



**Royal Surrey  
County Hospital**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Healthy eating guide

**Nutrition & Dietetics Department**

**Patient information leaflet**

## Why is a healthy diet important?

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A good diet is important for good health. Eating a variety of foods can help you:

- Manage your weight
- Improve your general wellbeing and energy levels
- Reduce the risk of conditions including heart disease, stroke, some cancers, diabetes and osteoporosis (thin bones)

The information in this leaflet is intended to help you make better choices and help make healthy eating as easy as possible.

## What is a healthy balanced diet?

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A healthy balanced diet contains a variety of foods, in the right amounts, which allows us to get enough energy, protein, vitamins and minerals to stay healthy.

It should include a selection of foods from each of the four food groups.

These include:

- Fruit and vegetables
- Starchy foods, such as wholemeal bread and wholegrain cereals
- Protein-rich foods such as beans, pulses, meat, fish and eggs
- Dairy foods

Foods which are high in fat or sugar should be limited as these often do not offer any additional vitamins or minerals, however provide a large amount of energy to our diets which can result in weight gain.

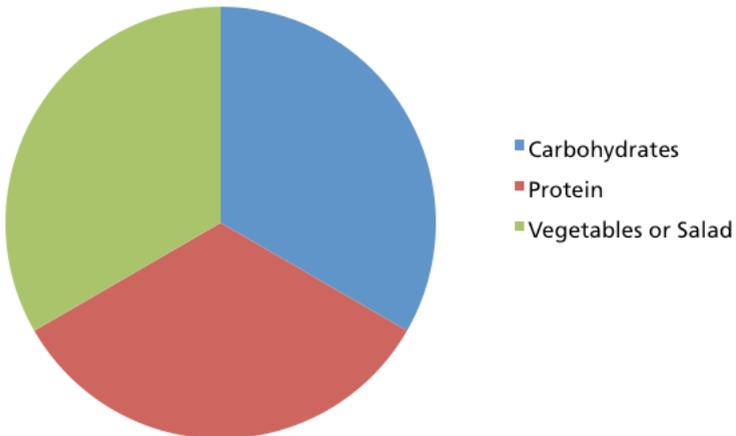
The diagram opposite gives an idea of the recommended proportions of each food group. This diagram is called the Eatwell Guide.



## What should my portion sizes look like?

Portion sizes are discussed in detail later in this leaflet, however as a general guide see the below.

### Healthy Eating



## What are the important tips for a healthy lifestyle?

- Eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day.
- Include starchy carbohydrates in each meal e.g. rice, potatoes, bread, pasta. Try to choose wholegrain options where possible.
- Include dairy or dairy alternatives e.g. soya to provide calcium and other vitamins and minerals.
- Include protein in your diet. This could include pulses, fish, eggs, meat and poultry.
- Try to increase the amount of pulses (beans, peas and lentils) in your diet, as they are high in fibre and protein, as well as vitamins and minerals. These provide a good alternative to meat as they are low in fat.
- Other vegetarian sources of protein include eggs, tofu, bean curd and mycoprotein (such as Quorn®).
- Have 2 portions of fish per week, one of which is to be oily such as salmon, mackerel or sardines.
- Choose unsaturated oils and spreads such as olive or rapeseed oil. Be careful to ensure these are eaten in small amounts as they are very high in calories and provide little other nutrition.
- Drink 6-8 cups/glasses of fluid a day. This can include water, low calorie squash, tea and coffee. If drinking fruit juice limit to 150ml maximum per day. Avoid drinks containing added sugar such as high juice, and non-diet versions of fizzy drinks.
- Limit foods high in fat, salt or sugar.
- If you need to buy readymade food, read the labels to help make the healthier choice.
- Try to eat at regular mealtimes as this can help you avoid feeling very hungry, and overindulging or reaching for high fat/sugar items.
- Do not exceed 14 units of alcohol per week (for men and women) with 2 alcohol free days. Most alcoholic beverages are high in calories and contain no/minimal amounts of other nutrients.  
1 unit = 250ml 4% beer (~half pint), 25ml 40% spirit, 76ml 13% wine.

