

Eating for Health

Maintaining a healthy diet is crucial for our overall well-being. Food not only nourishes our bodies, but also provides us with the energy and nutrients needed to thrive. By making smart food choices, we can reduce the risk of chronic diseases, boost our immune system, and enhance our mental and physical performance.

There is increasing evidence that what we eat can also have a significant impact on pain, and on our ability to manage long term pain. Diet can impact:







- Weight Tiredness & Fatigue Sleep Gut Problems Headaches Mood

This works through changing the level of **inflammation** in the body and brain, and the balance and variety of **gut bacteria (microbiome)**

This leaflet aims to provide you with valuable information and practical tips on how to improve your health, inflammation and microbiome through diet. From understanding portion sizes to incorporating more fruits and vegetables into your meals, we will guide you towards making sustainable and positive changes.

A Healthy Diet

One way to achieve a healthy diet is by understanding the different food groups and their importance in providing essential nutrients. By incorporating foods from each of these food groups into your diet, you can ensure a well-rounded and nutritious eating plan.

 <p>Eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruits and vegetables, including fermented vegetables like kimchi, miso or live sauerkraut.</p> <p>Why? They contain chemicals which reduce inflammation, & provide fibre for the microbiome.</p>	 <p>Protein- eat more beans and pulses, nuts and seeds. 2 portions of fish or lean white meat a week. Reduce/stop red and processed meat.</p> <p>Why? Healthy protein reduces inflammation and helps to build strength to address muscle strength.</p>
 <p>Grains – choose wholegrain or higher fibre versions of wheat/flour, rice, pasta, etc.</p> <p>Why? They provide slow and sustained energy, and fibre and prebiotics for the microbiome & gut health.</p>	 <p>Oils – choose unsaturated oil like extra virgin olive oil. Eat oily plant based foods like nuts, seeds, olives and avocados.</p> <p>Why? Healthy fats support health and reduce inflammation</p>
 <p>Dairy – Milk, yoghurt, cheese, plant-based drinks. Choose lower/no sugar yoghurt ie not 'fruit yoghurts'. Try fermented dairy drinks like kefir.</p> <p>Why? Contain protein to build strength, fats and important vitamins and minerals.</p>	 <p>Aim for 6-8 glasses of fluid a day. Water, milk, tea and coffee all count. Drink ~2L a day and reduce caffeine and alcohol (up to 14 units per week, spread across >3 days). Limit fizzy drinks (even low/no sugar) as these increase inflammation.</p> <p>Why? Dehydration and fizzy drinks increase pain sensitivity.</p>

Intermittent Fasting (IF):

Fasting has been shown to reduce inflammation associated with chronic pain and improve gut health. Many people find they feel more energy, better sleep and improved mood when fasting. Fasting can also support help weight management, blood sugar, blood pressure, and more.

IF means not eating in a window of 10-16hrs i.e. you could have all your meals between 7am and 7pm (12hrs window). Black tea/coffee or water does not break the fast.

Choosing IF is an attractive intervention due to its simplicity but patients with medical conditions and on medications should discuss it with their GP before starting to fast.

Are 30 plants a week the new 5-a-day?

Everyone is familiar with 5-a-day guidelines, but recent research suggests that a new approach might be more beneficial. People who consume at least 30 different plant foods a week had higher microbiome diversity in their gut which may improve overall health and well-being. The more diverse and colourful your choices, the better - remember to eat the rainbow daily!

FRUIT	VEG	LEGUMES	WHOLE GRAINS	NUTS & SEEDS	HERBS & SPICES etc
Apple	Leafy greens	Chickpeas	Oats	Almonds	Turmeric
Banana	Kale	Lentils	Brown rice	Walnuts	Pepper
Berries (fresh or frozen)	Peppers	Kidney beans	Bulgar	Chia seeds	Basil
Plums	Cabbage	Dahl	Wholewheat pasta	Hazelnuts	Ginger
Grapes	Olives	Butter beans	Quinoa	Flax seeds	Cinnamon
Kiwi fruit	Carrots	Split beans	Barley	Pumpkin seeds	Oregano
Melon	Broccoli	Adzuki beans	Buckwheat	Pistachios	Thyme
Cherries	Beetroot	Black beans		Sunflower seeds	Rosemary
Citrus fruit	Mushrooms			Cashews	Dark Chocolate
	Salad				Tea & coffee
	Tomatoes				Herbal tea

Ultraprocessed Foods/Drinks (UPF)

These are foods and drinks that have been industrially produced with added sugar, chemically modified proteins and fats and additives. They include soft and fizzy drinks, sweet or savoury packaged snacks, baked goods, many pre-prepared foods, and processed meats.

These foods increase inflammation, and negatively alter the balance of bacteria in the gut, leading to gut problems, sleep and mood problems, fatigue, weight gain, many health conditions and worsen chronic pain. Very often they don't make you feel full for long, and make you want to eat more food in the end.

