



THEME OF THE MONTH
MARCH 2024

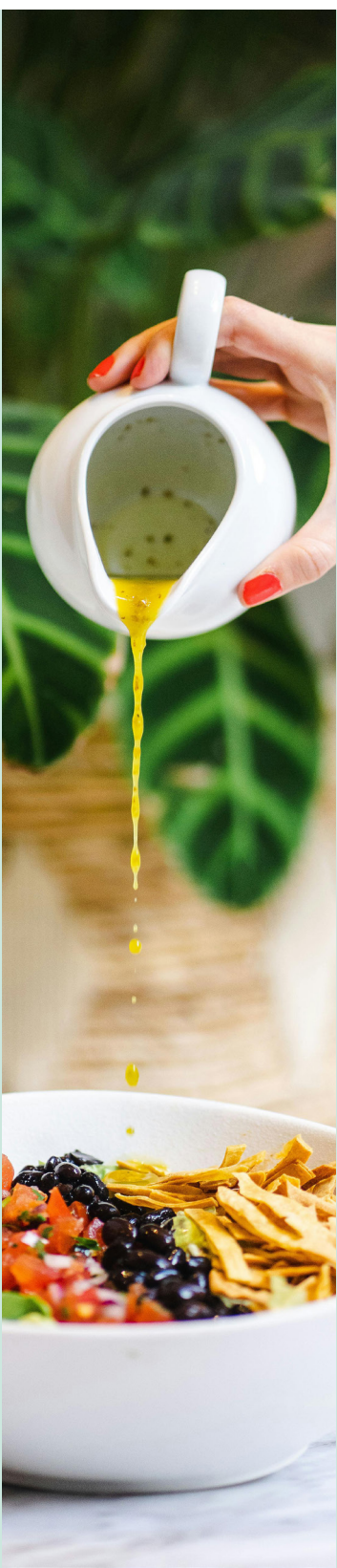
HEALTHY
EATING



Introduction

Whether you're looking to improve your energy levels, boost your mood, or simply enhance your overall well-being, this guide is designed to support you on your path to healthier living.

By making small, sustainable changes to your diet and adopting mindful eating habits, you can nourish your body from the inside out and enjoy a happier, healthier life.



The importance of Healthy Eating

Healthy eating is essential for nurturing our bodies and promoting overall well-being. Here are some key benefits of maintaining a balanced diet:

- **Improved Energy Levels:** Consuming a variety of nutritious foods provides the body with the essential nutrients it needs to function optimally. A balanced diet rich in carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, and minerals fuels our bodies, helping to sustain energy levels throughout the day.
- **Better Mood:** What we eat not only affects our physical health but also influences our mental and emotional well-being. Research suggests that diets high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins are associated with lower rates of depression and anxiety, contributing to a more positive mood and greater emotional resilience.
- **Enhanced Immunity:** The nutrients found in healthy foods play a crucial role in supporting a strong immune system. Vitamins like vitamin C and zinc, as well as antioxidants from fruits and vegetables, help to protect against infections and boost the body's natural defense mechanisms, reducing the risk of illness and promoting faster recovery.
- **Reduced Risk of Chronic Diseases:** A balanced diet can significantly lower the risk of developing chronic diseases such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and certain cancers. By incorporating nutrient-dense foods and limiting the intake of processed foods high in unhealthy fats, sugars, and sodium, individuals can help prevent or manage these serious health conditions.

Healthy Eating Statistics

The impact of unhealthy eating habits on public health is staggering. Consider the following statistics:

- According to the NHS, only about 31% of adults aged 19 to 64 consume the recommended five portions of fruits and vegetables daily. (Source: NHS, “National Diet and Nutrition Survey”)
- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported that the proportion of households that purchased convenience food, such as fast food or ready meals, increased from 86% to 89% between 2013 and 2019. (Source: ONS, “Family spending in the UK: April 2017 to March 2018”)
- Public Health England stated that as of 2019, 28% of adults in England were classified as obese and 36% were overweight, with obesity rates increasing over time. (Source: Public Health England, “Obesity: Adult obesity and overweight”)
- The UK government’s National Diet and Nutrition Survey indicates that both adults and children are consuming too much sugar, with sugar making up 12-15% of daily calories, exceeding the recommended limit of no more than 5%. (Source: Public Health England, “National Diet and Nutrition Survey”)
- The British Nutrition Foundation’s Healthy Eating Week survey found that in 2019, only 42% of adults were aware of the recommendation to eat five portions of fruits and vegetables per day, indicating a need for increased nutritional education. (Source: British Nutrition Foundation, “Healthy Eating Week survey 2019 results”)

