FOOD SHOULD BE FUN

ADVICE & RECIPES FOR HEALTHY EATING

British Heart Foundation
The heart research charity
HOW TO PUT THE ENJOYMENT BACK INTO EATING

Food should be fun, people should get pleasure from eating good, wholesome food and sharing meals. It may therefore be necessary to dispel a few myths, since it is very easy to be confused by the large volume of conflicting advice that is available.

FIRSTLY, there is no such thing as a “good” or “bad” food. It is essential to step back and look at your diet as a whole, and not become obsessed with foods you think are “good” for you or to totally avoid foods that you think are “bad” for you. It is the diet in its entirety that is important — a very occasional éclair or rich pudding won’t hurt.

SECONDLY, variety is all-important because adequate variety ensures adequate nutrition, or what used to be called a “balanced diet”. We are fortunate in being able to purchase a wide variety of foods, relatively cheaply; foods of high quality, hygienically prepared and produced, that are controlled by stringent Food Regulations.

Foods, that only a few years ago were completely unheard of, or only encountered on foreign holidays, are now available on our supermarket shelves all year round. There is really no need for anyone to be in danger of having a diet deficient in essential nutrients, unless they spend their money unwisely and put themselves at risk, as some food faddists on bizarre diets may do.

FINALLY, to enjoy our food, it must be attractive in appearance, smell, taste and texture, and appeal to all our senses. We probably all hated “school” cabbage — memories of soggy leaves floating in a sea of green water, but a bouquet of crisp, lightly-cooked vegetables, colourfully arranged and garnished would be difficult to resist.
HEALTHY EATING

The average diet contains more than enough food for our energy requirements but it may not be nutritionally well balanced. Therefore people may need to modify their diets if their existing habits present a potential health risk:

Too many calories result in an increase in body weight, which may lead to increased blood pressure.

Too much dietary fat not only causes an increase in body weight because fats are so high in calories but it is also associated with an increase in blood fat levels, which lead to fatty deposits in the blood vessels, especially those supplying the heart.

Too much sugar, apart from increasing calorie intake and body weight, causes tooth decay and may predispose towards diabetes.

In some people too much salt may increase the blood pressure.

Too little dietary fibre slows down the digestive processes, resulting in bowel disorders and constipation.

HEALTHY EATING CAN BE ACHIEVED BY:

1. A reduction in total energy intake (a reducing diet) for people who are overweight.

2. Cutting down total fat intake and substituting polyunsaturated fat for saturated fat where possible.

3. Increasing fibre intake with a concurrent increase in carbohydrate intake from cereals.

4. Redistributing meals and changing meal patterns, with the emphasis away from one large meal a day, to smaller lighter meals three times a day.

5. Reducing salt and sugar intake.

 LOSING WEIGHT

There is no magic way to lose weight — it can only be achieved by consistently eating less calories than the body requires. All foods contain calories, but some many more compared to others. The diet should be long on common-sense and short on gimmicks, i.e. a long term reduction of total food intake and alteration of eating habits to include plenty of nutritious, wholesome food, instead of short-term crash diets that may result in weight loss but only temporarily.

In general most people do know how to deal with a weight problem and realise that the so-called slimming foods are not a substitute for will-power, sensible eating of usual foods, or increasing daily exercise — the difficulty is putting theory into practice!

A simple 7-point plan may be the answer.

1. Eat three reasonable meals a day.

2. Eat sensible helpings of lean meat, fish, poultry, low fat cheese and occasionally eggs.

3. Eat plenty of vegetables and salad and have fruit instead of puddings.

4. Drink water, unsweetened tea or coffee, low-calorie squashes and no more than one pint of skimmed or semi-skimmed milk a day. Cut out alcohol and sugary drinks.

5. Cut right down on all fats, oils, butter and margarine.

6. Eat wholemeal bread and pasta, wholegrain cereals, high-fibre breakfast cereals, brown rice and potatoes in their skins regularly.

7. Cut out sugar, sweets, chocolates, sweet things, fried foods and crisps. Cut out cakes, biscuits, pastries and puddings.

To keep you "at it", enlist the support of family and friends or join a Slimming Club. If occasionally your resolve slips, do not give up, just try and make up for it by being extra careful for the next few days.
WHAT ABOUT FAT?

Throughout the country, in all social classes, in all age groups and in both men and women, blood fat levels (particularly blood cholesterol) are very high by international standards. This is associated with a high level of Coronary Heart Disease.

There are many types of fat, all equally fattening with the same calorie value but with complicated and differing biochemistry. The words saturated, unsaturated and polyunsaturated relate to the chemical make-up of the fatty acids contained in the fat. Saturated fats tend to raise blood cholesterol levels and polyunsaturated fats tend to lower them. The saturated fats are mostly of animal origin, hard or solid at room temperature and found in meat, dairy products and most margarine. The unsaturated fats, are mostly liquid fats or oils and are found mainly in vegetable or plant oils — some are high in polyunsaturates for example Sunflower Oil, Safflower Oil and Fish Oils. There are however, some important exceptions:

Chicken, turkey, rabbit and oily fish, like herrings, tuna and mackerel contain fats which are much less saturated than other animal fats, whereas Coconut Oil, although a plant oil, is very high in saturated fat. Palm Oil is 50% saturated but appears to have little influence on cholesterol levels. Olive Oil, which is monounsaturated, can be substituted for polyunsaturated fat. However, a word of CAUTION — labels should be studied carefully — just because a product is a vegetable oil does not mean that it contains polyunsaturated fat.

