

The Eatwell Guide

Helping you eat a healthy, balanced diet



Public Health England in association with the Welsh Government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland.

Get started now

Eating well and having a healthy lifestyle can help us feel our best – and make a big difference to our long-term health. So why not make a change today?

The Eatwell Guide shows the proportions in which different types of foods are needed to have a well-balanced and healthy diet. The proportions shown are representative of your food consumption over the period of a day or even a week, not necessarily each meal time.

Is the Eatwell Guide for me?

The Eatwell Guide applies to most people regardless of weight, dietary restrictions/ preferences or ethnic origin.

However, it doesn't apply to children under 2 because they have different nutritional needs. Between the ages of 2 and 5, children should gradually move to eating the same foods as the rest of the family, in the proportions shown on the Eatwell Guide. Anyone with special dietary requirements or medical needs might want to check with a registered dietitian on how to adapt the Eatwell Guide to meet their individual needs.

How can the Eatwell Guide help?

The Eatwell Guide shows the different types of foods and drinks we should consume – and in what proportions – to have a healthy, balanced diet.

- **Eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day**
- **Base meals on potatoes, bread, rice, pasta or other starchy carbohydrates; choosing wholegrain versions where possible**
- **Have some dairy or dairy alternatives (such as soya drinks); choosing lower fat and lower sugar options**
- **Eat some beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins (including 2 portions of fish every week, one of which should be oily)**
- **Choose unsaturated oils and spreads and eat in small amounts**
- **Drink 6-8 cups/glasses of fluid a day**

If consuming foods and drinks high in fat, salt or sugar have these less often and in small amounts.

When should I use the Eatwell Guide?

You can use the Eatwell Guide to help you make healthier choices whenever you're:

- deciding what to eat
- at home cooking

- out shopping for groceries
- eating out in a restaurant, cafe or canteen
- choosing food on the go

Aim to fill your trolley with a healthy balance of different types of food.

How does it work?

The Eatwell Guide divides the foods and drinks we consume into five main groups. Try to choose a variety of different foods from each of the groups to help you get the wide range of nutrients your body needs to stay healthy and work properly.

It is important to get some fat in the diet, however, foods high in fat, salt and sugar are placed outside of the main image as these types of foods are not essential in the diet and most of us need to cut down on these to achieve our healthy balance. Unsaturated fats from plant sources, for example vegetable oil or olive oil, are healthier types of fat. But remember, all types of fat are high in energy and so should only be eaten in small amounts.

Many of the foods we eat, such as pizzas, casseroles, pasta dishes and sandwiches, are combination foods and contain ingredients from more than one of the food groups. For these sorts of food, you just need to work out the main ingredients and think about how these fit with the sections on the guide. For example, if you're having a cottage pie the potato fits into the yellow segment, the milk in the mashed potato fits into the blue segment, the spread in the mashed potato fits into the purple segment, the meat, meat substitute or beans would fall into the pink segment, the onion, carrots and peas would fit into the green segment.

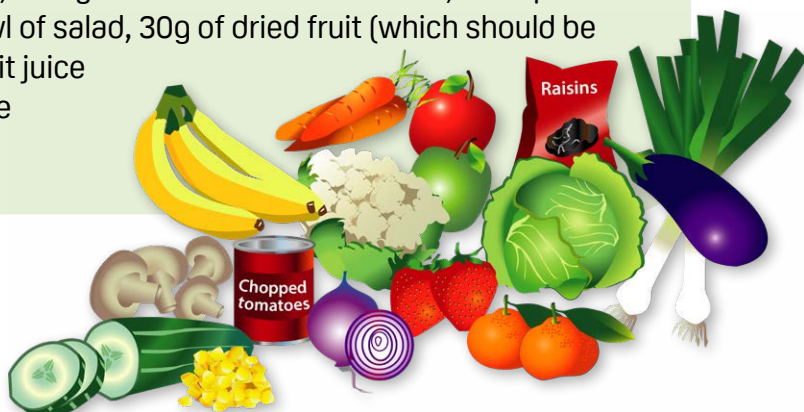
Let's take a closer look at each of the food groups...