These statistics highlight the urgent need for individuals and communities to prioritise healthy eating habits and make positive changes to their diets to improve overall health and well-being. By making informed food choices and adopting healthier lifestyles, we can work together to combat the growing epidemic of diet-related diseases and promote a healthier future for generations to come.



Building a **balanced plate**

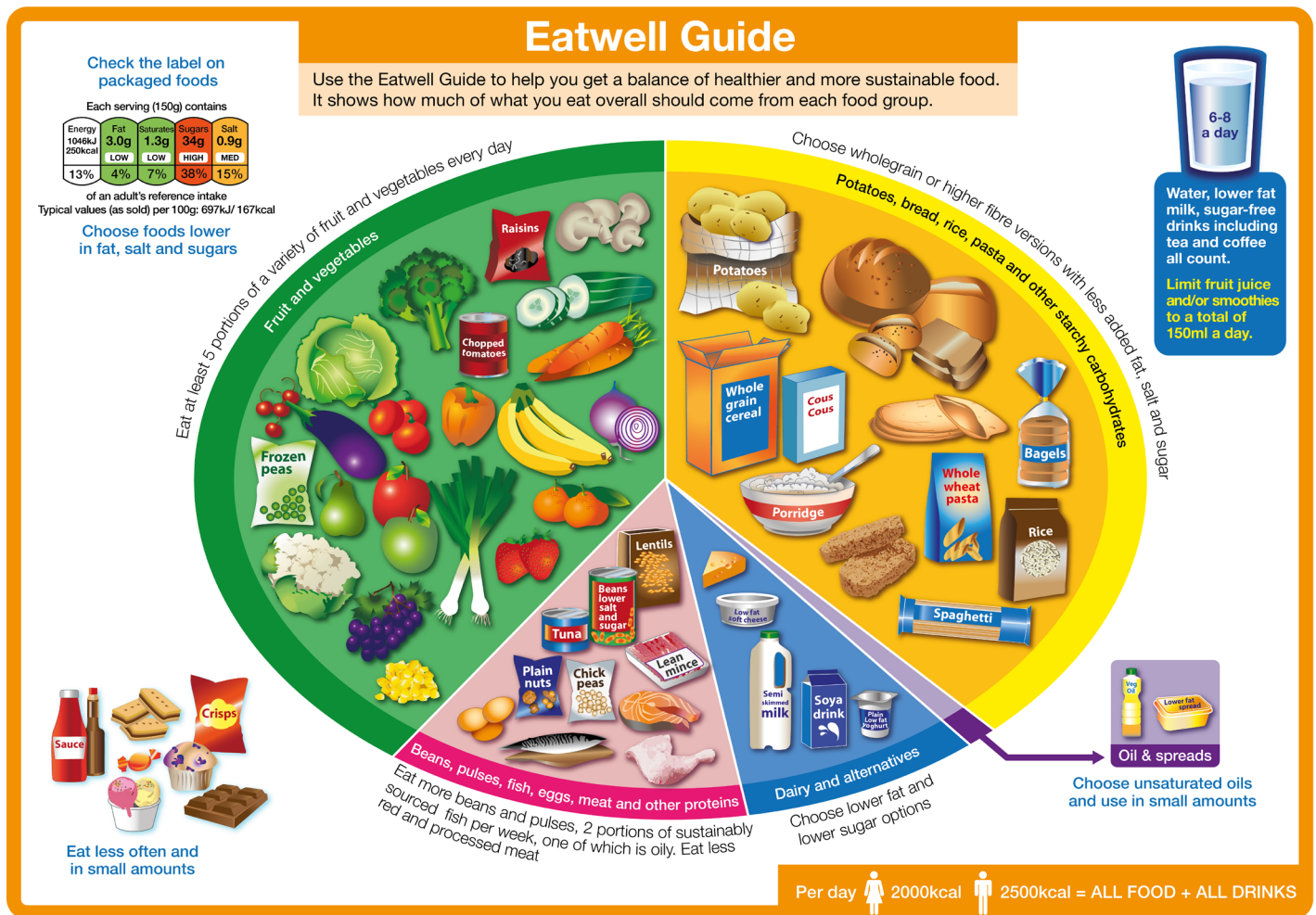
A balanced meal consists of a variety of nutrient-rich foods that provide essential vitamins, minerals, fiber, and macronutrients necessary for optimal health. Here's why each component is important:

