

# EatWell

Your guide to healthy eating

**8 tips**  
for making  
healthier  
choices



FOOD  
STANDARDS  
AGENCY

**This booklet gives you some practical tips on eating well to help you feel your best.**

The two keys to a healthy diet are:

- eating the right amount of food for how active you are
- eating a range of foods to make sure you're getting a balanced diet

A healthy balanced diet contains a variety of types of food, including lots of fruit, vegetables and starchy foods such as wholemeal bread and wholegrain cereals; some protein-rich foods such as meat, fish, eggs and lentils; and some dairy foods.

The advice in this booklet is suitable for most people. But if you want information for children or older people, or if you are pregnant, breastfeeding or trying for a baby, take a look at the other booklets listed on the back cover or visit: [eatwell.gov.uk/agesandstages](http://eatwell.gov.uk/agesandstages)

# Eight tips for eating well

	<b>1. Base your meals on starchy foods</b>
	<b>2. Eat lots of fruit and veg</b>
	<b>3. Eat more fish – including a portion of oily fish each week</b>
	<b>4. Cut down on saturated fat and sugar</b>
	<b>5. Try to eat less salt – no more than 6g a day for adults</b>
	<b>6. Get active and try to be a healthy weight</b>
	<b>7. Drink plenty of water</b>
	<b>8. Don't skip breakfast</b>

**And remember to enjoy your food!**



# 1. Base your meals on starchy foods



**Starchy foods such as bread, cereals, rice, pasta and potatoes are a really important part of a healthy diet. Try to choose wholegrain varieties whenever you can.**

Starchy foods should make up about a third of the food we eat.

They are a good source of energy and the main source of a range of nutrients in our diet. As well as starch, these foods contain fibre, calcium, iron and B vitamins.

Most of us should eat more starchy foods – try to include at least one starchy food with each of your main meals. So you could start the day with a wholegrain breakfast cereal, have a sandwich for lunch, and potatoes, pasta or rice with your evening meal.

Some people think starchy foods are fattening, but gram for gram they contain less than half the calories of fat. You just need to watch the fats you add when cooking and serving these foods, because this is what increases the calorie content.

## **Why choose wholegrain?**

Wholegrain foods contain more fibre and other nutrients than white or refined starchy foods.

We also digest wholegrain foods more slowly so they can help make us feel full for longer.

Wholegrain foods include:

- wholemeal and wholegrain bread, pitta and chapatti
- wholewheat pasta and brown rice
- wholegrain breakfast cereals



## 2. Eat lots of fruit and veg

**Most people know we should be eating more fruit and veg. But most of us still aren't eating enough.**

### **What is a portion?**

One portion of fruit and veg = 80g, or any of these:

- 1 apple, banana, pear, orange or other similar size fruit
- 2 plums or similar size fruit
- ½ a grapefruit or avocado
- 1 slice of large fruit, such as melon or pineapple
- 3 heaped tablespoons of vegetables (raw, cooked, frozen or tinned)
- 3 heaped tablespoons of fruit salad (fresh or tinned in fruit juice) or stewed fruit
- 1 heaped tablespoon of dried fruit (such as raisins and apricots)
- a dessert bowl of salad
- a glass (150ml) of fruit juice (counts as a maximum of one portion a day)
- 1 cupful of grapes, cherries or berries

Try to eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and veg every day. It might be easier than you think.

You could try adding up your portions during the day.

For example, you could have:

- a glass of juice and a sliced banana with your cereal at breakfast
- a side salad at lunch
- a pear as an afternoon snack
- a portion of peas or other vegetables with your evening meal

Choose from fresh, frozen, tinned, dried or juiced, but remember potatoes count as a starchy food, not as portions of fruit and veg.



### 3. Eat more fish – including a portion of oily fish each week

**Most of us should be eating more fish. It's an excellent source of protein and contains many vitamins and minerals.**

Aim for at least two portions of fish a week, including a portion of oily fish. You can choose from fresh, frozen or canned – but remember that canned and smoked fish can be high in salt.

#### **What are oily fish?**

Some fish are called oily fish because they are rich in certain types of fats, called omega 3 fatty acids, which can help keep our hearts healthy.

#### **How much oily fish?**

Although most of us should be eating more oily fish, women who might have a baby one day should have a maximum of 2 portions of oily fish a week (a portion is about 140g).

And 4 is the recommended maximum number of portions for other adults.