A closer look at

Fruit and vegetables

Most people know we should be eating more fruit and veg, but many of us aren't eating enough. Fruit and veg should make up just over a third of the food we eat each day.

Aim to eat at least five portions of a variety of fruit and veg each day. If you count how many portions you're having, it might help you increase the amount and variety of fruit and veg you eat. Choose from fresh, frozen, canned, dried or juiced. A portion is 80g or any of these: 1 apple, banana, pear, orange or other similar-size fruit, 3 heaped tablespoons of vegetables, a dessert bowl of salad, 30g of dried fruit (which should be kept to mealtimes) or a 150ml glass of fruit juice or smoothie (counts as a maximum of one portion a day).



Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates

Starchy food is a really important part of a healthy diet and should make up just over a third of the food we eat. Choose higher-fibre, wholegrain varieties when you can by purchasing wholewheat pasta, brown rice, or simply leaving the skins on potatoes.

Base your meals around starchy carbohydrate foods. So, you could:

- start the day with a wholegrain breakfast cereal; choose one lower in salt and sugars
- have a sandwich for lunch
- round off the day with potatoes, pasta or rice as a base for your evening meal

Some people think starchy food is fattening, but gram for gram it contains less than half the calories of fat. You just need to watch the fats you add when you're cooking and serving this sort of food, because that's what increases the calorie content.

Why choose wholegrain?

Wholegrain food contains more fibre than white or refined starchy food, and often more of other nutrients. We also digest wholegrain food more slowly so it can help us feel full for longer. Wholegrain food includes: wholemeal and wholegrain bread, pitta and chapatti, wholewheat pasta, brown rice, wholegrain breakfast cereals and whole oats.

Remember, you can also purchase high fibre white versions of bread and pasta which will help to increase your fibre intake using a like-for-like substitute of your family favourites.



Dairy and alternatives

Try to have some milk and dairy food (or dairy alternatives) – such as cheese, yoghurt and fromage frais.

These are good sources of protein and vitamins, and they're also an important source of calcium, which helps to keep our bones strong. Some dairy food can be high in fat and saturated fat, but there are plenty of lower-fat options to choose from.

Go for lower fat and lower sugar products where possible.

For example, why not try 1% fat milk which contains about half the fat of semi-skimmed milk without a noticeable change in taste or texture? Or reduced fat cheese which is also widely available. Or you could have just a smaller amount of the full-fat varieties less often. When buying dairy alternatives, go for unsweetened, calcium-fortified versions.



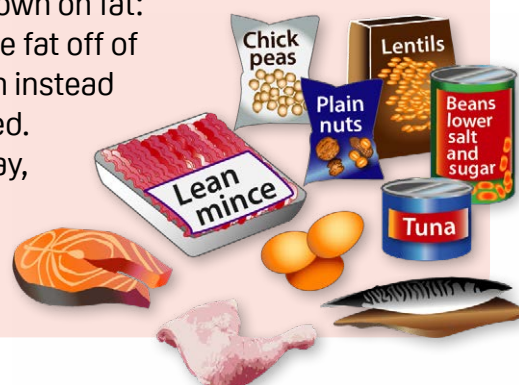
Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins

These foods are sources of protein, vitamins and minerals, so it is important to eat some foods from this group.

Beans, peas and lentils (which are all types of pulses) are good alternatives to meat because they're naturally very low in fat, and they're high in fibre, protein, vitamins and minerals. Pulses, or legumes as they are sometimes called, are edible seeds that grow in pods and include foods like lentils, chickpeas, beans and peas. Other vegetable-based sources of protein include tofu, bean curd and mycoprotein; all of which are widely available in most retailers.

Aim for at least two portions (2 x 140g) of fish a week, including a portion of oily fish. Most people should be eating more fish, but there are recommended limits for oily fish, crab and some types of white fish. For more information on fish please see www.nidirect.gov.uk/fish-and-shellfish. Also www.msc.org for more guidance on sustainably sourced fish.

