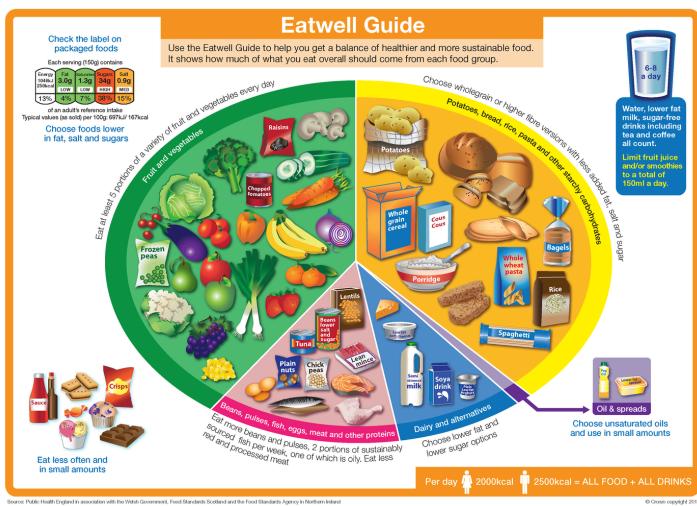


## The Eatwell Guide Factsheet



The Eatwell Guide is a visual aid that shows what a healthy and balanced diet should consist of. It divides foods into key groups such as: fruits and vegetables, starchy carbohydrates, proteins, dairy or alternatives and oils and spreads and shows how often foods should be eaten from each group. In addition to the previously discussed food groups, the Eatwell Guide also provides important information on hydration and foods that fit into the category of high fat, sugar and/or salt.

The guide is important because it helps people make choices about what to eat and how often to eat certain foods. In the long term this can support good health, reduce the risk of disease and keep our bodies strong and full of energy.

### Does the Eatwell Guide apply to everyone?

The Eatwell Guide is suitable for most people, regardless of body weight, dietary preferences or restrictions, or cultural background. However, it is not intended for children under the age of 2, as their nutritional needs differ. From ages 2 to 5, children should gradually start to eat the same types of foods as the rest of the family and follow the proportions shown in the Eatwell Guide. Individuals with specific dietary requirements or medical conditions may wish to consult a registered dietitian for advice on how to tailor the Eatwell Guide to their needs.

### Fruits and Vegetables

Fruit and Vegetables should make up around a third of what we eat and to achieve this we should be aiming to consume at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables each day helps to keep our bodies nourished. We should try to consume a range of different Fruits and Vegetables as they provide us with essential vitamins, minerals and fibre. Eating plenty of fruit and vegetables can also help to reduce this risk of developing some diseases and cancers.

We should aim for at least 5 portions of fruits and/or vegetables in **total** each day - you do not need to eat 5 portions of fruit and 5 portions of veg.

### Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are our bodies main source of energy and should make up around a third of what we eat. Foods such as pasta, rice, bread, potatoes, oats and wholegrain cereals are all great sources of carbohydrates. It is important to try and opt for wholewheat or wholegrain versions such as brown bread where possible as they often contain more vitamins, minerals and fibre. The fibre in wholegrain carbohydrates also helps our bodies to release energy more steadily.

### Protein

Protein is an important part of your diet because it helps your body grow, heal, and stay healthy. It keeps your muscles strong, supports your immune system, and helps you feel full longer, which can make healthier eating easier. Protein also helps your body make the enzymes and hormones it needs and keeps your skin, hair, and nails healthy. We should aim to consume protein from a range of different sources including plant proteins such as beans, lentils and peas. Some protein sources such as red meat can be high in saturated fat so we should try to have this less often and instead try to select leaner cuts of meat or lean mince.

### Dairy and Alternatives

Dairy products such as milk, cheese and yogurt, are great sources of protein and calcium in the diet. Butter, cream and ice cream are however not included with the dairy group due to their high fat content. Dairy is an important part of a balanced diet as it supports strong bones and teeth. It also helps to provide us with essential vitamins, minerals and nutrients. Dairy alternatives can also be included as part of a balanced diet. For these alternatives we should try to go for those that are fortified with calcium and other vitamins and minerals.

### Oils and Spreads

Most oils and spreads contain both saturated and unsaturated fats in different proportions. Unsaturated fats are considered the healthier fats and include vegetable, rapeseed, olive and sunflower oils. All fats regardless of the type are high in energy (calories) so therefore we should consume them less often.

 **Top Tip:** Try using a spray oil containing unsaturated fats as you will generally use much less and be able to better control how much you're adding to your meals!

### Foods high in Fats, Sugars and Salt

Generally, most people in the UK eat too many foods that are high in saturated fat, salt and sugar. These types of foods are not needed as part of a healthy diet so we should aim to consume them in small amounts and less frequently. Some examples of foods high in fat, sugar and/or salt include: cakes, biscuits, chocolate, butter, jams, fried foods and crisps. Although these types of foods are not needed, they can still be enjoyed as part of a balanced lifestyle.

### Hydration

Fluid intake plays an important role in the body as we use water in every cell, organ and tissue of the body. Water is used to produce saliva which helps us swallow. It also helps to create mucus which protects us from illness. Our bodies also use water to regulate body temperature and for appetite control. Water intake is also key for physical activity.

Would should be aim to drink **6-8 glasses** of fluid per day and focus on consuming drinks such as water, lower fat milk and/or sugar free/no added sugar juice to meet your fluid intake recommendations

### Using the Eatwell Guide to support lifestyle change:

#### *Building balanced meals:*

- Use the Eatwell Guide when putting your meals together so you have a good visual reminder to mix in foods from each group every day.
- When cooking, get your child involved and have them check the guide to see if their meal includes something from multiple food groups.
- Where possible, fill your plate with your portion of fruit or vegetables first. This can help you to better portion out the other elements of the meal.

- To get to know your family's lifestyle better and to check out how balanced your meals are, try filling out a food diary for a few days. When you look back over your week of meals, think about which food groups are missing in your meals.



## BUILDING BALANCED MEALS

