

Information & Advice

Helping you to help yourself

Healthy Eating



Help the Aged



In association with



NAGE

This leaflet was written in association with the Nutritional Advisory Group for Elderly People (NAGE), a specialist group of The British Dietetic Association. www.bda.uk.com

The Balance of Good Health concept on page 4 to 5 by the Health Education Authority. © Queens Printer and Controller of HMSO.

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Eating well means enjoying your food and having plenty of variety. Here is a guide to the foods you should try to eat each day.

Fruit and vegetables

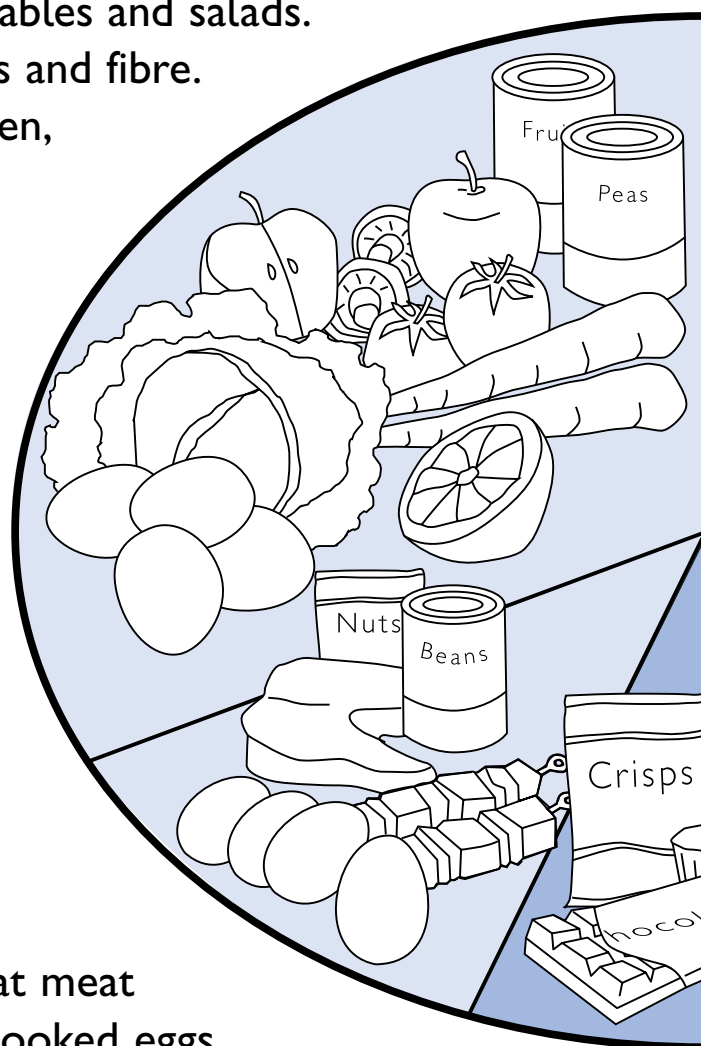
Try to eat a variety of fruit, vegetables and salads.

They are full of vitamins, minerals and fibre.

Aim to eat 5 portions a day. Frozen, tinned, dried fruit and vegetables, and fruit juice, are just as good for you as fresh produce. Try to include some fruit and vegetables at each meal and use fruit as between-meal snacks.

Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans, lentils and nuts

Eat a portion of any of these foods at two of your meals each day. All these foods contain protein which builds and repairs your body. You do not need to eat meat or fish every day - cheese, well cooked eggs, beans or lentils can be eaten instead.



