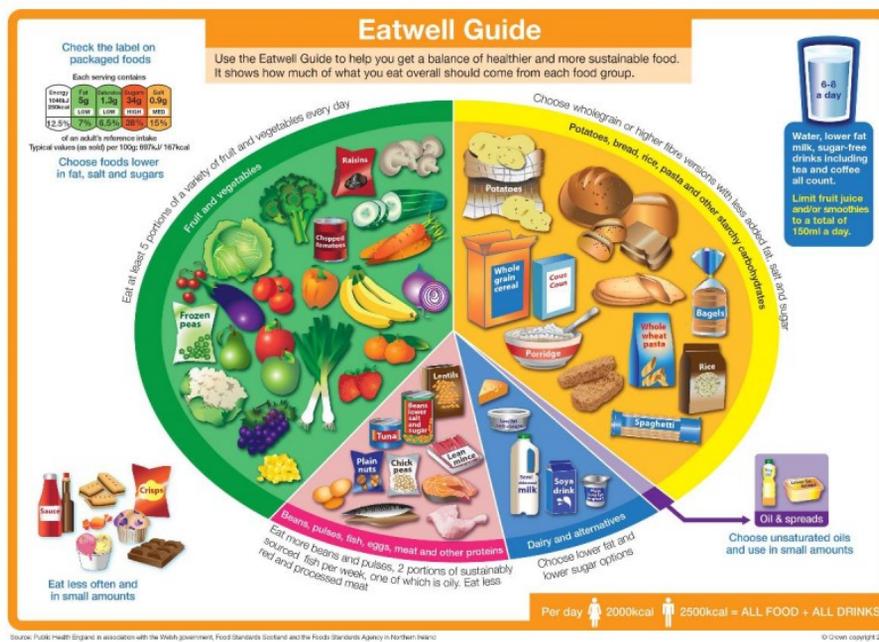


Workshop 9: Healthy Eating

Many people are still unsure about what makes up a healthy diet. With busy lifestyles, we often forget to think about what we need to eat to have a healthy balanced diet and, in a hurry to get on with the next thing that needs doing, we often end up grabbing ‘something quick’. Unfortunately ‘something quick’ often means ‘fast foods’ or ‘convenience foods’, which are usually high fat, high sugar and highly processed.

The Eatwell Plate

To help people work out what to eat and how much, Public Health England has developed ‘The eatwell plate’. ‘The eatwell plate’ is made up of food from 5 food groups. It shows the proportion of how much of each of these groups we need to eat during each day (all meals and snacks included) to achieve a healthy balanced diet.



Starchy Foods (such as bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and cereals)

Starchy foods, also known as carbohydrates, should make up one third of the food we eat each day. Ideally we should include food from this group in every meal. Starchy foods are a good source of energy and also contain fibre, calcium, iron and B vitamins.

It is not true that starchy foods are fattening in themselves – gram for gram they contain less than half the calories of fat. The key thing to be careful of is how much fat you add to these foods when cooking and serving them, as this does increase the calorie content.

It is better to choose wholegrain or wholemeal varieties of these foods wherever possible, as they are more nutritious than white or refined starch foods. Wholegrain foods take longer to digest and help us feel fuller for longer.

Fruit and vegetables

Fruit and vegetables should also make up a third of our food intake very day. It is recommended that we do this by having a variety of at least 5 portions of different fruit and vegetables a day, for example 3 portions of fruit and 2 of veg, but you can choose whatever mix of fruit and veg portions you like. Remember potatoes count as a starchy food and not as portions of fruit and veg.

There are so many good reasons to eat 5 portions of fruit and veg a day and here's a few:-

- They are packed with vitamins and minerals
- They can help you maintain a healthy weight
- They help reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke and some cancers

It may be easier than you think to get your 5 portions of fruit and veg a day.

Whether fresh, frozen, tinned, dried or juiced fruit or veg, they all count. To know you are having enough, it is important to know what size a portion of fruit or veg is. One portion of fruit or veg is 80g in weight, or any of the following:

1 apple, banana, pear, orange or similar size fruit

2 plums or similar size fruit

Half a grapefruit or avocado

1 slice of large fruit such as melon or pineapple

3 heaped tablespoons of vegetables (raw, cooked, frozen or tinned)

3 heaped tablespoons of fruit salad (fresh or tinned in juice) or stewed fruit

1 heaped tablespoon of dried fruit

A dessert bowl of salad

A glass (150ml) of fruit juice (counts as a maximum of one portion a day)

1 cupful of grapes, cherries or berries

Are you getting your '5 a day'?

Fill in the chart below with your ideas of how you can get your '5 a day'

Example of meal or snack times	Example	Your ideas
Breakfast	Sliced banana with cereal	
Mid morning		
Lunch	Lunch with a dessert bowl of salad and a glass of juice	
Afternoon	Apple	
Dinner	Dinner served with a portion of peas or greens	

Milk and dairy foods

It is recommended that we eat some milk and dairy products such as cheese, yoghurt or fromage frais each day. However, you will see from 'The eatwell plate' that the proportion of these foods we need each day is less than half of that for either starchy foods or fruit and veg.

