Healthy Eating

Part of the Berkshire Healthy Eating Strategy
Introduction

Food provides energy and nutrients which we need to stay healthy. No single food contains all the nutrients needed, so eating a mixture of foods will help you to get the right amount. The Balance of Good Health represents the types of foods and the proportions in which you need to eat them to have a well balanced, healthy diet. Foods that are eaten as snacks and between meals count as well as food eaten at mealtimes.

Fruit and Vegetables

Fruit and vegetables provide essential vitamins, minerals and fibre. **Have at least five portions daily.**

Meat, Fish and Alternatives

Such as nuts, pulses and eggs

These foods provide us with protein, iron and B-vitamins. **Have two to three portions daily.**
Milk and Dairy Foods
These foods provide protein and calcium for strong bones and teeth. Have two to three portions daily.

Starchy Foods
Such as bread cereals and potatoes
These foods form the basis of your diet. It is best to fill up on plenty of these at each meal. They provide energy, B-vitamins, iron and fibre. Have at least five portions daily.

The Balance of Good Health applies to the majority of the population including vegetarians and those who are overweight. It does not apply to the under-fives or people who are very underweight as these groups usually require diets which are more energy and nutrient dense.

Foods Containing Fat
Fatty foods are high in calories and most are high in saturated fat which is bad for your heart. Eat them sparingly.

Foods Containing Sugar
We enjoy sugary foods as treats, but try not to eat these too often and when you do, have small amounts.
Fruit and vegetables, fresh, frozen or canned, are all good sources of minerals and vitamins as well as soluble and insoluble fibre. Soluble fibre, also found in oats and beans, can help to reduce the amount of cholesterol in the blood.

Most of us do not eat enough fruit and vegetables. Try to eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables each day, including some vegetables, some fruit and some salad.

Avoid preparing vegetables too far in advance or overcooking them, as most of the vitamins will be lost. Place the vegetables in a small amount of boiling water and cook for a short time in as little water as possible. Alternatively use a steamer or microwave.

**What is a portion?**

1 glass of fruit juice
1 medium sized piece of fruit e.g. apple, orange
1 handful of berry fruit or grapes
1 wedge of large fruit e.g. mango or melon
2 small sized pieces of fruit e.g. satsumas, plums
2 tablespoons of raw, cooked, frozen or canned vegetables
A small bowl of salad/side salad

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**Eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day**
Starchy foods

Starchy foods should make up the main part of most meals. Examples of these types of food include bread, chapattis, pitta bread, rice, pasta, matzos, potatoes, yams, green bananas and breakfast cereals.

It is often thought that starchy foods are fattening. This is not true, but they become so if either served or cooked with fat.

Wholegrain varieties of starchy foods are a particularly good choice – for example wholemeal bread and wholewheat pasta. These are rich in a type of fibre, called insoluble fibre, that helps to prevent constipation and some other bowel disorders.

They also contain more vitamins and minerals and are more filling than refined versions.

When you have plenty of fibre in your diet you need to take plenty of fluids too – at least six to eight cups each day.

What is a portion?

3 egg sized potatoes
1 small chapatti
2 tablespoons of cooked rice
4 tablespoons of cooked pasta
2 slices of bread
4 tablespoons of breakfast cereal

Eat more of these foods

Preferably whole grain varieties and those without added fat and sugar
Meat, fish and alternatives

This food group is an important source of protein, vitamins and minerals. Red meat is a particularly rich source of iron which is needed for healthy blood. White fish is a low fat source of protein, while oily fish offer protection against heart disease. Nuts are rich in minerals such as calcium and zinc.

Pulses, such as beans, peas and lentils, are low in fat and high in soluble fibre. This type of fibre helps to lower blood cholesterol and is filling without promoting weight gain. Try to have 2-3 portions from this food group each day. Wherever possible, choose lean or low fat meat and meat products to reduce the amount of saturated fat you eat. Grilling or roasting is preferable to frying.

To help reduce the risk of heart disease, it is recommended that you have 1 portion of white fish or fish product plus one portion of oily fish each week.

What is a portion?

Approx. 50 to 70g / 2 to 3oz of meat or oily fish
100 to 150g / 4 to 5oz of white fish (not fried in batter)
3 tablespoons of baked beans or other pulses such as kidney beans, chickpeas or lentils
60g / 2 tablespoons of nuts or nut products
65g / 2½oz of meat products such as burgers or sausages
2 eggs

To help reduce the risks of some cancers, it is recommended that you do not eat more than 90g of cooked red or processed meat per day.

90g of cooked red meat is equivalent to:
3 slices of roast beef, lamb or pork
2 rashers of bacon plus one large sausage
pork chop
2 standard beefburgers
2 tablespoons of minced beef
Oily fish are:
Anchovies, herring, kipper, mackerel, pilchards, salmon, sardines, trout, fresh tuna, whitebait.

Choose lean cuts of meat, and low fat meat products
Two portions of fish a week, one of them oily

Milk and dairy foods

This food group is a rich source of calcium which is needed for strong bones and teeth. Choose lower fat versions such as skinned or semi-skimmed milk, reduced-fat cheese and yoghurt. Aim for 2 to 3 portions from this food group daily, but be aware of foods from this group that are very high in fat such as cream cheese.

What is a portion?
200ml / 1/3 pint of milk
Matchbox sized 40g / 1 1/2 oz piece of cheese
125g pot of yoghurt

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole Milk</th>
<th>Semi-skimmed</th>
<th>Skimmed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22 grams of fat per pint</td>
<td>9 grams of fat per pint</td>
<td>0.6 grams of fat per pint</td>
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Choose low fat versions of these foods whenever possible
High fat diets tend to be high in Calories, which may lead to weight gain. This increases your risk of a number of debilitating diseases including heart disease and some cancers. It is recommended that you cut down on the total amount of fat you eat, and when possible choose unsaturated fats instead of saturates. Low fat spreads (less than 40g of fat per 100g) are recommended.