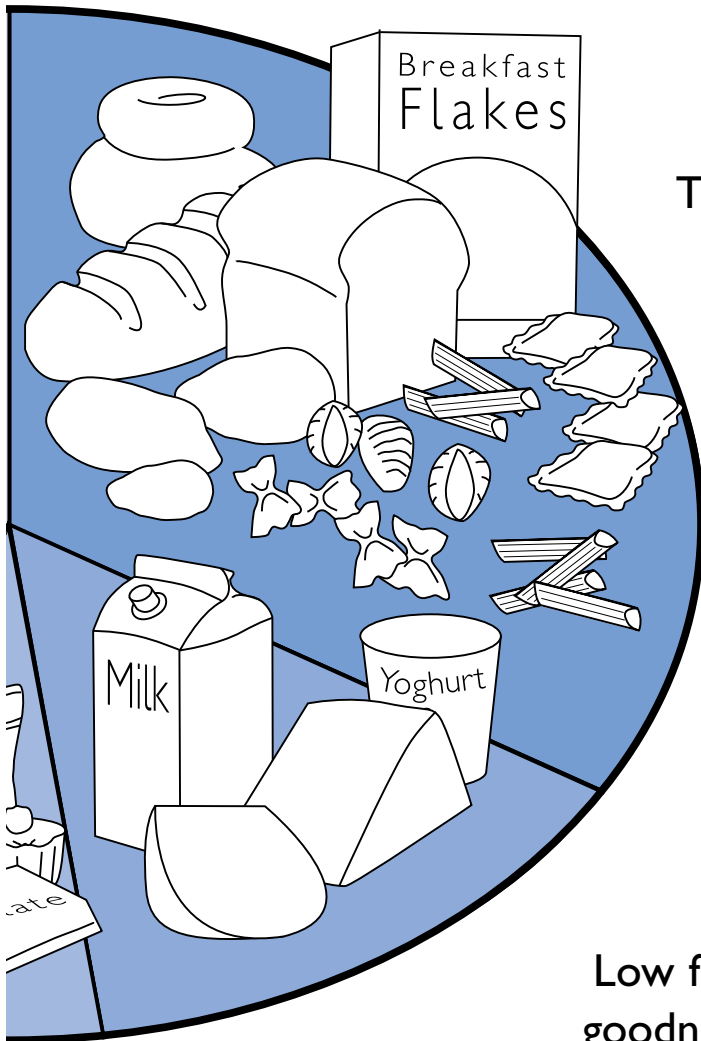
The Balance o

Foods containing fat and sugar

Sugary and fatty foods provide us with energy and can make meals taste better, but use them sparingly if you are watching your weight as they are high in calories. Don't eat these foods at the expense of other more nourishing foods.

Bread, other cereals and potatoes

Try to have a serving of bread, breakfast cereal, potatoes, rice, chapatti or pasta with every meal. These foods give energy, and the whole grain types of cereals have more fibre, which prevents constipation.



Milk and dairy foods

These foods contain calcium which helps to keep the bones strong. Try to have 3 servings a day.

A serving can be:

- 1 cup of milk
- 1 yoghurt or fromage frais
- 1oz (25g) cheese
- a small pot of cottage cheese
- a portion of ice cream or custard

Low fat dairy products still have all the goodness in them, they just have less fat and less calories.

f Good Health

Drinks

Drink at least 6 to 8 cups of liquid every day. These could include water, tea, coffee, fruit juice, fruit squash, fizzy drinks, milk and milky drinks.

Enjoying and eating a good variety of food is important. If you eat well, you are likely to feel healthier, stay active for longer and protect yourself against illness.

Eating habits

Eating regular meals and snacks is a good habit. If you get used to missing meals, or eating unhealthily, you may start to feel tired, depressed and cold. Check your eating habits against the following questions and answers.

1. Do you always eat:

- breakfast?
- lunch (midday meal)?
- tea (evening meal)?

To keep well, good regular eating patterns are essential. This means three meals or snack meals daily.

2. If you don't manage three meals a day, do you tend to replace meals with:

- tea and biscuits?
- bread and jam?
- nothing?

Instead of missing meals, you could try some of the simple snacks and meals suggested later in this leaflet.

