

Balance your plate.

Many of us are eating too much and getting energy from the wrong kinds of food. Find out how to balance your plate and what to eat to feel and stay well.



Our eating habits

Most of us know we should be eating five portions of fruit and vegetables a day. In reality, only one in four adults consume the recommended daily amount of fruit and vegetables.

The World Health Organisation advises eating at least 400g of fruit and vegetables a day to help prevent serious diseases like heart disease and stroke.

Fruit and vegetables are high in vitamins and minerals and provide the foundation for eating a balanced diet.

A widespread problem

According to research carried out by the Food Foundation, most adults and children in the UK aren't getting enough nutrients in their diet. Eating too much sugar, saturated fat and salt is commonplace and many people aren't eating their five a day or recommended amounts of oily fish.

This is especially the case in lower income households, who don't eat as much fruit and vegetables than families on a higher income.

Portion control

Do you know how many calories you eat in an average day? Public Health England reports that a third of us in the UK are underestimating our daily calorie intake.

Data from the Office of National Statistics suggests that British men believe they are consuming 2,000 calories a day, when in fact their actual average consumption is closer to 3,000. Women are reporting their average calorie intake as 1,500, while consuming nearly 2,500.

The recommended daily calorie allowance is 2,500 for men and 2,000 for women.

Recommended calorie counts:

- 400 calories for breakfast
- 600 calories each for lunch and dinner
- 400 calories for snacks and drinks

The healthy plate

According to the NHS Eat Well guide, the healthy plate should be made up of:

- One third fruit and vegetables

- One third starchy carbohydrates (pasta, rice, potatoes)
- One third split between protein and dairy products, and a small amount of fats

Aim for this balance of thirds every day or week if easier – you don't have to plan every meal in this way.

Tips for balancing your plate

- Eat the rainbow in fruit and vegetables – choose a variety of different colours and kinds to get a range of nutritional benefits. Fresh, tinned, and frozen all count towards your five a day.
- Include starchy carbohydrates in each meal for energy. Swap white carbohydrates for brown or wholegrain varieties – they're higher in fibre, which is better for gut health.
- Pick proteins like lean meat and white or oily fish, beans, lentils, pulses and tofu. Beans and lentils are lower in fat and higher in fibre. If you eat fish, aim to include oily fish once or twice a week.
- Dairy products like milk, cheese, yoghurt and non-dairy alternatives are important for protein, calcium and some vitamins. Lower fat and lower sugar versions are better for you.
- Use fats sparingly and choose unsaturated fats like olive oil or low-fat spread. Snacks like biscuits, cakes, chocolates and crisps aren't needed: try to limit these to occasional treats.
- Keep hydrated: drink at least six to eight glasses of water a day. Milk, low-sugar drinks, tea or coffee all count towards your allowance.

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Balance your plate with one third fruit and vegetables, a third starchy carbs and a third split between protein and dairy.