- **Fruits and Vegetables:** Fruits and vegetables are rich in vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and dietary fiber, which support overall health and help reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, and certain cancers. Aim to include a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables in your meals to maximise nutritional benefits.
- **Whole Grains:** Whole grains like brown rice, quinoa, oats, and whole wheat provide complex carbohydrates, fiber, and important nutrients such as B vitamins and iron. Choosing whole grains over refined grains helps stabilise blood sugar levels, promote digestive health, and reduce the risk of obesity and type 2 diabetes.
- **Lean Proteins:** Lean protein sources such as poultry, fish, tofu, legumes, and low-fat dairy products are essential for muscle growth and repair, immune function, and hormone synthesis. Including lean proteins in your meals helps you feel full and satisfied while supporting overall health and maintaining a healthy weight.
- **Healthy Fats:** Healthy fats found in foods like avocados, nuts, seeds, olive oil, and fatty fish are crucial for brain health, hormone production, and nutrient absorption. Incorporating sources of healthy fats into your meals helps reduce inflammation, improve cholesterol levels, and support heart health.

By including a balance of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats in every meal, you can ensure that your body receives the diverse array of nutrients it needs to thrive and function optimally.



Dietary recommendations



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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- **Fruits and Vegetables:** Fill half of your plate with colorful fruits and vegetables. Include a variety of options such as leafy greens, berries, carrots, broccoli, and bell peppers to maximize nutrient intake and add visual appeal to your meals.
- **Whole Grains:** Allocate a quarter of your plate to whole grains such as brown rice, quinoa, or whole wheat bread or pasta. Choose whole grain options over refined grains for added fiber and nutrients.
- **Lean Proteins:** Reserve the remaining quarter of your plate for lean protein sources such as grilled chicken, fish, tofu, or legumes. Aim for portion sizes that fit in the palm of your hand to ensure adequate protein intake without overdoing it.
- **Healthy Fats:** Incorporate small amounts of healthy fats into your meal, such as a drizzle of olive oil over vegetables or a sprinkle of nuts or seeds on top of a salad. Remember that while fats are essential, they are also calorie-dense, so it's important to consume them in moderation.

This visual representation serves as a helpful guide for building balanced meals that provide a variety of nutrients while promoting overall health and well-being.

Tips for Healthy Eating

Portion control:

Portion control is a fundamental aspect of healthy eating that can help prevent overeating and promote weight management. Here are some strategies for controlling portion sizes:

- **Use Smaller Plates:** Opt for smaller plates and bowls to visually trick your brain into thinking you're eating more than you actually are.
- **Measure Portions:** Use measuring cups, spoons, or a food scale to accurately portion out servings of foods like grains, proteins, and snacks.
- **Practice the Plate Method:** Divide your plate into sections for fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains, ensuring proper portion sizes for each food group.
- **Be Mindful of Serving Sizes:** Familiarise yourself with recommended serving sizes for different foods to avoid unintentionally consuming excessive calories.
- **Listen to Your Body:** Pay attention to your body's hunger and fullness cues, stopping eating when you feel satisfied rather than when your plate is empty.