Surveys show that we obtain well over 40% of our fat intake from butter, margarine, lard, cooking oils and baked goods containing these products — over 25% from meat and meat products, approximately 13% from milk and only 8% from cream, cheese and eggs.

It has been suggested that, as a nation, we should aim to get less than 35% of our total calorie (energy) intake from fat, and that less than half that amount should be saturated fat. This should be easier now that improvements in food labelling allow customers to make a much more nutritionally-informed choice about purchases.

There are also some simple things that can be done, for example:

Butter and margarine can be spread more thinly on bread or low fat spreads can be used.

Chips and fried foods can be chosen less often.

Food could be eaten grilled rather than fried.

Skimmed or semi-skimmed milk can be used as a matter of course.

However, a major factor has been that in recent years food manufacturers and supermarket chains have become well aware of the trends to reduce the nations' fat intake. Thus, a rapidly expanding market has been created in which there has been an enormous increase in the range and variety of new products now available.

i) Reduced fat varieties of naturally high fat dairy products such as low fat spreads, skimmed and semi-skimmed milks, low fat cheeses, cream and yoghurt, fromage frais and quark are available from grocers' shops, supermarkets, health food stores and even the milkman.

ii) Butchery departments are presenting leaner cuts of meat as a matter of course and are also selling low fat mince, low fat sausages and low fat beefburgers.

iii) The high fat content of some processed meat products and pies is being reduced and special lower fat lines of many convenience foods and ready meals are being developed.

SUBSTITUTING POLYUNSATURATED FATS FOR SATURATED FATS

Everyone needs to cut down saturated fat and cholesterol intake.

1. Only lean meat, poultry and plenty of fish, especially the oily fish, such as mackerel, salmon, tuna and herrings which are all high in polyunsaturated fat, should be eaten.

2. Low fat cheese should be substituted for hard and cream cheese.

3. Skimmed or semi-skimmed milk should be used.

4. Butter should be replaced by margarine high in polyunsaturates.

5. Sunflower or safflower seed oils should replace other cooking fats.

6. If overweight, both the fat intake and the polyunsaturated fat intake should be cut down since polyunsaturated fats are not low in calories.

CAUTION: Oils high in polyunsaturates should not be heated for too long at very high temperatures or re-used several times over, as this alters the chemical composition, reducing the beneficial effect.
FACTS ABOUT FAT TO HELP THE SELECTION OF LOWER FAT PRODUCTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural or Dairy Product</th>
<th>Lower Fat Substitutes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>g Fat per 100g Product</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweetened condensed milk</td>
<td>Semi-skimmed milk 1.6g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaporated milk</td>
<td>(silver/red stripe top) 0.1g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channel Island (gold top)</td>
<td>Skimmed milk (blue top) 0.1g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole milk (silver top)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oils (including polyunsaturated oils)</td>
<td>Low fat spreads 40g*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suet and lard</td>
<td>Very low fat spreads 28g*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Butter</td>
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| Margarine (including polyunsaturated margarine) | 81g  
| Cream cheese                               |                                        |
| Stilton cheese                             |                                        |
| Cheddar & other hard cheeses               |                                        |
| Camembert, Brie & soft cheeses             |                                        |
| Double cream                               |                                        |
| Whipping cream                             |                                        |
| Single cream                               |                                        |
| Soured cream                               |                                        |
| Half cream                                 |                                        |
| Low fat double cream (whippable)           | 24g*                                   |
| Low fat single cream                       | 9g                                     |
| Fromage frais 8%                           | 8g                                     |
| Low fat natural yoghurt                    | 1g                                     |
| Fromage frais 1%                           | 0.1g                                   |
| Buttermilk                                 | 0.1g                                   |

**CAUTION:** Although 'Lower Fat Products', these are still relatively high in Fat.

DIETARY CHOLESTEROL

Cholesterol is not a fat but a naturally occurring substance, present in the human body and in the bodies of all animals as a vital constituent for the normal functioning of all cells. We obtain our cholesterol in two ways: by eating it in foods of animal origin and by making as much as we require ourselves.

Although egg yolks, offal, shellfish and fish roes are concentrated sources of cholesterol, we tend not to eat them daily in large amounts. Most cholesterol in the diet is therefore obtained from meat, dairy products and eggs.

If a diet is modified by reduction in total fat intake, especially saturated fat, then cholesterol intake will look after itself and be automatically low.

It is suggested that eggs be limited to three to four a week.

FIBRE

Fibre is "good news", for whilst most dietary modifications are restrictions of some kind or other, everyone agrees that for a variety of reasons, we should be eating more fibre.

Fibre (it used to be called roughage) — consists of the cell walls of plants — seeds, roots, shoots, leaves, flowers and fruit. It isn't just one substance but a complex mixture varying in different plants. Fibre cannot be digested and absorbed by the human body, it passes straight through, from one end to the other, absorbing water and food residues, speeding up the passage of food through the gut and providing bulk in the stools.

Excellent sources of fibre are all wholegrain or unrefined cereals, such as wholemeal flour, bread and pasta, wholewheat cereals, cornmeal, oatmeal and buckwheat. Other good sources are pulses such as peas, beans and lentils, potatoes in their skins, dried fruits and nuts.