

# Keeping a healthy weight

It's important to maintain a healthy weight. Being overweight can lead to a greater risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, stroke and some cancers. Being underweight can also affect your health too.

Keeping a healthy weight is not just about dieting. It's also about getting into healthier habits and choosing the right variety of food, drink and exercise every day. The main things to remember are:

- **Make healthier food choices.** Eat plenty of fruit, vegetables and wholegrains, and choose food which is lower in fat with no added sugar. Watch the salt content too – food that's lower in sugar and fat can often contain more salt.
- **Watch your portion size.** Stop eating when you feel full and cut down on less healthy snacks.
- **Get more active.** Gradually build up to 30 minutes of moderately intense exercise at least 5 days a week.

## PRACTICAL WAYS TO HELP YOU MAKE HEALTHIER CHOICES

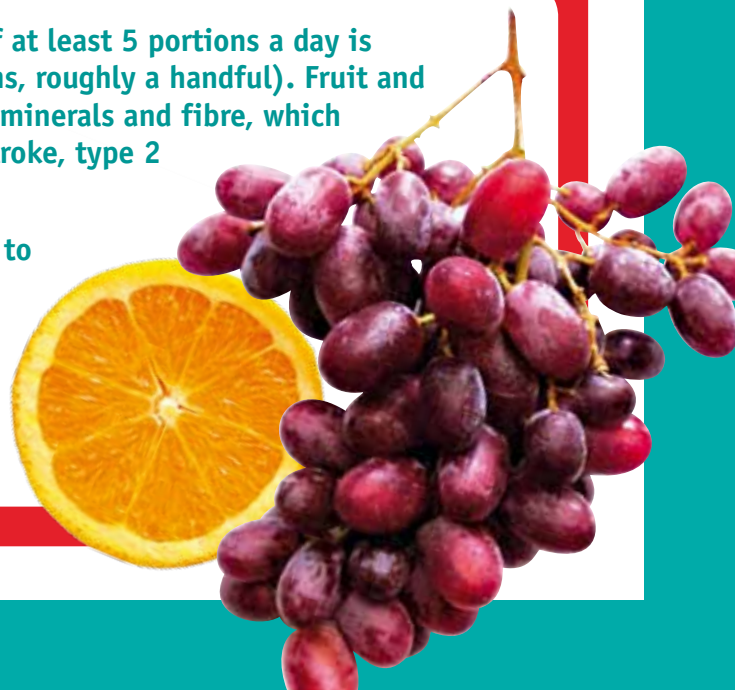
**CUT BACK THE FAT** – eat less food that is high in saturated fat and go instead for food that is rich in unsaturated fat, such as vegetable oil (including sunflower, rapeseed and olive oil), oily fish, avocados, nuts and seeds.

For a healthier choice, use a small amount of vegetable oil or a reduced-fat spread rather than butter, lard or ghee. And when you're eating meat, choose lean cuts and remove any visible fat.

**EAT MORE FRUIT AND VEGETABLES** – a variety of at least 5 portions a day is important for your health (a portion is 80 grams, roughly a handful). Fruit and vegetables are packed with essential vitamins, minerals and fibre, which may help to reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and some cancers.

It can be easier than you think to eat your way to 5 A DAY. Canned, frozen, 100% fruit juice and dried fruit and vegetables all count, as well as fresh produce. Remember, potatoes don't count because they're classed as starchy food.

For more information visit: [nhs.uk/5aday](https://www.nhs.uk/5aday)



**EAT LESS SUGARY FOOD** – most people in the UK are eating too much sugar. So we should all try to eat fewer foods containing added sugar, such as sweets, cakes and biscuits. Cutting down on sugary drinks is also important.

**EAT LESS SALT** – lots of people think they don't eat much salt, especially if they don't add it to their food. But three quarters (75%) of the salt we eat is already in the food we buy, so you could easily be eating too much salt without realising it. Adults and children over 11 should have no more than 6 grams of salt a day.

**EAT MORE FISH** – we should eat more fish because it's an excellent source of protein and contains many vitamins and minerals. Aim to eat at least two portions of fish a week, including a portion of oily fish such as salmon, mackerel or trout. You can choose from fresh, frozen or canned, but remember that canned and smoked fish can be high in salt.

