



Helping you
stay well

Eating for Good Health



Hertfordshire
Independent Living Service
Supporting your independence

Contact us on: **0330 2000 103** info@hertsindependentliving.org

www.hertsindependentliving.org

Eating for good health

Maintaining a healthy weight is important for good health. Our Nutrition & Wellbeing Team have put together this booklet to inform older people, their family and friends about good nutrition in later life. It does not replace any individual tailored advice given to you by a doctor or dietitian. Please note, if you have a health condition or are taking medications which may be affected by a change in your diet, please speak to your doctor before making any changes.

What is good nutrition all about?

Food and drinks are essential for good health. By eating a balanced diet with the right amount of energy, protein, vitamins and minerals we should all be able to meet our nutritional needs and achieve good nutrition.

What is a healthy balanced diet?

The 'Eatwell Guide' (opposite) shows the proportion of each of the five food groups you should include in your diet. You should try to eat as varied a diet as possible to ensure you meet your nutritional needs. Drinking plenty every day is also important.

Keeping active is also an important factor for general good health, and keeping your muscles strong. If you are looking to get more active, you can find out about our Active Aging service or classes and activities near you by calling HILS on **0330 2000 103**.

Foods high in fat and sugar

These foods should be eaten in small quantities unless you are underweight or losing weight unintentionally.



Maintaining a healthy weight

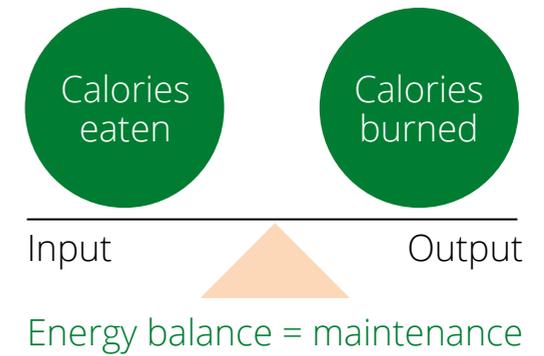
Benefits of good nutrition:

- ☑ Helps the body stay strong and mobile
- ☑ Supports a healthy immune system
- ☑ Minimises the risk of developing health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and even some cancers

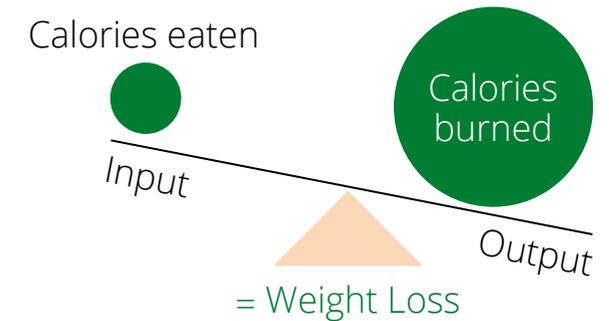
Calories are how we measure energy in our food. We all need a certain amount to keep us going, and this depends on many things, such as age, gender, body size and activity levels.



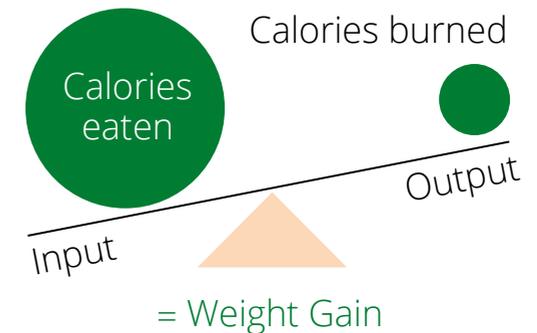
If we take in the same number of calories as we use – our weight will remain stable. This is called energy balance. This is what we should aim to do if we are about the right weight for our height.



If we are underweight we should try to take in more calories by enriching our food and drinks. If you would like more information about this, see our booklet *Achieving Healthy Weight Gain*.



If we are very overweight we should try to take in less calories than we use – we can do this by either eating a little less or exercising more, but ideally a bit of both. If you would like more information about this, see our booklet *Achieving Healthy Weight Loss*.



Key Nutrients

Key nutrients, vitamins, and minerals explained

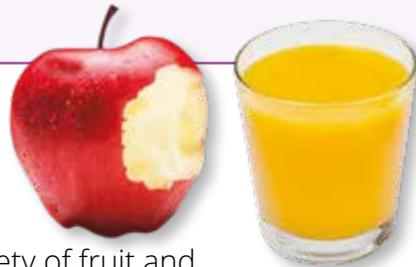
Protein

- ✓ Vital for repair and recovery, and to help minimise muscle loss.
- ✓ Good sources include beans, pulses, fish, eggs, and meat.
- ✓ Include one portion of oily fish a week, such as salmon, mackerel, pilchards or sardines which are rich in heart healthy omega-3 fats.