Some types of meat are high in fat, particularly saturated fat. So when you're buying meat, remember that the type of cut or meat product you choose, and how you cook it, can make a big difference. To cut down on fat: choose lean cuts of meat and go for leaner mince, cut the fat off of meat and the skin off of chicken, try to grill meat and fish instead of frying and have a boiled or poached egg instead of fried. If you eat more than 90g of red or processed meat per day, try to cut down to no more than 70g per day. The term processed meat includes sausages, bacon, cured meats and reformed meat products.



Oils and spreads

Although some fat in the diet is essential, generally we are eating too much saturated fat and need to reduce our consumption.

Unsaturated fats are healthier fats that are usually from plant sources and in liquid form as oil, for example vegetable oil, rapeseed oil and olive oil. Swapping to unsaturated fats will help to reduce cholesterol in the blood, therefore it is important to get most of our fat from unsaturated oils.

Choosing lower fat spreads, as opposed to butter, is a good way to reduce your saturated fat intake.

Remember that all types of fat are high in energy and should be limited in the diet.



Foods high in fat, salt and sugars

This includes products such as chocolate, cakes, biscuits, full-sugar soft drinks, butter and ice-cream. These foods are not needed in the diet and so, if included, should only be done infrequently and in small amounts. If you consume these foods and drinks often, try to limit their consumption so you have them less often and in smaller amounts. Food and drinks high in fat and sugar contain lots of energy, particularly when you have large servings. Check the label and avoid foods which are high in fat, salt and sugar!



Hydration

Aim to drink 6-8 glasses of fluid every day. Water, lower fat milk and sugar-free drinks including tea and coffee all count. Fruit juice and smoothies also count towards your fluid consumption, although they are a source of free sugars* and so you should limit consumption to no more than a combined total of 150ml per day.

Sugary drinks are one of the main contributors to excess sugar consumption amongst children and adults in the UK. Swap sugary soft drinks for diet, sugar-free or no added sugar varieties to reduce your sugar intake in a simple step.

6-8
a day

Water, lower fat milk, sugar-free drinks including tea and coffee all count. Limit fruit juice and/or smoothies to a total of 150ml a day.

Alcohol

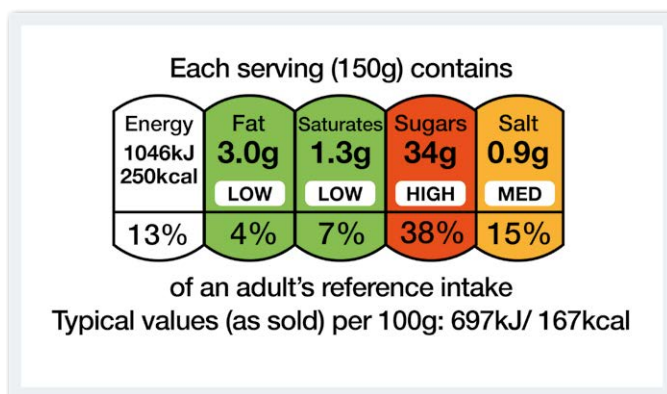
Alcohol also contains lots of calories (kcal) and should be limited to no more than 14 units per week for men and women. The calorific content of an alcoholic beverage depends on the type of alcohol, the volume served and the addition of mixers. As an example 1 pint of standard strength lager contains approximately 135kcal and a 175ml medium glass of wine contains approximately 135kcal. A 25ml shot of spirit (40% vol) contains approximately 56kcal and a 35ml shot of spirit (40% vol), which is the measure used in Northern Ireland, contains approximately 78kcal.

Food labelling

Lots of pre-packaged foods have a food label on the front of pack which shows the nutrition information per serving. They also refer to reference intake which tells you how much of each nutrient should be included in the daily diet. The percentage refers to the contribution that the product makes to the reference intake for each nutrient.

*Free sugars - Any sugar added to food or drink products by the manufacturer, cook or consumer including those naturally found in honey, syrups and unsweetened fruit juice.

Food labels can help you to choose between foods and to pick those that are lower in energy, fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt. Where colour coded labels are used you can tell at a glance if they are **high**, **medium** or **low** in fat, saturated fat, sugars and salt. For a healthier choice, try to pick products with more greens and ambers and fewer reds.



Remember that the portion sizes used on the label are suggestions and may not be the same as you actually consume. For example, some foods and drinks commonly consumed as single servings have the nutritional information presented per half pack.