Fats

There are several different types of fat in the diet, those most commonly referred to are:

- Saturated fat
- Unsaturated fat (of which there are two types - monounsaturated fat and polyunsaturated fat)
- Trans fatty acids
- Dietary cholesterol

Saturated fat

This is mainly found in foods from animal origin such as meat and meat products, dairy foods, butter, cakes, biscuits, puddings and chocolate. This type of fat has been shown to increase blood cholesterol and increase the tendency of the blood to clot. These effects increase your risk of heart disease.

Unsaturated fat

This is found in foods such as vegetable and seed oils, soft margarines labelled high in unsaturated fat, nuts and fish. These types of fat are thought to reduce your risk of heart disease if they replace saturated fat in the diet.

Monounsaturated fats

Foods with the largest proportion of fat from monounsaturates are the recommended choice.

Polyunsaturated

Certain polyunsaturated fats known as omega 3 fatty acids have been shown to reduce the potential of the blood to clot, and so reduce your risk of heart disease. The best source of these types of fat is oily fish.

Trans fatty acids

These are found in foods such as hydrogenated margarines, cakes, pastries and biscuits. It is recommended that you cut down on these types of fat as they have been shown to increase your risk of heart disease.

Dietary cholesterol

This is a type of fat found in foods from animal source. Contrary to popular belief, dietary cholesterol...
does not have a major effect on blood cholesterol in most people. A reduction in saturated fat will have the biggest impact on blood cholesterol and will also reduce your intake of dietary cholesterol as generally both of these fats are found in the same foods.

**Plant sterols and stanols**

Products containing plant sterols or stanols can help to lower blood cholesterol. However, these products may reduce the absorption of some vitamins so should only be used as part of a balanced diet, rich in fruit and vegetables.

They are only suitable for people with raised cholesterol. They should not be eaten by children, pregnant women or nursing mothers.

**Sugars**

Eating sugar is a major cause of tooth decay, especially when sugary foods and drinks are consumed frequently through the day. Sugar contains only Calories, with no other nutrients. You do not need sugar for energy as you get energy from all the other food you eat. If you are overweight, cutting back on sugar is one of the easiest ways to cut Calories without losing nutrients.

**Salt**

Eating too much salt can lead to high blood pressure. This in turn can cause heart disease, kidney disease and strokes. Try cutting the amount of salt you eat by not adding it to cooking, getting out of the habit of adding salt at the table and reducing the amount of processed foods you have. Approximately $\frac{2}{3}$ of the salt in our diet comes from processed foods.
For many people drinking alcohol is a pleasant social activity. However, drinking too much, or at the wrong time, can cause problems.

Alcoholic drinks contain a lot of Calories and can contribute to weight gain. Try to keep to sensible limits. In general, men can drink between three and four units a day or less without significant risk to their health. Women can drink between two and three units a day or less without significant risk to their health.

Light or moderate drinking has been shown to be of benefit to men over 40 and post-menopausal women. However, binge drinking is associated with medical and social harm, and strongly discouraged.

**Keep to sensible limits**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>One Unit</strong></th>
<th><strong>Units of Alcohol</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Half pint of ordinary strength lager, beer or cider (3.5% ABV)</td>
<td><strong>Men</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A small glass of wine (9% ABV)</td>
<td>Drinking <strong>3 to 4</strong> units a day or less has no significant health risk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A 25ml pub measure of spirit (40% ABV)</td>
<td><strong>Women</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Men</strong></td>
<td>Drinking <strong>2 to 3</strong> units a day or less has no significant health risk.</td>
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Note that many wines and beers have higher ABV (alcohol by volume) values than these examples.

You can use the equation below to calculate the exact number of units in a particular drink. (1 pint = 568 ml)

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\text{% alcohol content (ABV)} \div 1000 \times \text{volume (ml)} = \text{units}
\]
It is not healthy to be either underweight or overweight. If you don’t eat enough food and become underweight, you may not be getting all the nutrients you need from your diet. If, on the other hand, you eat more than you need and become overweight, you are more likely to suffer from problems such as heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes.

If you need to lose weight, try taking in less energy from food and doing more physical activity. It is recommended that we all do at least half an hour of moderate exercise five times a week.

Eat regular meals as skipping meals may cause you to fill up on fatty/sugary snacks. Breakfast is particularly important, try including some fruit or fruit juice to help achieve the five a day target.

By following the advice in the rest of this leaflet you will be improving your diet which will help maintain a healthy weight. If you need to lose weight aim to lose half to one kilogram (one to two pounds) a week until you reach your healthy weight.

This is a realistic target, a faster rate of weight loss is unsustainable and will probably be regained.

Dehydration can cause health problems such as constipation. It is important to drink plenty of fluid every day - approximately 1,800ml, 6 to 8 glasses is recommended. Tea and coffee can have a diuretic effect, so it is a good idea to include other sorts of drinks in your diet.

Good alternatives include water, herb/fruit teas and diluted fruit juice.
You can use this Height and Weight chart to get a rough idea of whether you are a healthy weight, but it is only an approximate guide.

If you are worried about your diet or need more specific advice, speak to your G.P. or practice nurse. If it is appropriate, you may be referred to a dietitian.

Notes

The Berkshire Healthy Eating Strategy has been developed as part of the implementation of the National Service Framework for coronary heart disease and the National Cancer plan. These government initiatives are designed to improve services and help prevent CHD and cancer in the UK population.