Iron

- ✓ Important for red blood cells which carry oxygen around the body.
- ✓ Found in red meat, pulses, beans, eggs, wholegrain products, nuts, green leafy vegetables, dried fruit, and fortified cereals.
- ✓ Avoid drinking tea at mealtimes if you are deficient in iron, as tea contains tannins which can reduce iron absorption.
- ✓ Vitamin C can help iron absorption. If you are iron deficient, try having a glass of orange juice with your iron rich meal.



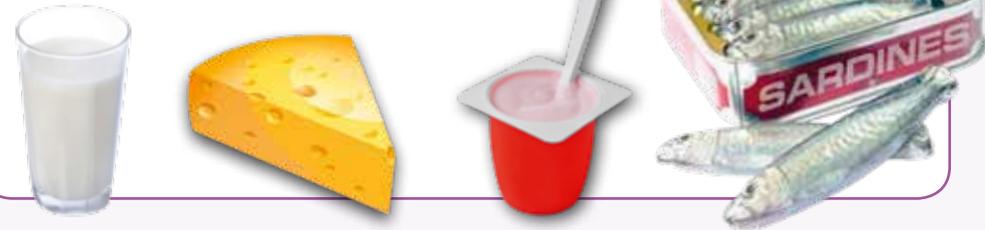
Vitamin C

- ✓ An antioxidant which helps fight disease and aids healing.
- ✓ Eating at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables a day should help ensure you get all that you need

Key Nutrients

Calcium

- ✓ Helps to keep our bones and teeth strong.
- ✓ Regulates muscle contractions including our heartbeat.
- ✓ Helps our blood to clot normally.
- ✓ Milk, cheese, and yoghurt are all good sources, as well as green leafy vegetables, nuts, and bony fish such as sardines.



Folic Acid and other B vitamins

- ✓ Involved in a range of important roles within the body, including nerve function, and keeping our cells, skin, and vision healthy.
- ✓ B vitamin deficiency can be associated with anaemia and neurological problems.
- ✓ It is harder to absorb as we age, so try to include good sources in your diet.
- ✓ Found naturally in green vegetables, beans, milk, egg, and cheese. Some breakfast cereals are also fortified with B vitamins.
- ✓ These vitamins can be lost from vegetables during cooking, so it is a good idea to steam or microwave where possible.



Eating for good health

Fibre

- ✓ Aids digestive health and can help protect against heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers.
- ✓ Helps you stay fuller for longer if you are watching your weight.
- ✓ Fibre found in oats and some vegetables can help lower cholesterol.
- ✓ Good sources of fibre include pulses, lentils, beans, oats, vegetables in their skins, wholegrains, wheatbran, and nuts.
- ✓ Drink plenty of fluids to make the most of the benefits of fibre.



Salt

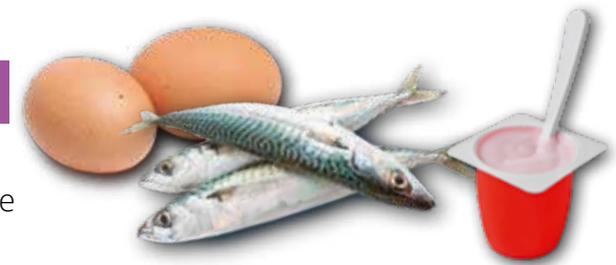
- ✗ 75% of us consume too much salt.
- ✗ Excess amounts are linked to high blood pressure.
- ✓ Use herbs, spices or lemon juice to enhance flavour as a healthy salt substitute.
- ✓ At HILS, our meals supplier has committed to reduce the salt content of their meals.
- ✓ If you are a HILS client, you can reduce your salt intake by choosing more of our meals with a , as these meals do not contain more than 1.5g salt per portion. Please get in touch if you need to follow a strictly low-salt diet.



Eating for good health

What about Vitamin D?