To find out more about food labelling you can visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/front-of-pack-labelling.

Cutting down on saturated fat

Cutting down on saturated fat can lower your blood cholesterol and reduce your risk of heart disease. Most people in the UK eat too much saturated fat. The average man should have no more than 30g saturated fat a day. The average woman should have no more than 20g saturated fat a day. Children should have less saturated fat than adults. But remember that a low-fat diet isn't suitable for children under five.

One of the easiest ways to cut down on saturated fat is to compare the labels on similar products and choose the one lower in saturated fat. Watch out for foods that are high in saturated fat, including fatty cuts of meat, sausages, butter, cream, cheese, chocolate, pastries, cakes and biscuits. You don't need to stop eating these foods altogether, but eating too much of these can make it easy to have more than the recommended maximum amount of saturated fat. To find out more, see www.nidirect.gov.uk/types-of-fat.

Cutting down on sugar

Regularly consuming foods and drinks high in sugar increases your risk of obesity and tooth decay. Ideally, no more than 5% of the energy we consume should come from free sugars*. Currently, children and adults across the UK are consuming 2-3 times that amount.

Age	Recommended maximum free sugars intake	Sugar cubes
4-6 years	No more than 19g/day	5 cubes
7-10 years	No more than 24g/day	6 cubes
From 11 years, including adults	No more than 30g/day	7 cubes

*Free sugars - Any sugar added to food or drink products by the manufacturer, cook or consumer including those naturally found in honey, syrups and unsweetened fruit juice.

Many packaged foods and drinks contain surprisingly high amounts of free sugars including some breakfast cereals, yoghurts and fruit juice drinks. Use the food label to help you choose foods lower in sugar. Swap sugary breakfast cereals for plain cereals such as plain porridge, wholewheat biscuit cereals, shredded wholewheat or no added sugar muesli. Cereal bars often contain high levels of free sugars too, so remember to check the label. Swap flavoured or corner-style yoghurts for low fat, lower sugar yoghurts, adding fresh fruit for variety.

Sugary drinks have no place in a child’s daily diet but account for a surprisingly large proportion of the daily sugar intake of both children and adults. Almost a third of the free sugars consumed by 11-18 year olds comes from soft drinks. We should aim to swap sugary drinks for water, lower fat milk or sugar-free drinks including tea and coffee. Be sure to check the label for added sugar. For more information, visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/sugars.

Cutting down on salt

Eating too much salt can raise your blood pressure, which increases your risk of developing heart disease or stroke. And since many people in the UK eat too much salt, that means that lots of people would benefit from cutting down. Adults should eat no more than 6g of salt a day. Children should have even less. 6g of salt is about a teaspoonful. But remember we’re not just talking about the salt you add to your food because most of the salt we eat is already in everyday foods such as bread, breakfast cereal, pasta sauce and soup. Try replacing salt with pepper, herbs and spices to add flavour to your favourite dishes. Checking the label and choosing foods that are lower in salt is one of the best ways to cut down. For more information, visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/salt.

How much food do I need?

We all need different amounts of energy (or calories) from food to be a healthy weight. How much you need depends on lots of things, including how active you are.

Whenever we eat more than our body needs, we put on weight. This is because we store the energy we don’t use as fat. Even if we have just small amounts of extra energy each day, we can put on weight. And most people in the UK eat more than they need.

Age	Daily energy requirements			
	Males		Females	
	kcal	kJ	kcal	kJ
1	765	3201	717	3000
2	1004	4201	932	3899
3	1171	4899	1076	4502
4	1386	5799	1291	5402
5	1482	6201	1362	5699
6	1577	6598	1482	6201
7	1649	6899	1530	6402
8	1745	7301	1625	6799
9	1840	7699	1721	7201
10	2032	8302	1936	8100
11 and over	2500	10,460	2000	8368

Try to:

- eat only as much food as you need. Improve the balance of your diet by looking at the Eatwell Guide
- get more active! If you're eating a good balance of the different food groups, and you're a healthy weight, you're probably eating about the right amount

If you're overweight, then you may need to eat less, improve the balance of your diet and/or get more active. Ask your GP, or another health professional, for advice about losing weight. Do you know if you're a healthy weight? Find out at: www.nidirect.gov.uk/healthy-weight.

