

Healthy Eating

A **healthy balanced diet** which includes a wide range of nutrients is important for **good bone health**. Choosing a varied diet will help to reduce the risk of MSK conditions developing at any stage in life, to support good bone health in later life and to prevent osteoporosis developing. A balanced diet also helps to prevent other diseases from developing which would impact on general health and wellbeing as well as possible contribute to MSK conditions developing over time.

These 8 practical tips cover the basics of healthy eating and food and drink habits. The tips can help you make healthier choices. They are particularly useful when you are beginning to make changes but might feel that you don't know where to start if you feel overwhelmed when you begin to read up on the subject. Make one change at a time, give yourself time to get used to the change, then add in another, and so on...

8 tips for eating well

- 1** Base your meals on starchy foods
- 2** Eat lots of fruit and vegetables
- 3** Eat more fish - including a portion of oily fish each week
- 4** Cut down on saturated fat and sugar
- 5** Eat less salt - no more than 6g a day for adults
- 6** Get active and be a healthy weight
- 7** Don't get thirsty
- 8** Don't skip breakfast

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The Eatwell Guide

Eating well and having a healthy lifestyle can help us feel our best – and make a big difference to our long-term health. The Eatwell Guide can be helpful and shows the proportions in which different types of foods are needed to have a well-balanced and healthy diet. You should aim to eat the proportions of food shown over the period of a day or even a week, not necessarily at each meal time.

Is the Eatwell Guide for me?

The Eatwell Guide applies to most people regardless of weight, dietary restrictions/preferences or ethnic origin. However, it doesn't apply to children under 2 because they have different nutritional needs. Anyone with special dietary requirements or medical needs might want to check with a registered dietitian on how to adapt the Eatwell Guide to meet their individual needs.

How can the Eatwell Guide help?

The Eatwell Guide shows the different types of foods and drinks we should consume – and in what proportions – to have a healthy, balanced diet:

- Eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day
- Base meals on potatoes, bread, rice, pasta or other starchy carbohydrates; choosing wholegrain versions where possible
- Have some dairy or dairy alternatives (such as soya or oat drinks); choosing lower fat and lower sugar or no added sugar options
- Eat some beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins (including 2 portions of fish every week, one of which should be oily)
- Choose unsaturated oils and spreads and eat all fats in small amounts
- Drink 6-8 cups/glasses of fluid a day. If consuming foods and drinks high in fat, salt or sugar have these less often and try to choose small portions

When should I use the Eatwell Guide?

You can use the Eatwell Guide to help you make healthier choices whenever you're:

- Deciding what to eat
- At home cooking
- Out shopping for groceries
- Eating out in a restaurant, cafe or canteen
- Choosing food on the go

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Bone Health

Dietary advice to support good MSK health includes information on healthy eating in general and on a small number of specific nutrients. We also know that some people need advice on preventing or treating malnutrition which often develops with age, but can occur at any time, for example when people have been unwell.

Vitamin D and calcium¹, which are both important dietary components for MSK health through maintaining healthy bones, teeth and muscles.

Vitamin D

Many people should be able to get enough vitamin D through sunlight on the skin and via a healthy, balanced diet during spring and summer. During autumn and winter everyone will need to rely on dietary sources of vitamin D as there is insufficient exposure to sunlight in the UK to prompt vitamin D synthesis. As it is difficult for people to meet the 10 microgram recommendation from consuming foods alone, people are advised to take a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D in the autumn and winter, between October and early March.

People whose skin has little or no exposure to the sun, like those in institutions such as care homes, or those who always cover their skin when outside, risk vitamin D deficiency. It is recommended that these people should take a supplement throughout the year. Ethnic minority groups with dark skin, from African, Afro-Caribbean and South Asian backgrounds, may not get enough vitamin D from sunlight in the summer and therefore should consider taking a supplement all year round.

Vitamin D for pregnant or breastfeeding women and small children

Families who can claim Healthy Start Vouchers to buy food and milk may also be able to get vouchers which they can exchange for Healthy Start vitamins for pregnant women, breastfeeding women and for children under the age of 4 years. If you are not sure whether you should take these supplements or whether your child would benefit from them please check with your midwife or health visitor and they will help you to decide depending on your own circumstances. You can find out more about Healthy Start here:

www.healthystart.nhs.uk

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Calcium

Calcium is needed for good bone health. Eating a diet consistent with the Eatwell Guide will provide all the calcium your body needs. Try to regularly include some milk and dairy food (or dairy alternatives) – such as cheese, yoghurt and fromage frais in your food and drink intake. These are good sources of protein and vitamins, and they're also an important source of calcium, which helps to keep our bones strong.

Some dairy food can be high in fat and saturated fat, but there are plenty of lower-fat options to choose from. Go for lower fat and lower sugar products where possible. For example, why not try 1% fat milk which contains about half the fat of semi-skimmed milk without a noticeable change in taste or texture? Reduced fat cheese is also widely available. Or you could have just a smaller amount of the full-fat varieties less often. When buying dairy alternatives such as soya or oat alternatives to milk, go for unsweetened, calcium-fortified versions. Aim to include three portions of dairy food per day in order to get enough calcium to protect your bones.

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