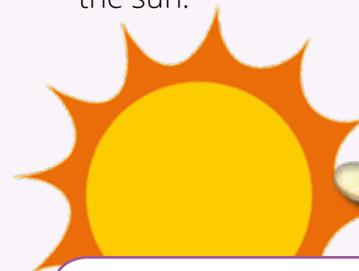
- Vitamin D is needed by the body in order to absorb calcium, and help keep your bones strong. This will help reduce the risk of developing osteoporosis, or suffering fractures following a fall.
- Our body makes most of our vitamin D in reaction to sunlight on our skin. However, as we age, we become less efficient at producing vitamin D from sun exposure, and we may spend less time exposed to the sun.



- Vitamin D is found in very small amounts in some foods including oily fish, eggs, red meat, yoghurts, margarines, and cereals that are fortified with vitamin D although it is virtually impossible to meet our needs from diet alone.

- All adults should take a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of Vitamin D every day.

- You can get this from your local pharmacist. If you are on any prescribed medication, check with the pharmacist that this vitamin supplement is suitable for you first.



Should I be taking any other vitamin supplements?

- Supplements can be expensive and unnecessary if you are fit and well.
- If you are eating regularly, maintaining your weight, and eating a wide variety of foods, you are not likely to need a vitamin supplement (unless a health professional has advised you that you should).

Keeping hydrated

How can I stay hydrated?

Drink 6-8 cups of fluid daily

A healthy adult should drink regularly throughout the day. 6-8 drinks is about 1500-2000ml or 3 pints.

Variety!

All non-alcoholic drinks, whether it's water, tea, squash, or milk can help keep you hydrated. If you are looking to lose weight or have diabetes, try to avoid sugary drinks.

What about dehydration?

Dehydration is a dangerous condition and can make us feel tired, affect memory and concentration, and can lead to other health conditions, such as constipation and urine infections (UTIs).



Water Jug Reminder

It can be difficult to remember to drink enough. Use a jug or fluid chart to help prompt you and to keep track of how much you are drinking.



Dehydration is a serious problem and is often linked to continence concerns. Both issues are very common amongst older people.

Support available

☑ If you're experiencing continence issues, your GP may be able to refer you to a local bladder and bowel nurse to ensure you have all the support you need.

☑ HILS have also produced a Keeping Hydrated: Top Tips poster. Please contact HILS if you would like a copy.

Ask the dietitian

Alethea, HILS' Nutrition & Wellbeing Lead and registered Dietitian has answered some of your frequently asked questions...



Now that I am older, do I still need to eat as much as I used to?

If you are fit and well, then generally, you have slightly lower energy requirements as you get older and become less active, but as you age, you become less efficient in processing the nutrients that your body needs. This can make it harder to meet nutritional requirements. It is therefore important to eat good quality food and to still base foods and drinks on the same principles as the 'Eatwell Guide'.

If you have a long term health condition, for example, Parkinsons disease, or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, your energy requirements may be increased and it is important you follow the advice of any health professional who has discussed this with you.

'The priority as we age is to enjoy our food, and eat for good health.'

Should I be worried if I have been losing weight?

If you have been eating less than normal, or have noticed that your clothes, dentures, or jewellery have become loose, and you have not been trying to lose weight, your health may be at risk.

If you are concerned and would like further advice, contact your GP to discuss this further. If you are a HILS client, you can request a nutrition and wellbeing check.

How can I ensure the meals I am eating are nutritionally balanced?

Following the 'Eatwell Guide' at the beginning of this booklet is a great place to start. Traffic light labels on packaging can also help guide you towards healthier choices. Look for products with more green or amber labels. This doesn't mean you can't have products with red sections. It's all about moderation and getting a good balance.

Ask the dietitian

Is butter bad for me?

Butter is made up of a type of fat called **saturated fat**. It is found in other animal products such as meat, and also in foods like coconut oil. This type of fat raises our cholesterol and this is linked to an increased risk of heart disease and stroke.

Unsaturated fats, found in plant based products like olive oil, rapeseed oil and some nuts don't raise our cholesterol and can even help lower them.

It's important to remember that all fats contain the same amount of calories, so if you are watching your weight you may want to reduce the overall amount of fat you are having.

There is a lot of new research emerging around fats and the role of in our health, but the current advice is to choose unsaturated fats where possible. Butter doesn't need to be banned but it is healthier to stick to smaller amounts.

Top tip: If you are a HILS client, and wish to reduce the amount of sugar you are having, you can choose our range of desserts that contain less than 15g of sugar per portion.



What about sugar?

Sugar can be found in a variety of forms in many different foods. The sugars that we should eat less of for our health, are called **free sugars**.

Free sugars are sugars that are added to food and drink, or those found naturally in fruit juice, honey, and syrup.

