

Healthy eating info

Some facts about what makes up a balanced diet



We divide food into five main groups. We need a variety of food from each of the groups to get all of the nutrients our bodies need. We don't need to achieve this balance with every meal – it's more important to get it right over the course of a day or week. Lots of foods (like pizza, casseroles, and sandwiches) are combination of the food groups, and fit into lots of them.

Fruit and vegetables

- Fruit and vegetables are good sources of vitamins, minerals, and fibre.
- We should aim to eat at least five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables a day.
- Fresh, frozen, tinned, dried, or juiced fruits and vegetables are all good options – though it's best to try and limit juice or smoothies to one portion a day. Beans and pulses also count as one of our five a day.

Carbohydrates

- Starchy carbohydrates such as potatoes, bread, rice, and pasta are important sources of energy and provide nutrients (including fibre, calcium, iron, and B vitamins).
- Starchy foods should make up just over a third of the food we eat.

Proteins

- Protein rich foods include beans, lentils, and peas – as well as eggs, fish, and meat. A balanced diet can include protein from all of these sources.
- Our bodies need protein to repair themselves. Protein rich foods also contain lots of vitamins and minerals.

Dairy and alternatives

- These foods are sources of protein, calcium, and vitamins. Calcium is important for our bones.
- As well as milk and milk products like cheese and yoghurt, calcium-fortified dairy alternatives like soya milks, yoghurts, and cheeses are also part of this food group.

Oils, spreads, and treats

- This group contains foods such as olive, rapeseed, or sunflower oil, avocados, and some nuts (almonds, brazils, and peanuts).
- We need some fat in our diets – our bodies can't make essential fatty acids, and we need fat to absorb vitamins A, D, and E.
- Foods high in other types of fat, salt, and sugar aren't a food group, because they aren't essential for our bodies to work. However, it's still okay to eat them – they're not 'bad' foods, and they can be a part of a balanced diet.