

men and food

eating for
good health

Food Standards Agency Publications

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**FOOD
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Eating a balanced diet is important for good health and to help reduce your risk of heart disease and certain cancers. This booklet contains practical advice to help you make some healthy food choices.

Q What should I be eating?

A For a healthy balanced diet, aim to do the following:

- Eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables each day. These can be fresh, frozen, tinned, dried or a glass of juice. See **What is a portion of fruit and veg?** on page 2.
- Eat more starchy foods, such as pasta, rice, potatoes, cereals and pulses (beans, peas and lentils). These should make up about a third of your diet.
- Choose lean meat, and trim off the fat and any skin.
- Try to eat fish twice a week, including one portion of oily fish, such as mackerel or sardines.
- Grill, bake, poach, boil, steam or microwave your food, rather than frying or roasting. Or you could try 'dry roasting', without adding any fat.
- Reduce the amount of sugar in your diet.



Q What is a portion of fruit and veg?

A 1 portion = any of these:

- 1 apple, banana or orange
- 2 plums or other fruit of a similar size
- ½ a grapefruit or avocado
- 2 to 3 tablespoonfuls of vegetables (raw, cooked, frozen or canned)
- 2 to 3 tablespoonfuls of fruit salad (fresh, stewed or canned)
- ½ to 1 tablespoonful of dried fruit (such as raisins and apricots)
- 1 handful of grapes, cherries or berries
- 1 dessert bowl of salad
- 1 glass (150ml) of fruit juice (however much you drink, fruit juice counts as a maximum of 1 portion a day)



Q Should I cut down on salt?

- ### A
- Sodium in salt can lead to high blood pressure, which increases the risk of stroke. So, you should try to cut down on the salt you add to your food during cooking and at the table. Remember to check the labels of any ready-prepared foods for the sodium content, before you buy. (See the **Salt stats and facts** below.)

Potassium, on the other hand, has a beneficial effect on blood pressure. Fruit and vegetables such as bananas, tomatoes and avocados are all good sources of potassium.

Salt stats and facts

- ¾ of the salt we eat comes from processed food
- people in the UK eat about 9 g salt (about 3.5 g sodium) a day, on average
- men should have about 6 g salt or about 2.5 g sodium a day
- 0.5 g sodium or more per 100 g is a lot of sodium
- 0.1 g sodium or less per 100 g is a little sodium



Q What about drinking?

- A Men can drink up to 3 to 4 units of alcohol a day without significant risk to their health. A unit is half a pint of ordinary-strength beer, lager or cider, a small glass of wine or a single 25 ml measure of spirits.

Drinking too much alcohol can increase your weight, particularly around the abdominal area, as well as leading to other long-term health problems, such as high blood pressure. To help you cut down, you could try drinking lower-strength drinks, drinking half pints instead of pints, or alternating alcohol with non-alcoholic drinks.

Try to drink at least 6 to 8 cups of water a day, or more if you exercise. If you don't like the taste of plain water, you could try sparkling water, or add some squash or fruit juice for flavour. You could also try adding a slice of lemon or lime.



Q Should I cut out fat?

- A It's important to have some fat in your diet. Fat helps the body absorb certain vitamins, and it's a good source of energy and the 'essential fatty acids' that the body can't make itself. But fat should make up no more than one third of the energy (or calories) in your diet. On average, men in the UK eat more fat than this.

Avoid fatty foods, especially those rich in saturated fat. Foods high in saturated fat include red meat, meat pies, sausages, butter, cheese, and cakes and biscuits made with hydrogenated fats. Choose foods high in monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fat, such as olive, sunflower and vegetable oils.



Q Should my diet be different to the diet of a woman of my age?

- A Men and women should both eat a varied and balanced diet, and try to avoid becoming overweight.

Men in particular need to avoid excess weight gain, because they are more likely to carry the extra weight in the abdominal area. This is known as central obesity and is commonly referred to as an 'apple' shape. Carrying excess weight in the stomach area increases your risk of developing heart disease and diabetes.

Men of African-Caribbean and Asian (Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi) origin appear to have an increased risk of developing diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease. This may be related to a tendency to carry any excess weight in the abdominal area.

Being overweight also increases the risk of developing cancers. And severe obesity can place great strain on your joints.

Eating a diet that is high in fat can contribute to gaining excess weight, not only because fat is high in calories, but because it can reduce your sensation of feeling full. This means you may end up eating more food than you need. So, try to make sure that your meals are made up of a balance of carbohydrates, protein, fat and fibre.



Q Should I eat the same diet all my adult life?

- A During the teenage years, when your body is growing, it's especially important to eat enough food to meet your energy needs. But as we get older, we tend to need less food because our bodies use up less energy.

Throughout your life you should adjust the amount of food you eat according to how physically active you are. We all put on weight when our diet provides more energy than we use up.

Although you may need to adjust the amount you eat, it's always important to make sure you're eating a wide variety of foods, including a balance of carbohydrates, protein, fat, fibre, and vitamins and minerals.



Q Where can I get more information?

A If you have any concerns, consult your GP, or call NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 or visit www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Remember to ask your GP for advice before starting a new exercise programme, particularly if you haven't exercised for some time.

You can find out more about food at www.food.gov.uk



www.food.gov.uk/men