## What are the best food choices most of the time?

| Instead of...   | Try these...   |
|---|--|
| White bread, sugar coated breakfast cereals, croissants                         | Granary or wholemeal bread, wholegrain breakfast cereals, porridge   |
| Sugar (e.g. in drinks, cooking or as a topping)                                 | Artificial or natural sweetener e.g. Canderel®, Sweetex®, Hermesetas®, Splenda®, Stevia®   |
| Squashes and fizzy drinks   | Low calorie/diet versions with no added sugar  |
| Desserts and puddings, milk puddings, jellies, ice cream, fruit tinned in syrup | Fruit canned in juice, low fat/diet yogurts, fresh fruit, sugar-free jelly, low calorie instant whip or mousses, low calorie ice cream or ice lollies  |
| Cakes, doughnuts, pastries, cream-filled or chocolate biscuits, crisps          | Fresh fruit, wholegrain crackers, rice cakes, scones, teacakes or plain biscuits (Rich Tea, garibaldi, digestives)   |
| Fried and fatty foods   | <p>Use only small amounts of oil in cooking. Choose lean meats, remove any visible fat.</p> <p>Grill, boil, steam food instead of frying or roasting.</p> <p>Ready prepared meals should be the lower fat, lower calorie or 'healthy' options.</p> |
| Butter, lard ghee, hard margarine, palm oil, coconut oil                        | <p>Choose a low fat spread labelled 'high in monounsaturates'.</p> <p>Use these sparingly, spread thinly. Cook with olive or rapeseed oil. Try oil sprays.</p>   |

| Instead of...            | Try these...  |
|--------------------------|---|
| Full fat milk and cheese | <p>Semi-skimmed, 1 % or skimmed milk</p> <p>Limit cheese to small portions (30g) of low fat varieties at meal times only. Try soft cheeses e.g. cottage cheese, 'light' cream cheese</p> <p>If you dislike low fat options, try grating a smaller portion of hard cheese.</p> |
| Sauces and dressings     | <p>Try low fat vinaigrette or low fat salad cream.</p> <p>Choose a tomato based sauce.</p> <p>Prepare your sauces from scratch if possible, to control how much fat goes in these.</p>  |
| Additional salt on food  | Pepper, dried herbs and spices, fresh ginger, reduced salt stock cubes  |

## What can I eat for breakfast?

- Wholegrain/high fibre cereal with skimmed/semi-skimmed milk or low fat yogurt
- Porridge – add variety with fresh/dried/frozen fruit
- Wholegrain bread/toast with a scraping of low fat spread and/or jam, marmalade, honey, marmite®
- Fruit salad with low fat/diet yogurt
- Boiled or poached egg and wholemeal/wholegrain toast
- Lean grilled bacon, grilled tomatoes, baked beans or mushrooms on wholemeal/wholegrain toast
- You could drink a small glass of unsweetened fruit juice or have piece of fruit (dried or fresh) along with any of the above

## What can I eat for my main meal?

Ensure your dishes are served with vegetables and include 1-2 portions of starchy carbohydrates at each meal e.g. potatoes, pasta, rice, couscous (see diagram on page 3).

| Meat dishes  | Fish dishes   | Vegetarian dishes  |
|--|---|--|
| Minced meat dishes made with lean minced meat e.g. spaghetti bolognaise, cottage pie, chilli con carne | Choose a variety of oily fish and white fish e.g. salmon, mackerel, tuna, cod   | Use a variety of pulses, quorn or soya products rather than cheese           |
| Always choose lean cuts of meat, remove any visible fat, cook without excess oil                       | Grilled/baked fish in the oven served with starchy carbohydrates and vegetables | If adding cheese aim for recommended portion sizes and use low fat varieties |
| Grilled lean meat with tomato based sauce, starchy carbohydrates and vegetables                        | Fish cooked in low fat sauce e.g. tomato sauce                                  | Vegetable lasagne or spinach ravioli with tomato based sauce                 |
| Chicken casserole/<br>Stewed lean meat with vegetables – use small amounts of oil                      | Fish pie, made without cream or cheese or using low fat varieties               | Vegetable curry with rice, made with small amounts of oil                    |
| Stir fry with lean meat and vegetables   | Grilled or oven baked fish fingers or fish cakes                                | Stuffed whole peppers, tomatoes of mushrooms                                 |
| Lean pork chop with apple sauce/gammon and pineapple   | Avoid frying fish or serving with chips   | Pasta with tomato sauce – avoid creamy or cheese based sauces                |
| Lean roast meat with gravy made with no added fat  | Stir fry with fish, vegetables with low fat sauce e.g. reduced salt soy sauce   | Tofu and vegetable stir fry served with rice                                 |

## What can I eat for lunch/lighter meal?

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### **Soups**

- Home-made, tinned or packet soups – check labels
- Try consommé or soups with beans, vegetables and pulses e.g. lentils
- Avoid creamy (“cream of”) soups
- If you are having bread with the soup, have small portions and avoid full fat spreads