**BASE YOUR MEALS ON STARCHY FOODS** – these should make up about a third of the food we eat, because they're a good source of energy and the main source of a range of essential nutrients in our diet. Some people think that starchy foods are fattening, but gram for gram they contain less than half the calories that fat can. When cooking and serving starchy foods keep an eye on adding fats as this can increase the number of calories.

Try to include at least one starchy food with each of your main meals. For example, you could start the day with a wholegrain breakfast cereal, eat a sandwich for lunch, and then have potatoes, pasta or rice with your evening meal.



## MEALS AND SNACKS

**DON'T SKIP BREAKFAST** – a healthy breakfast can help give us the energy we need to face the day. There is also some evidence to suggest that it can help towards weight control. So try eating wholegrain cereal with low-fat milk, adding some chopped fruit or berries, and drinking a glass of 100% fruit juice.

**EAT REGULAR MEALS** – although it's not always easy, making time for regular meals is important and can be key to successfully maintaining a healthy weight. If you grab a bite to eat on the run, you might think you're eating less, but it can mean that you're tempted to go for fast food or snacks, which are often higher in fat and calories.

**AVOID LESS HEALTHY SNACKS** – most people snack more often than they realise and many snacks can be high in added sugar, fat, calories and salt – all the things we shouldn't eat too much of. If you think that high-calorie snacks could be a problem for you, try making this your first change and opt instead for more healthy snacks, such as fruit. This simple step could help you on your way to a healthier weight.

## DRINKING HEALTHILY

**DRINK PLENTY OF FLUIDS** – we should be drinking about 6 to 8 glasses (1.2 litres) of water or other fluids every day, to stop us from getting dehydrated. Remember, when the weather is warm or when we get more active our bodies will need more fluid. And avoid drinking soft and fizzy drinks, which are high in added sugar.

**WATCH HOW MUCH ALCOHOL YOU DRINK** – the alcohol content of a drink is measured in units. For instance, a pint of typical-strength bitter contains just over 2 units, while a glass of wine can contain anything from 1.5 to over 3 units, depending on the size and strength. The NHS recommends that:

- Men should not regularly drink more than 3 to 4 units of alcohol per day.
- Women should not regularly drink more than 2 to 3 units of alcohol per day.

For more information visit: [units.nhs.uk](http://units.nhs.uk)



## USEFUL WEBSITES

[nhs.uk/letsgetmoving](https://nhs.uk/letsgetmoving)

Visit this website to find out how you can get more active in your local area.

There are lots of other websites where you can also find helpful information:

### Getting more active

[nhs.uk/livewell/fitness](https://nhs.uk/livewell/fitness)

Information on becoming more active.

[bhf.org.uk/keeping\\_your\\_heart\\_healthy/staying\\_active.aspx](https://bhf.org.uk/keeping_your_heart_healthy/staying_active.aspx)

Ways to get more active and information on the benefits.

### Walking

[walkengland.org.uk/walknowgettingstarted.aspx](https://walkengland.org.uk/walknowgettingstarted.aspx)

A comprehensive website, with information on how to get active through walking, linking to lots of different local opportunities.

[ramblers.org.uk](https://ramblers.org.uk)

Details of many locally organised walking groups, catering for all levels of fitness.

[whi.org.uk](https://whi.org.uk)

'Walking the way to Health' aims to encourage people, particularly those who take little exercise, to do regular short walks in their local community.

[walkit.com](https://walkit.com)

A website covering a number of cities which helps you plot your active travel route.

### Cycling

[sustrans.com](https://sustrans.com)

Information on starting off cycling and national cycle network maps.

[britishcycling.org.uk](https://britishcycling.org.uk)

Go to Skyride for information on led rides and mass participation events.

Have a look at the Travel and Recreation sections for online cycling support, cycling routes and events.

### Nature conservation

[btcv.org.uk](https://btcv.org.uk)

Information on outdoor conservation opportunities.

### Other websites to help you live a healthy, active life include:

[nhs.uk/5aday](https://nhs.uk/5aday) [eatwell.gov.uk](https://eatwell.gov.uk) [nhs.uk/change4life](https://nhs.uk/change4life) [nhs.uk/smokefree](https://nhs.uk/smokefree)  
[nhs.uk/livewell/alcohol](https://nhs.uk/livewell/alcohol) [nhs.uk/lifecheck](https://nhs.uk/lifecheck)