

# The importance of good nutrition as we age.

It's essential we adopt healthy lifestyle habits as soon as possible to ensure that as we age we remain as healthy as possible for as long as possible. Small changes made now can have a big effect over time.



## Calorie intake.

Most adults are consuming more calories than they need. If we eat and drink more calories than we use, the excess is stored in our bodies as fat.

Being underweight or overweight is detrimental to your health. Being underweight can make it difficult for your body to fight infections and illness, and puts you at risk of fracturing bones if you fall.

Being overweight, particularly carrying excess fat around your waist, can increase your risk of developing heart disease, cancer and type 2 diabetes.

**As a guide, an average woman needs around 2000kcal and an average man around 2500 kcal for a day to maintain a healthy weight.**

## Keep hydrated.

The government recommends drinking 6-8 cups/glasses of fluids a day which can be made up of water, lower-fat milk, lower-sugar and sugar-free drinks, tea and coffee. Fruit juices and smoothies also count, but as these contain sugar they should be limited to a combined total of 150ml per day.

Early signs of dehydration can include dizziness, tiredness and headaches. Long-term mild dehydration can increase the risk of kidney stones, constipation and cholesterol problems, as well as physical and mental performance.

**Ageing can decrease our thirst sensation, so it's especially important to pay attention to keeping hydrated.**

## The Eatwell Guide.

Categorising what you eat into one of the five main groups is an easy way to think about what you are eating and to ensure you achieve a healthy and a nutritionally balanced diet. This will ensure that you achieve a healthier balance rather than solely focussing on calorie counting.

There are five main food groups that you need to include in your diet. You don't need to achieve this balance with every meal but try to get the balance right over a day or week.

- **Vegetables and fruit** – this food group should make up over a third of the food we eat each day. Aim to eat a variety of at least 5 portions a day. Choose fresh, frozen, tinned dried or juiced. This

food group is low in calories and high in fibre, vitamins and minerals.

- **Starchy carbohydrates** – starchy food should make up just over a third of the food you eat and includes rice, bread, potatoes & pasta. Wholemeal varieties are higher in fibre and will keep you feeling fuller for longer.
- **Milk & dairy** – try to include some of this group every day. Milk, cheese, yogurt and fromage frais are good. Try to go for lower-fat and lower-sugar options where possible, like 1% milk, reduced-fat cheese and plain low-fat yogurt. This group is a good source of protein, vitamins and calcium – essential for strong bones. After the menopause, less oestrogen is produced making women at a higher risk of osteoporosis (thinning of the bones) and reduced bone density. This makes it particularly important for women to get plenty of calcium from their diet.
- **Protein** – try and include a source of protein with every meal. This could be meat, fish, eggs, beans, and pulses such as peas and lentils. Aim for two portions of fish every week, one of which should be oily, such as salmon or mackerel. Choose lean cuts of meat and choose less red and processed meats such as bacon and sausages.
- **Healthy fats** – choose unsaturated oils and spreads and eat in small amounts. All types of fat should be eaten sparingly.
- **Food high in fat, salt and sugar** – limit these to small amounts and to an occasional treat. This food group is high in calories and low in nutritional value.

**Supplements and functional foods (i.e. modified foods such as dairy products designed to lower cholesterol) don't replace a balanced, healthy diet.**

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**In the UK many people are overweight, which means we are consuming more energy (calories) than we need from food and drink.**