3. Over the last year, have you:

- lost more than one stone in weight without trying?
- stayed around the same weight?
- gained more than one stone without trying?

Checking your weight regularly (for example, monthly) is a good idea. If you gain or lose weight without trying, you should see your doctor.

4. Are your bowels regular?

Eating a diet with plenty of fibre is important for good health. It also helps prevent constipation. Wholegrain breakfast cereals, bread, pasta, brown rice and chapattis are all good sources of fibre, as are fruit, vegetables, beans and lentils. Drinking plenty of liquid helps to keep your bowels healthy and prevents constipation. Aim for at least 6 to 8 cups a day.

5. Do you eat the following foods which are rich in iron?

- red meat, including liver and kidney
- eggs (particularly the yolks)
- 'fortified' breakfast cereals containing added iron
- green leafy vegetables such as cabbage and spinach
- baked beans, lentils and other pulses, for example dahls

These foods are rich in iron and will help prevent anaemia, which causes tiredness and shortness of breath. Eat fresh fruit and drink fruit juices or vitamin C enriched cordial with meals or squash to help your body absorb iron. Don't drink tea with meals, because tannin in tea can reduce how much iron the body absorbs from your food.

6. Do you eat the following foods rich in vitamin D?

- oily fish such as tuna, sardines and pilchards
- eggs
- dried milk and evaporated milk with added vitamin D
- margarine and low fat spreads

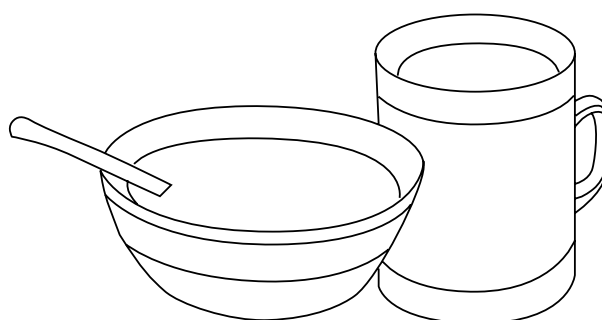
Vitamin D, which helps to keep the bones healthy, is found in all these foods. Another source of vitamin D is the action of sunlight on bare skin. If you are housebound and unable to sit outside, or are covered up all day, you may need to take a vitamin D supplement. Ask your doctor for advice. Help the Aged's free advice leaflet 'Healthy Bones' gives more information about looking after your bones.

Meal ideas

Try to eat regularly, at least three times a day. You may not always feel like cooking - if you don't, there is a wide variety of tinned, chilled and frozen 'ready meals' available. All food, whether hot or cold, provides warmth and energy. A snack can be just as nourishing as a more traditional meal. Here are some suggestions:

Breakfast foods

- Toasted currant teacake and a milky drink
- Fruit - fresh, tinned, dried (or fruit juices)
- Crumpets or muffins with butter and jam or cheese
- Peanut butter sandwich and fruit juice
- Banana sandwich
- Cheese and tomato on toast
- Yoghurt
- Wholegrain breakfast cereal
e.g. porridge

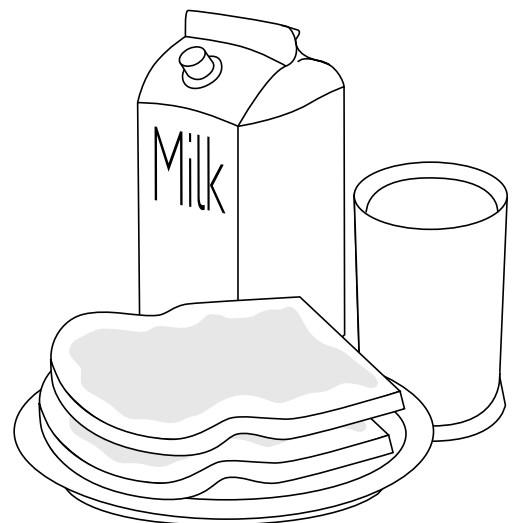


Main meals

- Corned beef hash with green vegetables
- Roast chicken with jacket potato and vegetables
- Curry with boiled rice, yoghurt and/or pickles
- Cauliflower or macaroni cheese with wholemeal bread and vegetables, for example tomato
- Fish pie and vegetables
- Spinach and potato curry, dahl and chapattis
- Omelette with potato and vegetables
- Meat casserole with swede and cabbage
- Liver and onions with creamed potatoes and carrots
- Shepherd's pie and peas

