Good food guide

Eating well means enjoying your food and having plenty of variety. Here is a guide to the foods you should try to eat each day.

Fruit and vegetables

Try to eat a variety of fruit, vegetables and salads. They are full of vitamins, minerals and fibre. Aim to eat 5 portions a day. Frozen, tinned, dried fruit and vegetables, and fruit juice, are just as good for you as fresh produce. Try to include some fruit and vegetables at each meal and use fruit as between-meal snacks.

Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans, lentils and nuts

Eat a portion of any of these foods at two of your meals each day. All these foods contain protein which builds and repairs your body. You do not need to eat meat or fish every day - cheese, well cooked eggs, beans or lentils can be eaten instead.

Foods containing fat and sugar

Sugary and fatty foods provide us with energy and can make meals taste better, but use them sparingly if you are watching your weight as they are high in calories. Don’t eat these foods at the expense of other more nourishing foods.
Bread, other cereals and potatoes

Try to have a serving of bread, breakfast cereal, potatoes, rice, chapatti or pasta with every meal. These foods give energy, and the whole grain types of cereals have more fibre, which prevents constipation.

Milk and dairy foods

These foods contain calcium which helps to keep the bones strong. Try to have 3 servings a day. A serving can be:

- 1 cup of milk
- 1 yoghurt or fromage frais
- a small pot of cottage cheese
- 1 oz (25g) cheese
- a portion of ice cream or custard

Low fat dairy products still have all the goodness in them, they just have less fat and less calories.

Good Health

Drinks

Drink at least 6 to 8 cups of liquid every day. These could include water, tea, coffee, fruit juice, fruit squash, fizzy drinks, milk and milky drinks.
Enjoying and eating a good variety of food is important. If you eat well, you are likely to feel healthier, stay active for longer and protect yourself against illness.

**Eating habits**

Eating regular meals and snacks is a good habit. If you get used to missing meals, or eating unhealthily, you may start to feel tired, depressed and cold. Check your eating habits against the following questions and answers.

1. **Do you always eat:**
   - breakfast?
   - lunch (midday meal)?
   - tea (evening meal)?

To keep well, good regular eating patterns are essential. This means three meals or snack meals daily.

2. **If you don’t manage three meals a day, do you tend to replace meals with:**
   - tea and biscuits?
   - bread and jam?
   - nothing?

Instead of missing meals, you could try some of the simple snacks and meals suggested later in this leaflet.

3. **Over the last year, have you:**
   - lost more than one stone in weight without trying?
   - stayed around the same weight?
   - gained more than one stone without trying?

Checking your weight regularly (for example, monthly) is a good idea. If you gain or lose weight without trying, you should see your doctor.
4. Are your bowels regular?
Eating a diet with plenty of fibre is important for good health. It also helps prevent constipation. Wholegrain breakfast cereals, bread, pasta, brown rice and chapattis are all good sources of fibre, as are fruit, vegetables, beans and lentils. Drinking plenty of liquid helps to keep your bowels healthy and prevents constipation. Aim for at least 6 to 8 cups a day.

5. Do you eat the following foods which are rich in iron?
- red meat, including liver and kidney
- eggs (particularly the yolks)
- ‘fortified’ breakfast cereals containing added iron
- dark green leafy vegetables such as cabbage and spinach
- baked beans, lentils and other pulses, for example dahls

These foods are rich in iron and will help prevent anaemia, which causes tiredness and shortness of breath. Eat fresh fruit and drink fruit juices or vitamin C enriched cordial or squash to help your body absorb iron. Don’t drink tea with meals, because tannin in tea can reduce how much iron the body absorbs from your food.

6. Do you eat the following foods rich in vitamin D?
- oily fish such as tuna, sardines and pilchards
- eggs
- dried milk and evaporated milk with added vitamin D
- margarine and low fat spreads

Vitamin D, which helps to keep the bones healthy, is found in all these foods. Another source of vitamin D is the action of sunlight on bare skin. If you are housebound and unable to sit outside, or are covered up all day, you may need to take a vitamin D supplement. Ask your doctor for advice. Help the Aged’s free advice leaflet “Healthy Bones” gives more information about looking after your bones.
Meal ideas

Try to eat regularly, at least three times a day. You may not always feel like cooking - if you don't, there is a wide variety of tinned, chilled and frozen 'ready meals' available. All food, whether hot or cold, provides warmth and energy. A snack can be just as nourishing as a more traditional meal. Here are some suggestions:

Breakfast foods

- Toasted currant teacake and a milky drink
- Fruit - fresh, tinned, dried (or fruit juices)
- Crumpets or muffins with butter and jam or cheese
- Peanut butter sandwich and fruit juice
- Banana sandwich
- Cheese and tomato on toast
- Yoghurt
- Wholegrain breakfast cereal e.g. porridge

Main meals

- Corned beef hash with green vegetables
- Roast chicken with jacket or mashed potato and vegetables
- Curry with boiled rice, yoghurt and/or pickles
- Cauliflower or macaroni cheese with wholemeal bread and vegetables, for example tomato
- Fish pie and vegetables
- Spinach and potato curry, dahl and chapattis
- Omelette with potato and vegetables
- Meat casserole with swede and cabbage
- Braised liver and onions with creamed potatoes and carrots
- Shepherd's pie and peas
Snack meals

- Sandwiches - try tuna, cheese, corned beef, peanut butter or egg and salad
- Toast - with pilchards, well cooked scrambled egg, baked beans, creamed mushrooms, tinned spaghetti with grated cheese
- Instant potato with grated cheese and baked beans
- Fish fingers, oven chips and peas with bread and butter
- Sausages, baked beans and potato
- Grilled bacon, tomatoes and toast
- Kippers or smoked haddock with bread and butter
- Soup containing meat or pulses (such as lentil, beef broth or pea and ham) with grated cheese and wholemeal bread

Puddings and desserts

- Fresh, tinned or stewed fruit
- Ice cream
- Cake
- Mousse
- Yoghurt
- Fruit crumble or pie and ice cream or custard
- Sponge and custard
- Fruit or milk jelly

Snacks

If you feel like a snack during the day, you might like to have fruit, breakfast cereal and milk, biscuits or cake. You could also try toast with butter or margarine, jam, cheese or peanut butter or have a milky drink.