### **Sandwiches**

- Use wholemeal or granary bread/rolls/baguettes/pitta bread/wraps
- Choose fillings of lean meats, fish, salad, cottage cheese, eggs
- Spread very thinly with low fat spread
- Avoid full fat cheese, paté and mayonnaise

### **Jacket potatoes/Pasta**

- Fill jacket potatoes with baked beans, tuna, reduced fat coleslaw, cottage cheese, ham and pineapple, reduced fat hummus and tomato
- Avoid full fat cheese and fillings mixed with mayonnaise, oil or cream
- Mix your pasta with tuna, chicken, fresh vegetables, tomato or vegetable-based sauces, low fat bolognese sauce
- Avoid topping with extra cheese or top with small amounts of grated low fat cheese

### **Toast**

- Top with baked beans, sardines/pilchards/mackerel tinned in brine or tomato sauce, tinned tomatoes, scrambled egg made with small amounts of unsaturated fats, tuna and small amounts of avocado
- Avoid using butter, margarine or full fat spread
- Try to choose wholegrain varieties

## Salads

- Use variety of vegetables e.g. lettuce, tomato, cucumber, peppers, mushroom, sugar snap peas, grilled vegetables
- Add cottage cheese, lean meats, fish (fresh or tinned) or eggs
- Include some starchy carbohydrates with your salad e.g. bread, new potatoes, rice or pasta. Avoid high fat foods with your salad e.g. quiche or pastry products
- Avoid high fat dressings e.g. mayonnaise, full fat salad cream

## Healthy snack and dessert ideas

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- Fresh fruit or fruit salad
- Stewed fruit, sweetened with artificial sweetener, spices e.g. cinnamon. Top with low fat yogurt or fromage frais
- Tinned fruit in natural juice
- Natural or fat free yogurt. Aim for less than 100 calories per pot
- Sugar-free jelly. Try adding some tinned fruit
- Sugar-free mousse (made with semi-skimmed, 1% or skimmed milk)
- Low fat/low sugar milk puddings
- Rice cakes topped with fresh/tinned fruit, cottage cheese, teaspoon of honey, cinnamon
- Tablespoon of reduced fat hummus or tzatziki and vegetable sticks
- Small handful of nuts, pretzels or dried fruit
- Wholegrain crackers topped with cottage cheese or low fat cream cheese

## Eating out

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- Try light starters e.g. clear soups, lean meat/fish, salad. Avoid cheese, bread and spreads, mayonnaise and salad dressings
- For the main course try lean meat or fish with salad
- Ask for food to be served without extra butter, oil or rich sauces
- Some restaurants have low calorie options that you can choose from
- Ask for dressings, sauces and gravy to be served on the side and only use small amounts
- Avoid fried food where possible e.g. chips or deep fried dishes
- If the portion is big, do not feel that you have to finish everything that is on your plate
- Opt for tomato or vegetable-based sauces instead of cream, coconut or cheese-based
- Ask for low fat milk with tea or coffee
- Choose low calorie/diet fizzy drinks

Meals out with friends and family should be enjoyable and not a source of anxiety. The occasional indulgent meal can be allowed as a treat. Try to make sensible choices if you are eating out regularly.

## Takeaways

| Type               | Healthier options   | Limit these options   |
|--------------------|---|---|
| Sandwich Shop      | Wholegrain/granary bread, roll, pitta or wrap with salad and: tuna and sweetcorn, low fat cheese spread, smoked salmon, cottage cheese, lean meat, chicken/turkey, sardines | Croissant, pies, pastries, doughnuts, cornish pasties, sausage rolls, salad dressing, mayonnaise, salad cream, butter and spread    |
| Fast Food          | Grilled, plain chicken, beef, fish or vegetable burgers, potato wedges, salad, no added sauces  | Fried, coated chicken, fish or beef burgers, quarter pounders, added extras such as bacon and cheese, chips, milkshakes, mayonnaise |
| Pizza              | Thin crust base with low fat toppings e.g. ham and pineapple, lean meat, extra tomatoes and vegetables  | Thick or stuffed crust, extra cheese, salami, pepperoni, garlic bread   |
| Chinese            | Stir fried dishes, boiled rice, chop suey dishes, beef in oyster sauce  | Fried rice, deep fried batters, duck, ribs, seaweed, spring rolls, sweet and sour dishes, prawn crackers, heavy sauces              |
| Indian             | Balti and tandoori dishes, tikka dishes (not masala), boiled rice, chappati, tomato based curries   | Korma and cream/coconut based dishes, naan, biryani, pilau rice, fried samosas, bhajis, poppadoms                                   |
| Café               | Baked beans, tinned tomatoes, mushrooms, poached egg on wholemeal/granary toast, grilled bacon sandwich, salads   | Pastry, sausage roll, quiche, fried bacon and eggs, sausages, pasty, chips, cream cakes or desserts                                 |
| Coffee shop drinks | Americano with skimmed milk, espresso, "skinny" latté, cappuccino, small fresh fruit juice  | All drinks made with full fat milk including cappuccino, latté, mocha and hot chocolate. Avoid syrup flavours                       |