Snack meals

- Sandwiches - try tuna, cheese, corned beef, peanut butter or egg and salad
- Toast - with pilchards, well cooked scrambled egg, baked beans, creamed mushrooms, tinned spaghetti with grated cheese
- Instant potato with grated cheese and baked beans
- Fish fingers, oven chips and peas with bread and butter
- Sausages, baked beans and potato
- Grilled bacon, tomatoes and toast
- Kippers or smoked haddock with bread and butter



- Soup containing meat or pulses (such as lentil, beef broth or pea and ham) with grated cheese and wholemeal bread

Puddings and desserts

- Fresh, tinned or stewed fruit
- Fruit crumble or pie and custard
- Ice cream
- Cake
- Mousse
- Yoghurt
- Sponge and custard
- Fruit or milk jelly

Snacks

If you feel like a snack during the day, you might like to have fruit, breakfast cereal and milk, biscuits or cake. You could also try toast with butter or margarine, jam, cheese or peanut butter or have a milky drink.

Store cupboard ideas

It's useful to have a store of basic foods, in case you can't get to the shops because of bad weather or illness. Here are some suggestions:

- **Milk** - Long-life, dried or evaporated milk; tinned milk puddings
- **Meat and fish** - Canned corned beef, ham, sardines, pilchards and tuna

- **Fruit, vegetables and fruit juice** - A variety of canned fruit and vegetables (including baked beans), dried fruits, lentils and other dried beans and peas, long-life fruit juice, instant mashed potato and frozen vegetables
- **Cereals** - Breakfast cereals, crispbread, plain biscuits, pasta and rice
- **Drinks** - Tea, coffee, cocoa, malted milk
- **Other** - Canned and dried soups; meat or yeast extract; stock cubes

If you have a freezer, you could use it to store a small supply of foods you enjoy. For example, frozen mince and chicken pieces, frozen vegetables, a selection of 'ready meals', frozen seasonal fruit and ice cream. Only buy food that you will use. Store cupboard foods don't keep forever, so use them occasionally and replace them with new ones. Don't let things go out of date.

When should you worry about a poor appetite?

Unwanted weight loss gradually causes tiredness, depression and a general lack of energy. People who are run down suffer more from infections such as flu and colds. If your appetite is poor and you are gradually losing weight without trying, you should see your doctor.

If you only feel like eating a little, it is important that the food you do eat is nourishing. Try to avoid foods which give you very little nourishment for your money, such as cakes, biscuits and sweets.

Missing an occasional meal does not usually cause harm. Milky drinks and meal replacement drinks can provide a nutritious alternative. These enriched drinks are sold in a range of flavours at chemists. You can drink them between meals or occasionally have them instead of a meal.

Always let your doctor know if you can't drink or keep liquids down as you can become dehydrated quite quickly.

Enjoying your food

Eating in company can increase your enjoyment of food. Sharing meals with friends and neighbours helps to cut the cost of shopping, cooking and heating. You will be able to share recipes and try new foods. Being a guest next time cuts out the work for you! Why not see if there are any luncheon clubs in your area. Some cafes and pubs may offer meals at special rates for older people.

Food may not taste as appetising as you grow older. Why not try using different herbs and seasonings? You may like to experiment with flavours and foods from abroad. Your local library will have recipe books.

