

General Nutritional Advice

BalancED MK advocates a healthy, balanced diet full of variety and natural goodness.

The Basic Food Groups

Fruit and vegetables...

- Eat a variety to ensure consumption of all essential vitamins and minerals;
- Should make up about one third of our daily intake;
- Try to eat at least 5 portions of different vegetables a day, plus one or two pieces of fruit;
- Often low fat and low calorie, but high in fibre, so a good source of food to satisfy your appetite;
- Favour low GI options to maintain a steady blood sugar level.

Starchy foods, such as bread, rice, potatoes, oats and pasta...

- Should make up about one third of our daily intake (when physically active);
- Contain fibre, calcium, iron and B vitamins;
- Favour wholegrain varieties, such as brown seeded bread, brown rice and whole-wheat pasta, as they contain more fibre, and usually more vitamins and minerals than the white alternatives;
- Combine with protein for added benefits.

Milk and dairy foods...

- Good source of protein, vitamins and calcium, which helps to keep your bones strong;
- Should make up about fifteen per cent of your daily intake;
- Avoid 'sweetened' / 'low fat' varieties (often advertised as diet alternatives) as they contain fewer vitamins and more artificial ingredients, potentially bad for your health;
- Enjoy naturally low-fat versions, such as Greek yoghurt, hard cheeses and cottage cheese;

Meat, fish, eggs and beans...

- Great source of protein, essential for growth and repair of the body;
- Contain B vitamins, iron, zinc and magnesium, important for healthy cell repair, maintaining metabolism and avoiding anaemia;
- Should make up about twelve per cent of your daily intake;
- Oily fish particularly rich in omega-3 fatty acids, so try to eat this at least twice a week;
- Some types of meat are high in saturated fat, so choose lean cuts, remove excess fat and grill or bake rather than fry;
- Include pulses in your diet – they're naturally low in fat, high in fibre and protein, and full of vitamins and minerals.

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Fat...

- A source of energy for the body and an essential element of every cell;
- Natural fats found in olive oil, eggs, nuts & seeds, avocado and fish are a valuable source of vitamin D;
- Should make up about seven per cent of your daily intake;
- Government recommendations suggest that you should limit saturated fat intake (to no more than 30g per day for men or 20g per day for women) as excessive intake can lead to weight gain and an increased risk of heart disease;
- Avoid trans fats / artificially modified fats, often found in cakes, biscuits, pies and convenience foods as they can be damaging to health;

Sugar

- Naturally occurring sugars, such as those found in fruit should be consumed only in moderation;
- Cut down on sugary fizzy drinks, chocolate and sweets as they have minimal nutritional value and yet raise blood sugar levels quickly, causing sudden drops in blood sugar levels, and thus encouraging hunger.

Helpful nutritional advice:

- Eat regularly – three small main meals and two-three snacks per day, spread two-three hours apart (each containing at least 200 kcal, so as to stimulate the metabolism);
- Never miss breakfast – have a high protein breakfast, containing at least 22g of protein, preferably in conjunction with complex carbohydrate and natural fat;
- Be aware of portion sizes and eat according to your levels of activity that day – fuel your body appropriately;
- Eat a variety of foods to ensure consumption of every food group and all essential vitamins and minerals during each week;
- Enjoy natural foods full of wholesome ingredients – enjoy eating foods that either ‘grow, run, swim or fly’;
- Have only one-two portions of fruit / fruit juice a day, preferably in the morning rather than the afternoon, allowing time for the body to use the natural sugars consumed;
- Include healthy natural fats in oily fish, nuts and seeds, vegetable oils, avocado, yoghurt and hard cheeses etc;
- Try to eat some protein with every meal;
- As a general rule, avoid or limit processed foods, especially those high in processed fats, sugar and salt, as they contain limited nutritional value and may leave your body craving more;
- Consider healthy foods swaps that improve your overall diet e.g. quinoa instead of white rice, pulses and lentils instead of white pasta, mixed vegetables instead of white potatoes, seeded wholegrain bread instead of white varieties etc.
- Drink plenty of water throughout the day, and even more when the weather is hot or you’re participating in exercise. Water is a necessary ingredient of every single chemical reaction in your body!;