#### **Examples of oily fish**

Salmon, mackerel, trout, herring, fresh tuna, sardines, pilchards, eel.

#### **Examples of non-oily fish**

Cod, haddock, plaice, coley, tinned tuna, halibut, skate, sea bass, hake.

#### **Shark, swordfish and marlin**

Don't have more than one portion a week of these types of fish. This is because of the high levels of mercury in these fish.

For more information on fish and for advice – including recommended limits – for children, women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or trying for a baby, see one of the booklets listed on the back cover or visit: [eatwell.gov.uk/fish](http://eatwell.gov.uk/fish)



## 4. Cut down on saturated fat and sugar

**To stay healthy we need some fat in our diets. What is important is the kind of fat we are eating.**

There are two main types of fat – saturated and unsaturated.

### **Saturated fat**

Having too much saturated fat can increase the amount of cholesterol in the blood, which increases the chance of developing heart disease.

### **Unsaturated fat**

Having unsaturated fat instead of saturated fat lowers blood cholesterol.

Try to cut down on food that is high in saturated fat and have foods that are rich in unsaturated fat instead, such as vegetable oils (including sunflower, rapeseed and olive oil), oily fish, avocados, nuts and seeds.

### **Foods high in saturated fat**

Try to eat these sorts of foods less often or in small amounts:

- meat pies, sausages, meat with visible white fat
- hard cheese
- butter and lard
- pastry
- cakes and biscuits
- cream, soured cream and crème fraîche
- coconut oil, coconut cream and palm oil

For a healthy choice, use just a small amount of vegetable oil or a reduced-fat spread instead of butter, lard or ghee. And when you are having meat, try to choose lean cuts and cut off any visible fat.



### How do I know if a food is high in fat?

Look at the label to see how much fat a food contains. Generally the label will say how many grams (g) of fat there are in 100g of the food.

Some foods also give a figure for saturated fat, or 'saturates'.

### This is A LOT of fat

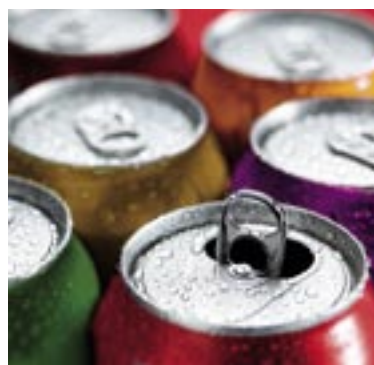
20g fat or more per 100g  
5g saturates or more per 100g

### This is A LITTLE fat

3g fat or less per 100g  
1g saturates or less per 100g

If the amount of total fat is between 3g and 20g per 100g, this is a moderate amount of total fat. Between 1g and 5g of saturates is a moderate amount of saturated fat.

Try to choose more foods that contain just a little fat (3g fat or less per 100g) and cut down on foods that contain a lot of fat (20g fat or more per 100g).



**Most people in the UK are eating too much sugar. We should all be trying to eat fewer foods containing added sugar, such as sweets, cakes and biscuits, and drinking fewer sugary soft and fizzy drinks.**

Having sugary foods and drinks too often can cause tooth decay, especially if you have them between meals.

Many foods that contain added sugar can also be high in calories, so cutting down could help you control your weight.

### How do I know if a food is high in added sugar?

Take a look at the label. The ingredients list always starts with the biggest ingredient first.

But watch out for other words used to describe added sugar, such as sucrose, glucose, fructose, maltose, hydrolysed starch and invert sugar, corn syrup and honey.

If you see one of these near the top of the list, you know the food is likely to be high in added sugars.

Another way to get an idea of how much sugar is in a food is to have a look for the 'Carbohydrates (of which sugars)' figure on the label. But this figure can't tell you how much is from added sugars, which is the type we should try to cut down on.

### This is A LOT of sugar

10g sugars or more per 100g

### This is A LITTLE sugar

2g sugars or less per 100g

If the amount of sugars is between 2g and 10g per 100g, this is a moderate amount.

Sometimes you will only see a figure for total 'Carbohydrates', not for 'Carbohydrates (of which sugars)', which means the figure also includes the carbohydrate from starchy foods.



## 5. Try to eat less salt – no more than 6g a day for adults

**Lots of people think they don't eat much salt, especially if they don't add it to their food. But don't be so sure!**

Every day in the UK, 85% men and 69% women eat too much salt. Adults (and children 11 and over) should have no more than 6g salt a day. Younger children should have even less.