Alcohol

Alcohol is something that can be enjoyed, and for many people having a drink is a pleasant social activity. The sensible drinking limits are up to 3 or 4 'units' a day for a man, and 2 to 3 for a woman. A 'unit' is the same as half a pint of beer or lager, a pub measure of spirits or a small glass of wine. Keep some days alcohol free and remember that too much alcohol can damage your health. Check with your doctor that it is safe

for you to drink if, for example, you are on any medication. When you're out, remember not to drink and drive.

Food safety

A few simple precautions can prevent food poisoning. Take care to store food properly and prepare food as hygienically as possible.

- When buying food check the 'use by' date. Don't buy any food that you won't eat before this date.
- Take frozen or chilled foods home as soon as possible.
- Keep your fridge at the correct temperature (below 5°C) and check regularly for out-of-date foods.
- Store raw foods on the lower shelves of the fridge, and keep food covered.
- Don't re-freeze food which has already thawed. Prepare and eat it or throw it away.
- Always wash your hands well before touching and preparing food.
- Reheat food thoroughly, and never reheat more than once.
- Avoid dishes containing raw eggs, such as home-made mousse or mayonnaise. Always cook eggs well until the yolk is solid.
- Keep worktops and utensils clean with hot, soapy water.
- Keep pets out of the kitchen.

Help in the kitchen

Many kitchen appliances can be adapted to make the controls easier to use if you suffer from arthritis or you are disabled. If you are blind or partially sighted, studded or brailled controls

are available. Contact the Disabled Living Foundation, your gas supplier or your electricity company to see what adaptations are available. The Disabled Living Foundation can also advise you on adapted kitchen utensils and equipment. They can be contacted at:

Disabled Living Foundation
380-384 Harrow Road
London W9 2HU
Tel: 0845 130 9177
Textphone (Minicom): 0870 603 9176

Winter tips

Frequent hot drinks are comforting and warming. Try keeping a flask by your bed so that you can have a hot drink without getting up in the night. Eating regular meals can give you warmth and energy. If it's too cold to go out, use store cupboard foods (see page 10). Drinking alcohol may feel warming, but it actually lowers your body temperature.

Keeping active

Taking part in a regular activity, which you enjoy, can improve your health and well-being. It can help to stimulate and increase your appetite, keep your bones strong and your joints flexible. Most of all it can give you the chance to enjoy fresh air, new experiences and make new friends. For ideas on how to keep active even if your mobility is restricted, see Help the Aged's free advice leaflet 'Keeping Mobile'.

Other useful information

The following books provide cooking tips and ideas for recipes. Your library or bookshop will probably stock many others. You may also find some leaflets and information at your health centre or local supermarket.

Title	Author	Publisher
Easy Cooking for One or Two	Louise Davies	Penguin
More Easy Cooking for One or Two	Louise Davies	Penguin
One is Fun!	Delia Smith	Hodder & Stoughton
Man Alone Cook Book	Don Tibbenham	Elliot Right Way Books

Cooking classes are often run by local adult education institutes and voluntary organisations. Your local library should be able to give you details of what is available.

Help the Aged produces a range of free advice leaflets for older people

Financial Leaflets

- Can You Claim It?
- Check Your Tax
- Claiming Disability Benefits
- Managing Your Savings
- Questions on Pensions
- Thinking About Money

Housing and Home Safety Leaflets

- Fire
- Help in Your Home
- Housing Matters
- Keep Out the Cold
- Living Alone Safely
- Residential Care
- Safety in Your Home
- Security in Your Home

Health Leaflets

- Bereavement
- Better Hearing
- Better Sight
- Bladder and Bowel Weakness
- Fight the Flu
- Fitter Feet
- Healthy Bones
- Healthy Eating
- Keeping Mobile
- Managing Your Medicines
- Shingles

Leaflets are free of charge and available in single copies for individuals or in large quantities for organisations. You can get leaflets in the following ways:

- by writing to the Information Resources Team
- by email on adviceleaflets@helptheaged.org.uk
- by faxing on 020 7239 1839

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