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- Allow yourself treats, such as a few squares of dark chocolate. Everything in moderation, including moderation itself;
- Limit your consumption of caffeine and alcohol, and consider replacing coffee and tea with green or herbal teas that offer a variety of health benefits and even claim to boost metabolism;
- Prepare home-cooked foods when every possible – this way you can guarantee the freshness of foods and avoid unnecessary additives;
- Avoid excessive salt intake (often hidden in processed food). Having said this, people who are very active and/or do a lot of sport may lose quite a lot of salt in sweat. This can cause leg cramps, so it's important to be aware and not think of salt as all bad.
- Shop smart – ensure that you always have healthy options readily available to you (and remove unhealthy temptations from your list / cupboard);
- Note – it takes fifteen minutes for your brain to register that you feel full, so eat slowly and allow time to appreciate how satisfied you're feeling;
- Educate yourself on the nutritional benefits of different foods, encouraging positive affirmations about healthy choices and enhancing your overall satisfaction when you eat them;
- Be adventurous and embrace variety. Enjoy considering, making and eating your food!

Practical Meal Suggestions

Breakfast	
Good food choices...	Limit consumption of...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Naturally low fat dairy products (e.g. Greek/plain yoghurt, cottage cheese, semi-skimmed milk); • Low GI cereals (e.g. porridge with seeds and nuts or muesli with yoghurt) • Oily fish (e.g. mackerel, salmon or kippers); • Lean red meat (e.g. lean grilled bacon or ham); • Nuts and seeds (e.g. sprinkled on cereals, fruit salads, yoghurts or in breads); • High protein smoothies, made with natural yoghurt or milk – you could include fruit such as apples, pears, plums, peaches, berries and citrus fruit, in moderation; • Vegetable juices; • Boiled, poached or scrambled eggs (or as a frittata, combined with vegetables); • High protein pancakes with yoghurt and fruit; • Pulses on seeded or rye bread. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refined, processed breakfast cereals; • White breads, bagels and croissants; • High fat, high sugar breakfast treats, such as pastries, jams and spreads; • Fatty meats, such as sausages and black pudding; • Sweetened fruit juices; • Sugar in tea, coffee or on cereals.

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Lunch	
Good food choices...	Limit consumption of...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open sandwiches on wholegrain, seeded or rye bread; • Baked sweet potatoes; • Wholemeal pitta bread; • Pulses and beans; • Salads, including vegetables, beans, nuts and pulses (drizzled with olive oil); • Vegetable soups with pulses and barley; • Naturally low-fat cheeses, such as ricotta, Edam, cottage cheese and feta; • Lean meat, fish and chicken; • Raw vegetables, such as carrot, celery, broccoli and cauliflower (with houmous); • Cracked wheat, pasta and noodles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional sandwiches; • Baked white potatoes; • Crisps; • Sugary snacks; • White breads, croissants and bagels; • High fat, high sugar pastries; • Processed mayonnaise and high fat dressings; • High fat cheeses, such as Brie and Stilton; • Full fat desserts.

Dinner	
Good food choices...	Limit consumption of...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home prepared meals; • Vegetable soups, stews, casseroles, stir fries, salads, curries and rice dishes; • Salads, as a starter or side dish; • Beans and pulses, as a side or main ingredient; • Chillies and spices (but not salt); • Lean meat, chicken and fish; • Noodles, basmati or brown rice; • Sweet potatoes; • Leafy green vegetables, such as broccoli and kale. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White potato-based meals, such as chips, mashed potato or baked potatoes; • Refined breads, such as pizza bases; • Ready meals; • Take-outs, especially from fast food restaurants; • White rice; • Large meals, especially when you plan to be sedentary for the rest of the evening.

Dessert	
Good food choices...	Limit consumption of...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh fruit; • Naturally low-fat yoghurt, such as Greek yoghurt; • Oat based desserts, with honey instead of sugar. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cream; • Desserts made with refined sugar; • Biscuits, chocolate and cakes.

Snacks	
Good food choices...	Limit consumption of...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raw vegetables, perhaps with houmous; • Fresh fruit, such as apples, bananas, kiwi fruit or berries; • Oatmeal or oat-based snacks, such as low-fat flapjacks, oat cakes or porridge; • Wholegrain or rye breads, especially when they include nuts and seeds; • Dried fruit and nuts, particularly almonds, walnuts, apricot and cranberries; • A few pieces of good quality dark chocolate (70 per cent cocoa content or above); • Hard boiled eggs; • Smoked salmon on wholegrain crackers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisps; • Processed snacks; • Pastries and cakes; • Milk chocolate and sweets.

Ultimately, remember the saying...

'Everything in moderation, including moderation itself!'