Healthy Swaps

Maintaining a healthy diet when on the go can be challenging. You can make healthier food choices by making simple yet effective alternatives to your favourite foods:

Crisps

Biscuits

Fruit yoghurt

Juice

Coffee with milk and sugar

Fizzy drinks



Mixed nuts

Fruit

Plain yoghurt with fruit+ and nuts/seeds

Fruit salad or fruit

Coffee with skimmed/plant milk, no sugar

Water/herbal tea

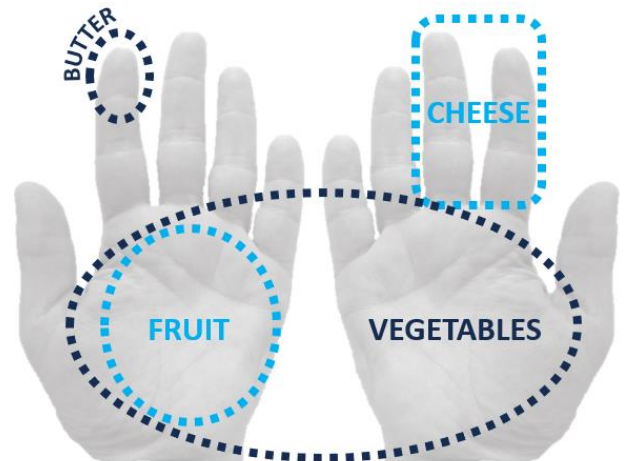
Fermented foods

It has been shown that fermented foods are very good for gut health and the microbiome, and therefore help inflammation. Try including foods like sauerkraut, miso, kimchi, and kombucha in your diet BUT if these are new to you introduce them very slowly. Details in the links at the end of this leaflet.

What does a Portion Look Like?

Eating a balanced diet is about having the right types of foods and drinks in the right amounts.

By understanding appropriate serving sizes, you can make informed choices about the food you eat. These handy guides are a tool to help to manage **their portion sizes effectively**, promoting better nutrition and overall well-being.



Mindful Eating:

Mindful eating involves being fully present and aware of our thoughts, feelings, and sensations while consuming food. By cultivating this awareness, we can develop a healthier relationship with food, enhance our overall well-being, and make more conscious choices about what and how we eat.

- ✓ Slow down when eating to allow your body to recognise when it is full.
- ✓ Avoid distractions like TV or a phone.
- ✓ Listen to your body to recognize when you feel hungry.
- ✓ Reflect on the thoughts and feelings to recognize when you are eating for other reasons than physical hunger. Emotional hunger comes on suddenly and usually creates a craving for a particular food.
- ✓ Plan ahead and stick to regular meal times.
- ✓ Eat food for fuel and nutrients.
- ✓ Enjoy each mouthful – its flavour, aroma, taste - to enjoy eating experience.
- ✓ Avoid labelling food with 'good' or 'bad' and focus on diversity to provide enjoyment and nourishment.



The Benefits of Healthy Eating:

Healthy eating is one of the most powerful tools to prevent and reverse disease and it can help you keep us healthy and active. It will give you more time to spend with friends and family on activities you enjoy.

There is not one diet to fit all. Government recommendations present different ways to eating healthy and anyone can find one to fit their preferences, tradition, culture and budget.

Eating healthy does not mean drastic changes as we can eat healthy and still enjoy the food we love. Small changes will help us to learn what is healthy eating and how to maintain a healthy diet for life. Make small sustainable changes step by step.

Facing Resistance?

In today's fast-paced world, maintaining a nutritious and balanced diet can be quite challenging. Many individuals find it difficult to break free from their old eating habits and embrace a healthier lifestyle.

Healthy food is expensive!

💡 Healthy eating is for everyone – if fresh fruit/vegetables are too expensive try frozen or canned.

I have too much pain to prepare healthy meals!

💡 Try using frozen/canned ingredients and plan your cooking over the time. You might ask your friends and family to help with batch cooking and freezing portions for future.

My kids won't eat healthy foods!

💡 Try having kids help pick out a few healthy options at the shops and help you when cooking.

I do not have time to cook healthy meals!

💡 Try cooking a healthy dinner once a week, or cook meals in batches on the weekend, so you can heat up dinners during the week.

Healthy eating is confusing, the guidelines keep changing!

💡 Changes in nutrition world might be confusing but the basic recommendations have stayed consistent over the years. Eat more colourful fruit and vegetables!

Do I need vitamin and mineral supplements?

Most people can get all the nutrients their bodies need by eating healthily. However, some people do need certain supplements i.e. vitamin D supplement during the autumn and winter months and vitamin B12 for vegans. Fortified foods can play a role in a healthy diet; i.e. fortified plant based drinks can be fortified with calcium, which is important for those who do not consume dairy.



Further Readings/Listening:

- British Dietitian Association for dietary advice in certain medical conditions bda.uk.com/food-health/food-facts.html
- British Nutrition Foundation nutrition.org.uk where you can learn more about nutrition and get practical tips
- Plant-Based Eatwell Guide (plantbasedhealthprofessionals.com)
- Book: Dr Deepak Ravindran, The Pain-Free Mindset: 7 steps to taking control and overcoming chronic pain. A helpful guide for anyone with chronic pain – covers more than diet.
- Book: Jessie Inchauspe, Glucose revolution: the life changing power of balancing your blood sugar
- Cooking ideas:
 - made in Hackney community cookery school
 - www.cookfulness.co.uk – website of a patient with chronic pain
 - Gut Health Doctor www.theguthealthdoctor.com for ideas on 30 plants a week
 - <https://zoe.com/learn/fermentation-101> - guide to fermenting foods
- Podcast: Zoe Science and Nutrition on Spotify. Note: we recommending the information contained in the interview rather than the product.