Do I need vitamin and mineral supplements?

Most people can get all the nutrients their body needs by eating healthily. However, some people do need certain supplements. For example, if you are planning a pregnancy, you should take a daily 400 microgram (μg) folic acid supplement from the time you stop using contraception until the 12th week of pregnancy. Women who have already had a pregnancy affected by neural tube defects, or if there is a history of neural tube defects in the family, need to take 5mg of folic acid each day until the 12th week of pregnancy. In addition, women who have diabetes and those taking anti-epileptic medicines should consult their GP for advice.

In spring and summer, most people will get all the vitamin D they need through sunlight on the skin and from a healthy, balanced diet. However, during the autumn and winter we need to rely on dietary sources of vitamin D. Since it is difficult for people to get enough vitamin D from food alone, everyone should consider taking a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D during autumn and winter.

People whose skin has little or no exposure to the sun, or who always cover their skin when outside, risk vitamin D deficiency and need to take a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D throughout the year. Ethnic minority groups with dark skin, from African, Afro-Caribbean and South Asian backgrounds, may not get enough vitamin D from sunlight in the summer and therefore should consider taking a supplement all year round.

Children aged 1 to 4 years should also have a daily 10 microgram vitamin D supplement. As a precaution, all babies under 1 year should have a daily 8.5 to 10 microgram vitamin D supplement to ensure they get enough. Children who have more than 500ml of infant formula a day do not need any additional vitamin D as formula is already fortified.

For more information, talk to your GP or another health professional, or visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/vitamin-d.

8 tips for eating well

1. Base your meals on starchy foods
2. Eat lots of fruit and veg
3. Eat more fish - including a portion of oily fish each week
4. Cut down on saturated fat and sugar
5. Eat less salt – no more than 6g a day for adults
6. Get active and be a healthy weight
7. Don't get thirsty
8. Don't skip breakfast

Remember fruit juice and/or smoothies should be limited to no more than 150ml per day in total.

Leaner: Choose leaner cuts of meat and poultry, remove any visible fat.

Lower: Go for lower fat, salt and sugar products - especially dairy and starchy carbohydrate foods.

Less: Use less oils and spreads. Choose foods high in fat, salt and sugar less often.

