ENJOY
HEALTHY
EATING

THE BALANCE OF
GOOD HEALTH
Enjoy healthy eating

In Britain our eating habits are changing all the time. There is now a much greater choice of foods available in our shops.

These include imported foods, which are a traditional part of eating patterns in other countries, as well as imaginative new ideas from food manufacturers. As a result, it has become more difficult to know which foods to choose, and how much of each, for a healthy diet.

This booklet will help you to choose a variety of foods so that you can eat healthily and enjoy it. It also explains how to prepare favourite foods in a healthier way, and explains about food additives and the labelling of foods.

Healthy eating helps reduce the risk of developing many conditions such as heart disease, cancer, constipation, obesity, and tooth decay. By eating a good variety and balance of foods, taking regular exercise, not drinking too much, and not smoking at all, you can give yourself the best chance of living a fitter and healthier life.

Don’t be put off by the amount of advice given in this booklet - you don’t have to follow it all. Try the suggestions that you would find easy and practical, that suit your lifestyle and that you can afford. You don’t have to change all your eating habits at once. Start with one or two of the ideas suggested here, then introduce others gradually.

While the advice in this booklet applies to most people there are some exceptions. It does not apply to children under two years of age, about whom your health visitor, doctor or local health promotion unit can give you information. Between the ages of two and five, the eating patterns described here should be gradually introduced. Some elderly people and those under medical supervision may have special needs. Your doctor may refer you to a dietitian for advice.

This booklet is divided into three sections:

- The basics of how to choose healthier options and the reasons why.
- How to put healthy eating into practice, whether eating at home or eating out.
- Other related food issues including labelling, additives and food safety.

The way to healthy eating

- Enjoy your food.
- Eat a variety of different foods.
- Eat plenty of foods rich in starch and fibre.
- Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables.
- Don’t eat too many foods that contain a lot of fat.
- Don’t have sugary foods and drinks too often.
- If you drink alcohol, drink sensibly.
- Eat the right amount to be a healthy weight.
Enjoy your food

Eating is an important part of everyone's life. Foods are chosen for all sorts of reasons, not just to get the nutrients you need. The taste, smell, colour, and how foods look are all important. Religion, cost, availability, and the way you live may all affect the choices you make about the foods you eat.

Eating may be a chance to sit down with the family or for a social occasion with friends. Or it may be a rushed snack grabbed during a spare five minutes.

Above all, it's important to enjoy food. To eat healthily you don't have to give up any of the foods you enjoy most. However, some foods should not be eaten too often or in large quantities if you want to be sure of enjoying good health.

Enjoy variety

Food provides nutrients to help the body work properly. A mixture of nutrients is obtained from food. No single food contains them all in the amounts needed, so we have to eat a mixture of foods to get the right amount. However, we need to eat more of some types of food than others.

The Balance of Good Health (shown overleaf) shows the types of foods and the proportions you need to eat them in to have a well-balanced, healthy diet. Foods that are eaten as snacks and between meals count as well as food eaten at mealtimes. There are five different food groups. These are:

- Bread, other cereals and potatoes.
- Fruit and vegetables.
- Milk and dairy foods.
- Meat, fish and alternatives.
- Foods containing fat; foods containing sugar.

Try to eat some foods from the first four food groups every day. It is also important to vary the foods chosen from each group to get a mixture of all the different nutrients needed to maintain our health. Foods in the fifth group (foods containing fat; foods containing sugar) add variety to our diet but should not be eaten too often or in large amounts and should not replace foods from other groups.
The Balance of Good Health

For most people the move towards a healthy balanced diet means eating more bread, breakfast cereals, potatoes, pasta and rice, and more fruit and vegetables. Above all we should aim for variety in our food.

Milk and dairy foods
This group includes:
- Milk*
- Cheese*
- Yoghurt*
- Fromage frais*

Foods containing fat; foods containing sugar
This group includes:
- Butter
- Margarine
- Low fat spreads
- Cooking oils
- Mayonnaise and oily salad dressings

And foods we can enjoy as treats, like:
- Biscuits
- Cakes
- Puddings
- Ice-cream
- Chocolate
- Sweets
- Crisps
- Sugar
- Sweetened drinks
Try not to eat these too often and when you do, have small amounts (see pages 12-21).

Some foods such as beans and lentils fit into more than one group because of the mixture of nutrients they contain.

Meat, fish and alternatives
This group includes:
- Meat – beef, pork, bacon, lamb
- Meat products – sausages*, beefburgers*, meat pies
- Poultry – chicken, turkey
- Fish – fresh, frozen and canned
- Fish products – fish fingers, fish cakes
- Offal – liver, kidney
- Eggs
- Beans and lentils – baked beans, chick peas, lentils
- Nuts and nut products such as peanut butter (see page 45 for information on food allergies)
- Textured vegetable protein and other meat alternatives

Choose a variety of foods from this group.
*Lower fat versions of these foods are available. Choose lower fat alternatives whenever you can (see pages 12-18).

Fruits and vegetables
This group includes:
- All fresh, frozen and canned fruit and vegetables
- Salad vegetables
- Beans and lentils
- Dried fruit and fruit juice can make up some of the choices from this group (see pages 19-21 for further information).

Try to eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables each day. Include some vegetables, some salad and some fruit. Choose a wide variety.

Eat a variety of different foods
Starch and fibre

The foods in the first group should make up the main part of most meals. They are the main sources of starch and fibre in our diets. They include foods like bread, breakfast cereals, chapattis, cornmeal, green bananas, maize, millet, noodles, pasta, plantains, potatoes, rice and sweet potatoes.

These foods should make up the main part of our diet. They are also a good source of other nutrients. Most of us don’t eat enough starchy foods and need to eat at least half as much again. They are usually cheap as well. Try serving larger portions of these foods at mealtimes by, for example, having more pasta and a little less sauce or more rice and a little less curry.

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

A typical helping of boiled potatoes (170 g or 6 oz) provides about 120 calories (500kJ). The same weight of chips provides three times as many calories.

A medium-sized baked potato provides about 140 calories (585kJ), while adding a small helping (30 g or 1 oz) of grated cheese would almost double the calories.

A small slice of bread contains about 55 calories (230kJ). Just a scrape of butter would add another 50 calories (210kJ).

The wholegrain varieties of starchy foods are a particularly good choice – for example, wholemeal bread, brown rice and wholegrain pasta. These are rich in a type of fibre which helps prevent constipation. They also contain more vitamins and minerals, and are more filling. The second group of foods are fruit and vegetables. These also contain fibre. The type of fibre that is found in fruit and vegetables, as well as in oats and beans, may help to reduce the amount of cholesterol in the blood (see page 13).

Because there are different types of fibre, you should include a mixture of fibre-rich foods in your diet. When you have plenty of fibre in your diet, you need to make sure that you take plenty of fluids too – at least six to eight drinks each day.

Fibre is what some people refer to as ‘roughage’. It is only found in foods derived from plants – cereals, grains, seeds, beans, peas, vegetables and fruit. There is no fibre in animal products like meat, cheese or eggs.

Bran is a rich source of fibre but it doesn’t provide the other nutrients that fibre-rich starchy foods contain. So don’t add bran to food. By eating a good range of the foods mentioned you’ll get all the fibre you need.