with reduced long-term health risks and higher life expectancy. The Mediterranean diet encourages a diet rich in fruit and vegetables, and moderate fat, carb and protein intake. It is a relaxed, easy and enjoyable long-term approach that can help you to achieve and maintain a healthy future.

Additional resources and further reading - [www.heartuk.org.uk/healthy-diets/the-mediterranean-diet](http://www.heartuk.org.uk/healthy-diets/the-mediterranean-diet)

### **Involving family and friends in your goal setting**

Sharing what you are learning from the course with friends and family can help to make your goals more real and boost your confidence and motivation. Their support may also help you to maintain new behaviours. It may even inspire them to make changes. However, they might not always be as supportive as you'd like. Some might find it difficult to see you making changes and may try to pressure or tempt you with less healthy food or snacks which may be hard to refuse. You might need to discuss this with them. Many people find that they need their family to change their habits in order to help themselves. For the best results, this should be discussed with them in advance.

### **Top tips:**

- Set a start date for the new plan so you are all prepared.
- Try negotiating e.g. chips some days, jacket or boiled potatoes on others.
- Try doing things gradually.
- Make a plan together.
- Increase the number of days you choose healthier options, until it is a daily routine.
- Share this handbook so they can see what you are trying to do.
- Try to avoid having different meals from your family. It makes it harder for you and can feel very lonely. It may feel as though you are depriving yourself or even punishing yourself and will reduce your motivation to achieve your goals.
- If you are not the main shopper for the family, you need to talk to the person who does the shopping and show them how to buy things that will help you.

### **Goal setting:**

Consider what you have learned today. Can you think of a new goal you could set to help achieve your long-term targets?

It is hard enough to change your own behaviour. It can be even more of a challenge to get other people on your side too. That is why you may need a bit of time and you will need to do things gradually. Keep going and good luck.