Mindful eating:

Mindful eating involves paying full attention to the sensory experience of eating and being present in the moment. Here's how to practice mindful eating:

- **Slow Down:** Eat slowly and savor each bite, taking the time to appreciate the flavors, textures, and aromas of your food.
- **Eliminate Distractions:** Minimize distractions such as television, smartphones, or other electronic devices during meals to focus on the act of eating.
- **Chew Thoroughly:** Chew your food thoroughly and put your utensil down between bites to give your body time to register feelings of fullness.
- **Tune into Hunger and Fullness:** Check in with your body before, during, and after meals to assess hunger and fullness levels. Eat when you're hungry and stop when you're satisfied, rather than eating out of habit or boredom.
- **Practice Gratitude:** Take a moment to express gratitude for the food you're about to eat, acknowledging the effort that went into producing and preparing it.

Hydration:

Staying hydrated is essential for overall health and well-being. Here are some tips for ensuring adequate hydration:

- **Drink Water Throughout the Day:** Aim to drink at least 8 glasses of water per day, or more if you're physically active or in hot weather.
- **Keep a Water Bottle Handy:** Carry a reusable water bottle with you wherever you go to make it easy to stay hydrated throughout the day.
- **Infuse Your Water:** Add natural flavor to your water by infusing it with fresh fruits, herbs, or cucumbers for a refreshing twist.
- **Limit Sugary Beverages:** Avoid sugary drinks like soda, fruit juices, and energy drinks, which can contribute to excess calories and sugar intake without providing the hydration your body needs.
- **Pay Attention to Thirst Signals:** Don't wait until you feel thirsty to drink water; instead, sip water regularly throughout the day to stay ahead of thirst and maintain optimal hydration levels.

By incorporating these tips into your daily routine, you can develop healthy eating habits that support your overall health and well-being, making it easier to nourish your body and achieve your wellness goals.



Smart shopping

Making healthier choices at the grocery store is key to maintaining a nutritious diet. Here are some tips to help you shop smart:



- 1. Read Food Labels:** Take the time to read food labels and ingredient lists to make informed choices. Look for products with shorter ingredient lists, minimal added sugars and unhealthy fats, and higher fiber and protein content.
- 2. Choose Fresh Produce:** Load up on fresh fruits and vegetables, aiming for a variety of colors and types. Opt for whole fruits and vegetables over canned or processed options, as they are often lower in sodium and preservatives.
- 3. Avoid Processed Foods:** Limit your intake of processed foods such as sugary snacks, packaged meals, and processed meats, which are typically high in added sugars, unhealthy fats, and sodium. Instead, focus on whole, minimally processed foods.
- 4. Shop the Perimeter:** Stick to the perimeter of the grocery store, where you'll find fresh produce, lean proteins, dairy products, and whole grains. The inner aisles tend to contain more processed and packaged foods.
- 5. Plan Ahead:** Make a shopping list before heading to the store and stick to it to avoid impulse purchases. Plan your meals for the week and only buy what you need to minimize food waste and save money.

Budget-friendly options

Eating healthily doesn't have to break the bank. Here are some budget-friendly options to help you stretch your grocery dollars while still eating nutritiously:

- **Buy Seasonal Produce:** Seasonal fruits and vegetables are often more affordable and taste fresher than out-of-season options. Visit farmers' markets or look for sales at your local grocery store to take advantage of seasonal produce.
- **Opt for Store Brands:** Store-brand or generic products are typically cheaper than name-brand equivalents but are often of comparable quality. Look for store-brand options when shopping for staples like grains, canned goods, and pantry items.
- **Purchase Items in Bulk:** Buying items in bulk can help you save money in the long run. Look for bulk bins at the grocery store for items like grains, nuts, and dried fruits, which allow you to purchase only the amount you need.
- **Use Coupons and Discounts:** Take advantage of coupons, sales, and discounts to save money on groceries. Look for coupons in newspapers, online coupon websites, or on grocery store apps, and use them to lower the cost of healthy foods.
- **Plan Meals Around Affordable Ingredients:** Choose budget-friendly ingredients like beans, lentils, eggs, and frozen vegetables as the basis for your meals. These inexpensive staples can be used in a variety of dishes and provide essential nutrients without breaking the bank.