Food group	What's included?	How much?	Tips
Fruit and vegetables	All fruit and vegetables including fresh, frozen, canned, dried and juiced varieties. Potatoes do not count as they are considered a starchy carbohydrate food.	Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables. Aim for at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day. Remember that a portion of dried fruit is 30g and should be kept to mealtimes. Limit fruit juice and smoothies to a combined total of 150ml which counts as 1 of your 5 A Day. There is evidence to suggest that people who eat lots of fruit and veg are less likely to develop chronic diseases such as coronary heart disease and some types of cancer.	Try to eat as many different types of fruit and vegetables as possible. Avoid adding sauces/dressing high in fat, salt or sugar to your fruit and veg e.g. chocolate sauce on banana or honey/butter glaze on your parsnips. Bulk out your meals with vegetables such as grated carrot, mushrooms or peppers for an extra portion of your 5 A Day which will make your meal spread further. Remember to keep fruit in your bag as a convenient and healthy snack and frozen vegetables in your freezer so you don't run out.
Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bread, including: soda bread, rye bread, pitta, flour tortilla, baguettes, chapatti, bagels rice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> potatoes breakfast cereals, oats pasta, noodles maize, cornmeal couscous, bulgur <ul style="list-style-type: none"> polenta millet, spelt wheat, pearl barley yams and plantains 	Eat plenty of starchy carbohydrates including potatoes, bread, rice and pasta. Choose wholegrain varieties, or keep the skins on potatoes, for more fibre, vitamins and minerals.	Base your meals around starchy carbohydrates. Check the labels and choose the products lowest in fat, salt and sugar. If you are having chips, go for oven chips lower in fat and salt. If you are serving starchy foods, try to avoid adding too much fat (eg oil or butter on roast potatoes) or sauces (creamy pasta) as these contain lots of calories.
Dairy and dairy alternatives	Milk, cheese, yoghurt, fromage frais, quark, cream cheese. This also includes non-dairy alternatives to these foods. Butters and creams are not included in this group as they are high in saturated fat and so they fit into the 'foods to eat less often and in small amounts' section.	Eat some dairy or dairy alternatives. Choose lower fat options when possible. For products like yoghurt, check the label and go for ones lower in fat and sugars.	Try swapping to 1% fat milk as opposed to whole or semi-skimmed milk. Cheese is high in saturated fat, so try buying reduced fat cheese. Alternatively grate it instead of slicing it to avoid using more than you need. Try to use low fat plain yoghurt as opposed to cream, crème fraiche or mayonnaise.
Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> meat, poultry and game, including: lamb, beef, pork, chicken, bacon, sausages, burgers white fish (fresh, frozen or canned), including: haddock, plaice, pollock, coley, cod, tuna <ul style="list-style-type: none"> oily fish (fresh, frozen or canned), including: mackerel, sardines, trout, salmon, whitebait shellfish (fresh, frozen kidney beans, butter beans or canned), including: prawns, mussels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> nuts eggs beans and other pulses, including: lentils, whitebait chickpeas, baked beans, vegetarian meat alternatives e.g. tofu, mycoprotein 	Eat some beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins. Eat at least 2 portions (2 x 140g) of fish each week, one of which is oily. Limit processed meats such as sausages, bacon and cured meats. If you eat more than 90g per day of red or processed meats, try to reduce the amount to no more than 70g per day.	When you're cooking and serving these foods, try not to add extra fat or oil. When you're buying meat, ask your butcher for a lean cut or compare the labels on different products and choose the one lower in saturated fat. Watch out for meat and fish products in pastry, batter or breadcrumbs as these can be high in fat and/or salt. Remember that an 80g portion of beans or pulses can count as 1 of your 5 A Day!
Oils and spreads	Unsaturated oils including vegetable oil, rapeseed oil, olive oil and sunflower oil. Soft spreads made from unsaturated oils. Butters are not included in this section as these are high in saturated fat and are included in the 'foods to eat less often and in small amounts' section.	Use these products sparingly as they are high in fat. Cutting down on these types of foods could help to control your weight as they are high in calories.	Choose lower fat spreads where possible and use sparingly. Check the label and choose oils high in unsaturated fat and low in saturated fat. Oils expand when heated and so heating oil in the pan before you use it will make it go further so you don't need to use as much.
Foods to eat less often and in small amounts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cakes biscuits chocolate sweets puddings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pastries ice cream jam honey crisps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> saucés butter cream mayonnaise 	These foods are not required as part of a healthy, balanced diet. If included, they should only be consumed infrequently and in small amounts. Most of us need to cut down on the amount of high fat, salt and sugar foods we eat and drink.	Use lower fat spread instead of butter. Swap cakes and biscuits for a slice of malt loaf or a teacake with low fat spread. If you add sugar to your food or drinks, gradually reduce the amount you add until your taste buds adapt and you can cut it out altogether. Alternatively try using a calorie-free sweetener instead.

Eatwell Guide

Check the label on packaged foods

Each serving (150g) contains

Energy	Fat	Saturates	Sugars	Salt
1046kJ 250kcal	3.0g	1.3g	34g	0.9g
	LOW	LOW	HIGH	MED
13%	4%	7%	38%	15%