Three-quarters (75%) of the salt we eat comes from processed food, such as some breakfast cereals, soups, sauces, bread, biscuits and ready meals. So you could easily be eating too much salt without realising it.

Eating too much salt can raise your blood pressure. And people with high blood pressure are three times more likely to develop heart disease or have a stroke than people with normal blood pressure.

### **How do I know if a food is high in salt?**

Salt is often listed as sodium on food labels.

Salt = sodium x 2.5

Use the following as a guide to what is a lot and what is a little salt (or sodium) per 100g food.

### **This is A LOT of salt**

1.25g salt or more per 100g  
0.5g sodium or more per 100g

### **This is A LITTLE salt**

0.25g salt or less per 100g  
0.1g sodium or less per 100g

Try to choose foods that are low in salt (0.25g salt or less per 100g).

For more information visit:  
[salt.gov.uk](http://salt.gov.uk)

## 6. Get active and try to be a healthy weight



It's not a good idea to be either underweight or overweight. Being overweight can lead to health conditions such as heart disease, high blood pressure or diabetes. Being underweight could also affect your health.

You can check if you are the right weight for your height by using the chart at the end of this booklet.

If you think you just need to lose a little weight, the main things to remember are:

- only eat as much food as you need
- make healthy choices – it's a good idea to choose low-fat and low-sugar varieties, and eat plenty of fruit and veg and wholegrains
- get more active

It's also important to eat a variety of types of food so you get all the nutrients your body needs.

Physical activity is a good way of using up extra calories, and helps control our weight. But this doesn't mean you need to join a gym.

Just try to get active every day and build up the amount you do. For example, you could try to fit in as much walking as you can into your daily routine. Try to walk at a good pace.

Whenever we eat more than our body needs, we put on weight. This is because we store any energy we don't use up – usually as fat. Even small amounts of extra energy each day can lead to weight gain.

But crash diets aren't good for your health and they don't work in the longer term. The way to reach a healthy weight – and stay there – is to change your lifestyle gradually. Aim to lose about 0.5 to 1kg (about 1 to 2lbs) a week, until you reach a healthy weight for your height.

For more information visit: [eatwell.gov.uk/healthyweight](https://eatwell.gov.uk/healthyweight)



## 7. Drink plenty of water

In climates such as in the UK, we should drink about 6 to 8 glasses (1.2 litres) of water, or other fluids, every day to stop us getting dehydrated.

When the weather is warm or when we get active, our bodies need more than this.

But avoid drinking soft and fizzy drinks that are high in added sugar.

### Alcohol

There is nothing wrong with the occasional drink. But drinking too much can cause problems. Alcohol is also high in calories, so cutting down could help you control your weight.

Women can drink up to 2 to 3 units of alcohol a day and men up to 3 to 4 units a day, without significant risk to their health.

A unit is half a pint of standard strength (3 to 5% ABV) beer, lager or cider, or a pub measure of spirit. A glass of wine is about 2 units and alcopops are about 1.5 units.

For good health, it's a good idea to spread your drinking throughout the week and avoid binge drinking.

Drinking heavily over a long period of time can damage the liver.



## 8. Don't skip breakfast

**Breakfast can help give us the energy we need to face the day, as well as some of the vitamins and minerals we need for good health.**

Some people skip breakfast because they think it will help them lose weight. But missing meals doesn't help us lose weight and it isn't good for us, because we can miss out on essential nutrients.

Research shows that eating breakfast can actually help people control their weight.

This is probably because when we don't have breakfast we're more likely to get hungry before lunch and snack on foods that are high in fat and sugar, such as biscuits, doughnuts or pastries.