Sugar found naturally in starchy food, whole fruit, and dairy don't count as free sugars. This is because these foods contain other beneficial nutrients.

Excess free sugars can lead to weight gain and poor dental health. But as with most things, moderation is key, and unless you have been advised otherwise by a health professional, it's fine to have an occasional treat if eaten as part of a balanced diet.

Ask the dietitian

Is it alright to drink alcohol?

We should all aim to minimise our consumption of alcohol. We should not drink more than 14 units per week regularly, and should have several alcohol-free days every week.

Alcohol does not count towards your daily fluid intake as it is dehydrating.

How many units are in the most common drinks?



2.8 UNITS



2.3 UNITS



1 UNIT

Alcoholic drinks are generally high in calories, so if you are watching your weight and drink alcohol regularly, you may want to think about cutting this down.

INGREDIENTS

Water, Carrots, Onions, Red Lentils (4.5%) Potatoes, Cauliflower, Leeks, Peas, Cornflower, **Wheat**flour, Cream (milk), Yeast Extract, Concentrated Tomato Paste, Garlic, Sugar, **Celery** Seed, Sunflower Oil, Herb and Spice, White Pepper, Parsley

ALLERGY ADVICE

For allergens, see ingredients in **bold**

What if I am allergic or intolerant to some foods?

All food providers, by law, have to provide information about the 14 common allergens upon request.

If you are allergic or intolerant to any of these foods, always check the labels of any food you purchase. If you are a HILS meals on wheels client, we can ensure you are only delivered meals which do not contain these allergens. We can also send you details of ingredients for you to check and make your own informed choices.

If you are interested to find out more, contact us for further information.

Five Top Tips to help you achieve good nutrition!

1 Have three meals spaced out through the day, every day



2 Remember to drink regularly throughout the day to keep you and your bowels healthy!



3 Include snacks of dairy or fruit between meals every day



4 Have a nourishing milky drink daily - a great source of protein and calcium



5 Finally - enjoy your food



Nutrition & Wellbeing Service

HILS' Nutrition and Wellbeing service is a one of a kind in the UK, specialising in supporting people to stay happy, healthy, and independent at home. The team consists of registered Dietitians and Nutritionists, and Nutrition & Wellbeing Visitors, who offer a range of services for HILS meals on wheels clients in Hertfordshire.

Free nutrition & wellbeing checks

- ☑ We will come to your home, and talk to you about your overall wellbeing, including any nutritional, lifestyle, and health issues that may be having an impact on your wellbeing
- ☑ We will tell you about other local services that are available, that might be able to support you in other ways
- ☑ We will provide you with more information about good hydration and nutrition, that is specific to your needs
- ☑ We will provide you with regular and ongoing support to help you to stay well

Free nutritional expertise

- ☑ We design our menus to make sure that they are suitable for the needs of all our clients
- ☑ We can make changes to your menu choices to help you to meet your personal nutritional needs
- ☑ We offer extra one-to-one visits and support for those with more complex needs

Training & Education

- ☑ We train all of our staff in nutrition and hydration, so that they can help us to identify nutritional and health issues
- ☑ We teach people about nutrition and hydration through fun information sessions and provide resources
- ☑ We raise awareness of nutritional issues affecting older and vulnerable people by attending key events in Hertfordshire and across the UK



Helping you stay well

Your personal goals

If after reading this guide, you decide to make any changes to your diet to promote good health, please use this space to make a note of any personal goals. Even small goals can make a huge difference. Make sure they are realistic and achievable for you.

For example

1. I will aim to have at least 6-8 drinks per day to stay well hydrated
2. I will look into having a vitamin D tablet each day
3. I will avoid adding salt to my food at the table

Your personal goals

1.
2.
3.

This resource has been compiled using available current evidence and has been approved by a team of registered dietitians and nutritionists. This resource has also received external review and agreement from dietitians with an interest and actively working with older people, and by our Nutrition & Wellbeing Steering Group members.

Contact Details

For further information on HILS' services including meals on wheels, please visit our website on www.hertsindependentliving.org or call us on 0330 2000 103 (all calls charged at local rate).



Photographs of meals are for reference purposes only and may differ slightly due to recipe changes.

Hertfordshire Independent Living Service is the operating name of Hertfordshire Community Meals Limited, a registered society number IP30206R under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, registered with the Financial Conduct Authority and as a charity with HMRC registration number XT37228. **HILS October 2018. Review due 2020.**