of an adult's reference intake

Typical values (as sold) per 100g: 697kJ/ 167kcal

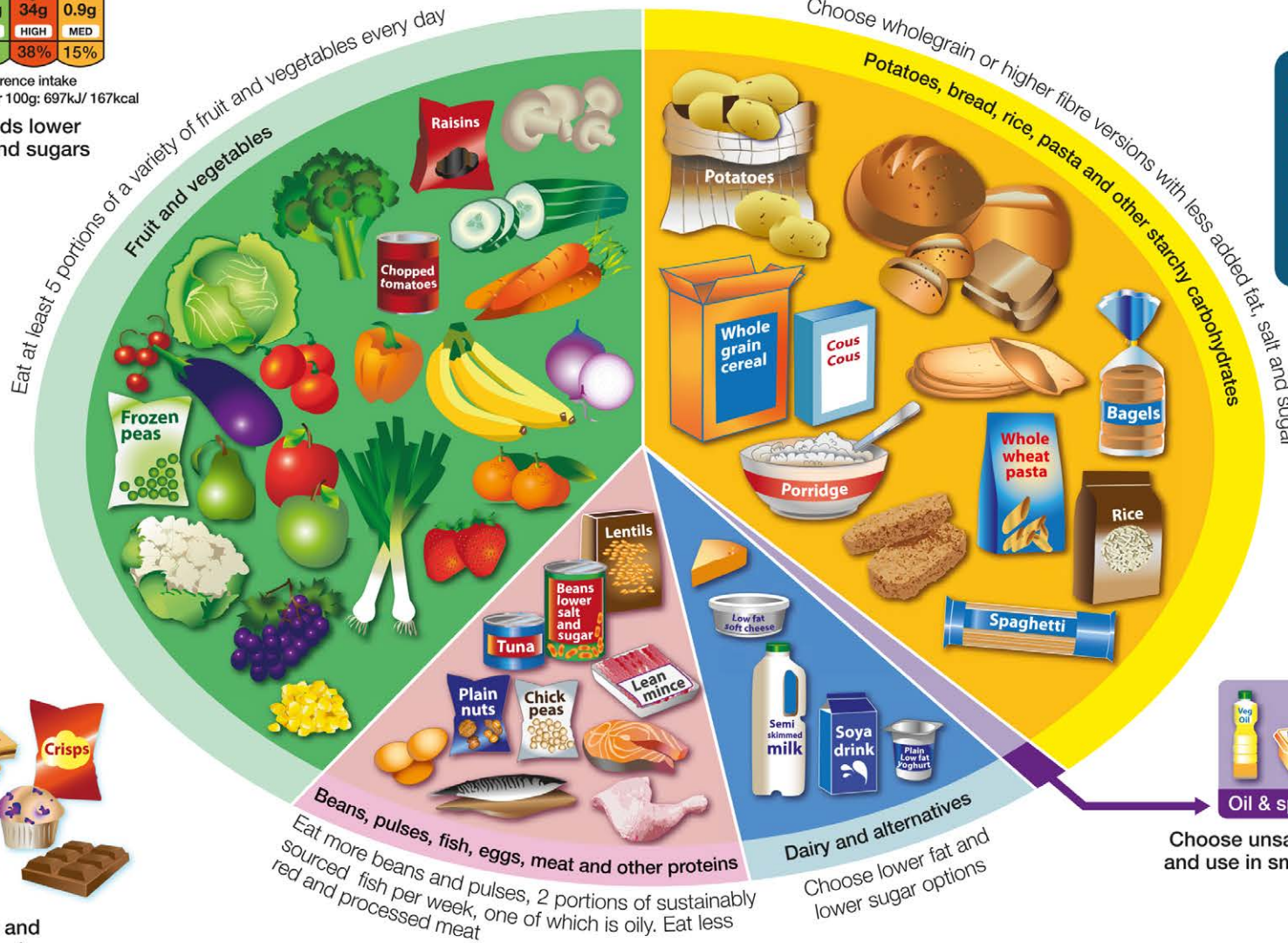
Choose foods lower in fat, salt and sugars

Use the Eatwell Guide to help you get a balance of healthier and more sustainable food. It shows how much of what you eat overall should come from each food group.



Water, lower fat milk, sugar-free drinks including tea and coffee all count.

Limit fruit juice and/or smoothies to a total of 150ml a day.



Eat less often and in small amounts

Per day 2000kcal 2500kcal = ALL FOOD + ALL DRINKS

How can I find out more about healthy eating?

To find out more:

- get general advice from [food.gov.uk/eatwell](https://www.food.gov.uk/eatwell) and www.nidirect.gov.uk/eat-well
- contact your local community dietician, you can do this through your health centre or GP
- for healthy eating ideas, handy tips and recipes visit, www.choosetolivebetter.com



© Crown copyright 2020

Gateway number: 2015588

You may re-use this information (excluding logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0.

To view this licence, visit OGL. Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.