



**Royal Surrey  
County Hospital**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Healthy eating for weight loss

**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.



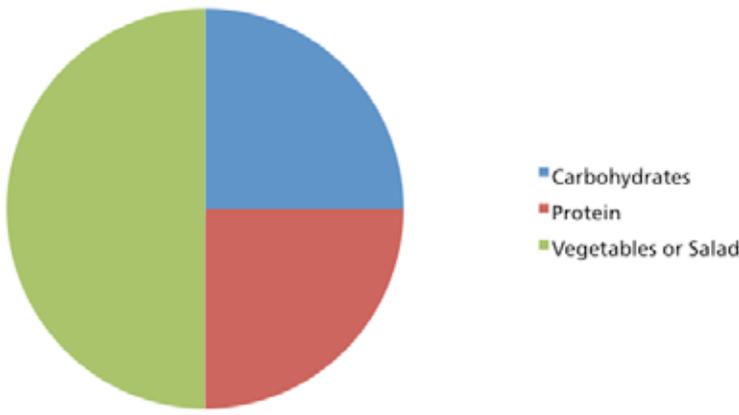
Source: Public Health England in association with the Welsh government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

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## 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.

### Weight Loss



## 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, 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.
- 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.

## Starchy carbohydrates

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Food item	Portion
Breakfast cereal (bran flakes, porridge, rice crispies)	3 tablespoons
Weetabix®	One
Bagel/Roll	Half
Bread (white or brown)	1 slice, medium
Crumpet	One
Muffin	Half
Pitta bread	Half
Potatoes	2 egg-sized
Rice, cooked	2 heaped tablespoons (80g)
Pasta, cooked	3 heaped tablespoons
Noodles, cooked	3 heaped tablespoons

Choose wholegrains or higher fibre versions e.g brown varieties of bread, pasta and rice. Fibre is important for maintaining a regular bowel pattern and it also keeps you full for longer.

Aim to have ..... portions per day.

## Fruits and vegetables

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Food item	Portion
Large fruit e.g. papaya, pineapple,	1 large slice
Mango	2 slices
Grapefruit	Half
Medium sized fruit e.g. apple, banana, peach	One
Small fruit e.g. kiwi, satsuma, clementine, plum	Two
Grapes/berries	1 handful
Dried fruit e.g. raisins, cranberries, sultanas	1 heaped tablespoon
Salad leaves e.g. lettuce, rocket, spinach	5 tablespoons
Fruit juice, smoothies	One small (150ml) glass
Mixed vegetables e.g. peas, carrots, sweetcorn	3 heaped tablespoons
Corn on the cob	One, small

Remember all fresh, canned or frozen fruit and vegetables count. Ensure fruit are not canned in syrup and vegetables are not canned in oil or sauces. Limit your fruit juice/smoothie intake to one small glass daily (150ml) as they contain less fibre than whole fruit and vegetables and can contain a lot of sugar.

Aim to have ..... portions per day.

## Meat, fish and other protein

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Food item	Portion
Lean meat, cooked (chicken, beef, pork etc)	70g (size of deck of cards)
Fish, cooked	140g (size of cheque book)
Tinned fish e.g. sardines	Half a can, drained in brine (50g)
Eggs	2 medium sized
Baked beans	Small tin (200g)
Beans and pulses, cooked	5 tablespoons
Nuts	2 tablespoons/small handful
Quorn, tofu, soya, uncooked	2 sausages or 120g

Aim to have ..... portions per day.

## Dairy products

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Food item	Portion
Milk or milk alternative	1 glass (200ml)
Yogurt or yogurt alternative	Small carton (125ml)
Hard cheeses e.g cheddar	25g (Size of small matchbox)
Soft cheeses e.g. cottage cheese	Small pot (75g)

Aim to have ..... portions per day.

## Fats and sugar

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Food item	Portion
Biscuits e.g. shortbread finger/digestive/jam ring/oat biscuit	One
Crisps	1 average pack (30-40g)
Doughnut	1 average (60)
Butter/Margarine	1 level teaspoon
Low fat spread	2 level teaspoons
Oils	1 level teaspoon
Mayonnaise/Vinaigrette	1 level teaspoon
Jam/Honey	1 heaped teaspoon
Low calorie salad cream	2 tablespoons

Keep these to a minimum/small amounts. Opt for unsaturated fats e.g. olive oil, rapeseed oil, vegetable oil, avocado etc.

## Alcohol

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Type of alcohol	Amount in millilitres (ml)	Unit
Standard 4% beer	250ml	1 unit
Standard 4% cider	218ml	1 unit
Standard 13% wine	76ml	1 unit
Standard 40% spirit	25ml	1 unit
Standard 20% liqueur or sherry	50ml	1 unit

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.

## 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	Use only small amounts of oil in cooking. Choose lean meats, remove any visible fat.  Grill, boil, steam food instead of frying or roasting.  Ready prepared meals should be the lower fat, lower calorie or 'healthy' options.
Butter, lard ghee, hard margarine, palm oil, coconut oil	Choose a low fat spread labelled 'high in monounsaturates'.  Use these sparingly, spread thinly. Cook with olive or rapeseed oil. Try oil sprays.
Full fat milk and cheese	Semi-skimmed, 1 % or skimmed milk.  Limit cheese to small portions (30g) of low fat varieties at meal times only. Try soft cheeses e.g. cottage cheese, 'light' cream cheese.  If dislike low fat options, try grating a smaller portion of hard cheese.

Instead of...	Try these...
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?

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- Wholegrain/high fibre cereal with skimmed/semi-skimmed milk or low fat yogurt
- Porridge – add variety with fresh/dried fruit
- Small glass of unsweetened fruit juice or piece of fruit (dried or fresh)
- 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

## 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/ 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 in 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: tune 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, chapatti, 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

## Staying motivated

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Staying motivated can be one of the biggest challenges when trying to eat healthily or lose weight.

- **Make small goals regularly** – make these SMART
  - Specific
  - Measureable
  - Achievable
  - Relevant
  - Time Specific

For Example: 'I want to lose 3kg in 6 months', rather than 'I want to lose weight'.

- **Celebrate your success** – Set lots of small goals, even if your long-term goal has not been met yet, every success is worth celebrating!
- **Don't dwell on your mistakes** – everyone has days where they struggle to eat as healthily as they planned to. Don't let this take over your whole day or even week. Accept and move on!

- **Think positively!** Accept there will be difficult times, however how we deal with these situations can have a huge impact on how successful we are.
- **Think ahead** – consider what are likely to be challenges or barriers to healthy eating, now think of how you get minimise or get around these completely.
- **Stay organised** – have healthy snack options with you to try and avoid reaching for an unhealthy option when out and about.
- **Try an alternative goal** – sometimes weight loss can seem to consume all. By setting an alternative goal, for example training for a 10km run, you can increase your activity to achieve this, rather than just to lose weight.
- **Involve others** – Explain to friends and family the reasons you are trying to lose weight and why it is important to you. If people understand your reasons, they will be more likely to support you.

## Reference source

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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

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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

**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: Terpsi Karpasiti

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