By following these smart shopping tips and budget-friendly options, you can make healthier choices at the grocery store while sticking to your budget. With a little planning and creativity, eating healthily can be both affordable and delicious.



Healthy cooking methods

Choosing the right cooking method can significantly impact the nutritional value of your meals. Here are some healthy cooking techniques that help preserve nutrients and minimise added fats:

- **Steaming:** Steaming involves cooking food by exposing it to steam from boiling water. This gentle cooking method helps retain the natural flavors, colors, and nutrients of foods, making it an excellent choice for vegetables, seafood, and delicate proteins like fish and chicken breasts.
- **Grilling:** Grilling is a popular cooking method that uses direct heat from a grill or barbecue to cook food. Grilling helps to reduce the need for added fats since excess fat drips away from the food as it cooks. It also imparts a delicious smoky flavor to meats, vegetables, and even fruits.
- **Baking:** Baking involves cooking food in an oven using dry heat. This method is great for cooking lean proteins like chicken, fish, and tofu, as well as vegetables and whole grains. Baking requires minimal added fats and allows foods to cook evenly while retaining moisture and flavor.
- **Sautéing:** Sautéing involves cooking food quickly in a small amount of oil or liquid over medium to high heat. This technique is ideal for cooking vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains, as it helps to preserve their natural flavors and nutrients while adding a delicious caramelised texture.

By incorporating these healthy cooking methods into your culinary repertoire, you can create flavorful and nutritious meals that promote overall health and well-being.



Flavourful Substitutions

Making simple substitutions in your recipes can help reduce the intake of unhealthy fats, sodium, and sugar without sacrificing taste. Here are some flavorful substitutions to try:

- **Healthy Fats:** Instead of using butter or margarine, opt for heart-healthy oils like olive oil, avocado oil, or coconut oil. These oils add richness and flavor to dishes without the saturated fat found in butter.
- **Salt:** Reduce your reliance on salt by incorporating herbs, spices, and citrus juices to season your food. Fresh herbs like basil, cilantro, and rosemary, along with spices like cumin, paprika, and turmeric, can add depth and complexity to your meals without the need for excess salt.
- **Sugar:** Cut back on refined sugars by using natural sweeteners like honey, maple syrup, or mashed ripe bananas in your recipes. These alternatives provide sweetness while also adding nutrients and flavor to your dishes.
- **Creamy Textures:** Instead of heavy cream or full-fat dairy products, use alternatives like Greek yogurt, low-fat milk, or pureed vegetables to add creaminess to soups, sauces, and dips. These substitutions offer a lighter texture without sacrificing flavor.
- **Processed Ingredients:** Minimise the use of processed and packaged foods by making homemade versions of staples like sauces, dressings, and marinades. Homemade versions allow you to control the ingredients and avoid unnecessary additives and preservatives.

By making these flavorful substitutions, you can create healthier versions of your favorite dishes while still enjoying delicious and satisfying meals. Experiment with different ingredients and cooking techniques to discover new flavors and enhance the nutritional value of your meals.

Explore further

Here are some reputable resources based in the UK to help you continue your journey towards a healthier lifestyle:

Websites:

- [NHS Eatwell Guide](#): The Eatwell Guide, provided by the National Health Service (NHS), offers practical advice on building a healthy, balanced diet. Visit the website to access useful tips, recipes, and meal plans.
- [British Nutrition Foundation \(BNF\)](#): The BNF website provides evidence-based information on nutrition and healthy eating, including resources for schools, families, and individuals looking to improve their diet.
- [BBC Good Food](#): BBC Good Food offers a vast collection of healthy recipes, cooking tips, and nutritional advice. Explore their website for inspiration and guidance on creating delicious and nutritious meals.
- [Food Standards Agency \(FSA\)](#): The FSA website provides information on food safety, labelling, and hygiene standards in the UK. It also offers guidance on healthy eating and dietary recommendations.

LSP's Safeguarding & Mental Health First Aider Teams

If you have any concerns at all, please don't hesitate to contact a member of our Safeguarding or Mental Health teams.

You can find the contact details [here](#).





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