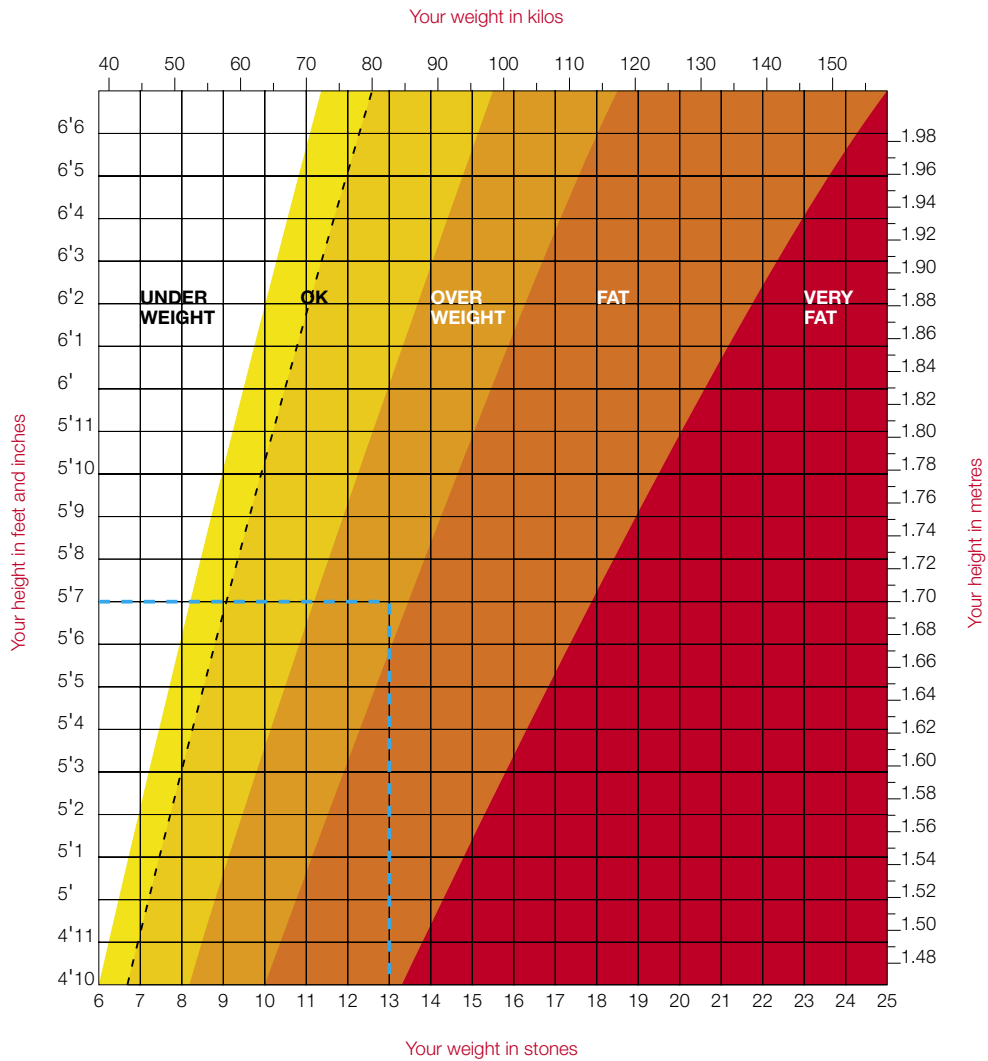
So why not go for a bowl of wholegrain cereal with some sliced banana and a glass of fruit juice for a healthy start to the day?

# Are you the right weight for your height?

If you want to check what sort of shape you're in, you can use this chart to check your weight against your height.

If you're worried about your weight, ask your GP or a dietitian for advice.

Remember this information is only a guide. The most important thing to remember is that you need to make sure you're eating a healthy balanced diet and keeping physically active.



For more information and advice about food,  
visit the Food Standards Agency's websites:

[eatwell.gov.uk](http://eatwell.gov.uk)

[food.gov.uk](http://food.gov.uk)

[salt.gov.uk](http://salt.gov.uk)

### **Food Standards Agency Publications**

To order further copies of this or other publications  
produced by the Agency, contact Food Standards  
Agency Publications:

tel	0845 606 0667
minicom	0845 606 0678
fax	020 8867 3225
email	<a href="mailto:foodstandards@ecgroup.uk.com">foodstandards@ecgroup.uk.com</a>

### **Other booklets from the Food Standards Agency**

Thinking of having a baby	FSA/0452/0105
Eating while you are pregnant	FSA/0451/0904
Eating for breastfeeding	FSA/0453/0905
Feeding your baby	FSA/0454/0602
Feeding your toddler	FSA/0455/0105
Feeding your growing child	FSA/0456/0105
Men and food	FSA/0458/0602
Eating for later life	FSA/0457/1104

Published by the Food Standards Agency October 2005.

Design by The Team. Print by Ancient House Press.

© Crown copyright 2005

Printed in England 300k FSA/0996/1005