## Reading food labels

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Understanding how to read labels can be extremely helpful when trying to choose the healthier option of packaged foods

Food labels may show values using:

- A 'traffic light' system which shows low values in green, medium values in amber, and high values in red.
- The values as a percentage of your daily allowance.
- Per portion – this will give you the nutritional information for the portion size of the product you are going to have. Be mindful as the portion size on the label may not be the same as what you consider a portion size to be.
- Per 100g – this will enable you to look at the overall proportions of the product. If the label is not presented using the traffic light system you can use the diagram below to remind you as what is low, medium or high for fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt.

All allergens will be highlighted in either **bold**, *italics* or underlined so they are easy to spot on the ingredients list.

|        | Fat          | Saturated Fat | Sugars       | Salt         |
|--------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| Low    | 3g or less   | 1.5g or less  | 5g or less   | 0.3g or less |
| Medium | 3.1g – 17.5g | 1.6g - 5g     | 5.1g - 22.5g | 0.31- 1.5g   |
| High   | Over 17.5g   | Over 5g       | Over 22.5g   | Over 1.5g    |

## Salt

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Alongside being overweight, including too much salt in your diet can raise your blood pressure, which can lead to cardiovascular disease such as heart attacks or stroke.

The guideline daily amount (GDA) of salt for adults is 6g, and 3g for children. In addition to the salt you add in cooking or on the table, salt is also hidden in many foods you may not expect, so it is important to read labels.

You may also hear salt described as sodium. SALT = (sodium) x 2.5.

## Hints for cutting down on salt

- Always read the label – if there are traffic lights.
- Swap higher salt sandwich fillings such as ham and cheese for lower salt options such as chicken.
- Swap high salt snacks such as crisps for a yoghurt or piece of fruit.
- Use alternative flavourings when cooking, to avoid bland foods.

## Physical activity

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Physical activity burns energy and strengthens muscles, which improves health in many ways. For example, helping us maintain a healthy weight, keeping bones strong, protecting the heart and improving mood.

You should aim to exercise for at least 150 minutes per week at moderate intensity (slightly out of breath!).

Although many people find joining a gym a really helpful way of increasing exercise, it is not for everyone. Other ideas for exercise:

- Swimming
- Brisk walking or a jog
- Exercise DVD
- Chair based exercises – with a group or using a video
- Aerobics class
- Take up a sport
- Bike ride

## What if I have no time?

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If you find it difficult to fit in physical activity into your day, try adding in 5-10 minute bursts, several times per day. This could be as simple as running on the spot, going for a brisk walk or jumping jacks.

Remember: All physical activity is beneficial, no matter how small. Simple ways to stay more active:

- Take the stairs instead of the lift
- Park further away from your destination
- Do a spring clean of the house!
- Do some extra gardening

## Reference sources

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### **NHS Choices**

- [www.nhs.uk/livewell/healthy-eating/Pages/Healthyeating.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/healthy-eating/Pages/Healthyeating.aspx)

### **British Dietetic Association**

- [www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/home](http://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/home)

### **British Heart Foundation**

- [www.bhf.org.uk/heart-health/preventing-heart-disease/healthy-eating](http://www.bhf.org.uk/heart-health/preventing-heart-disease/healthy-eating)



## Dietetic Department contact details

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If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet please contact the Dietetic Department at the address below:

### **Nutrition & Dietetics Department**

Royal Surrey County Hospital, Egerton Road, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 7XX.

**Switchboard telephone:** 01483 571122 **ext** 4202

**Direct line:** 01483 464119

**Fax:** 01483 464868

**Email:** [rsch.dietitians@nhs.net](mailto:rsch.dietitians@nhs.net)

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## PALS and Advocacy contact details

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Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

**Telephone:** 01483 402757

**Email:** [rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net)

**Opening hours:** 9.00am–3.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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Author: Lindsey Allan

Review author: Terpsi Karpasiti

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