Milk and other dairy products are really good sources of protein, vitamin A and vitamin B12. These foods are also an important source of calcium, which we need to keep our bones strong. The calcium in dairy foods is easily absorbed by the body.

Some dairy products are high in salt. It is important to keep a check on this as too much salt can cause high blood pressure, which is linked to heart disease.

It is also important to mention that the fat content of dairy products varies a good deal and that a high percentage of this is saturated fat, which can raise cholesterol and is linked to heart disease. For example, many popular cheeses are high in fat, but we don't need to avoid eating them altogether.

Using semi-skimmed or skimmed instead of whole milk helps you cut down the amount of fat you are having but will still provide a similar level of the other nutritional benefits like protein, B vitamins and calcium, as will using low fat rather than whole yoghurt.

Butter and cream are high in fat. To reduce the amount of fat you have, try using low fat spreads instead of butter and fromage frais or yoghurt instead of cream, soured cream and crème fraîche.

The key is to keep a check on how much you are eating and you can do this by:

- Eating smaller amounts
- Eating cheese less often
- Choosing a reduced or low fat type of cheese
- Using stronger flavoured cheeses for sauces, to reduce the amount used

Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy proteins

As with the milk and dairy food group, the proportion of meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy proteins we need each day is also less than half of that for either starchy foods or fruit and veg.

Meat

Meat is a good source of protein, vitamins, particularly B vitamins, and minerals such as iron and zinc. Vitamin B12 only naturally occurs in meat, milk and eggs.

Certain types of meat are high fat, particularly saturated fat, so think carefully about the cut or meat product you decide to buy and also choose ways to prepare and cook meat which will reduce the amount of fat that gets eaten.

Fish

Fish is an excellent source of protein and it contains essential vitamins and minerals, such as selenium and iodine. White fish such as cod, haddock, plaice and whiting are very low in fat. Oily fish such as sardines, herring, mackerel, trout and salmon are rich in omega 3 fatty acids and a good source of vitamins A and D. White fish contain some omega 3, but at much lower levels than oily fish.

For a healthier choice, poach, bake or grill fish, rather than frying it, because fried fish is much higher in fat, especially if it's cooked in batter. This doesn't mean you need to stop having fish and chips altogether. It's still OK to do this occasionally and you can make it healthier by having baked beans or mush peas with your fish and chips. If you have salt, add only as much as you like and cut down on the number of chips you have.

Eggs

Eggs are a good source of protein and contain vitamins and minerals such as vitamin D, vitamin A, vitamin B2 and iodine. There is no recommended limit on how many eggs people should eat. Eggs are a good choice as part of a healthy balanced diet. But remember that it's a good idea to eat as varied a diet as possible. This means we should be trying to eat a variety of foods each week to get the wide range of nutrients we need.

Eggs can make a really healthy meal and they are easy to prepare. But it's important to handle, cook and store them properly to avoid food poisoning, especially for the very young, pregnant women and elderly people.

Beans (pulses)

A pulse is an edible seed that grows in a pod. Pulses are a great source of protein for vegetarians, but they are also a very healthy choice for meat-eaters.

Pulses include beans, lentils and peas. They are a low fat source of protein, fibre, vitamins and minerals and they count as a portion of fruit and veg.

Pulses are a good source of iron. Eating peppers or dark green vegetables, or drinking a juice rich in vitamin C, like orange, with your meal will help you to absorb the iron.

You can add pulses to soups, casseroles and meat sauces to add extra texture and flavour. This means you can use less meat, which makes the dish lower in fat and cheaper; this can help if you have a big family, are on a budget or catering for a large number.

Foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar

Less than 10% of what we eat each day should come from these foods. We need to cut down on food which is high in saturated fat and try to have foods which are rich in unsaturated fat instead, such as vegetable oils, oily fish, avocados, nuts and seeds.

Although very tempting, try to eat the following either less often or in a smaller amount:

Pastry, cakes and biscuits

Hard cheese, butter and lard

Meat pies, sausages and meat with visible white fat

Coconut oil, coconut cream and palm oil

Although we need to make sure that we get plenty of fluid everyday (6 to 8 glasses) we need to be cautious about the amount of soft drinks we have, as many are high in calories as they contain a lot of sugar.

And finally, The Food Standards Agency (2005) promotes 8 tips for eating well:

- Base your meals on starchy foods
- Eat lots of fruit and vegetables
- Eat more fish – 2 portions a week for girls, pregnant or breast feeding women or women who wish to become pregnant in the future; 4 portions a week for boys, men and older women
- Cut down on saturated fat and sugar
- Try to eat less salt (6g a day for adults, less than 4g for children under 14)
- Get active and try to be a healthy weight
- Drink plenty of water
- Don't skip breakfast
- Don't forget- it is easier to make changes if you set an appropriate goal