

What is a Healthy Diet

The key to a healthy diet is to eat the right amount of calories for how active you are so you balance the energy you consume with the energy you use.



If you eat or drink more than your body needs, you'll put on weight because the energy you do not use is stored as fat. If you eat and drink too little, you'll lose weight.

The NHS define a healthy diet as **"eating a wide variety of foods in the right proportions and consuming the right amount of food and drink to achieve and maintain a healthy body weight"**.

Easy to say but what does it mean and how can you make quick easy changes to your eating habits?

Have you heard of the "Eatwell Guide"?

If not, have a quick [look at this link from the NHS site](#) - you may remember being shown something similar at school. It provides a rough idea how to balance your daily intake of fruit & vegetables, carbohydrates, protein and dairy/fats. The Eatwell Guide has taken the foods and drinks we consume, and split them into **five main food groups**, each in different proportions.

You don't have to eat all the groups in these proportions at every meal time, but rather over the space of a day or even a week.

Each group provides different essential nutrients, so we should be trying to choose a variety of different foods from each of the food groups to make sure our diet provides the range of essential nutrients our body needs to function properly and stay healthy

None of these food groups need to or should be excluded. Cutting out a whole food group, for instance, avoiding starchy carbohydrates could reduce intake of key nutrients like dietary fibre and B vitamins.

The size of each group in the Eatwell Guide shows what proportion these foods should make up in our diet.

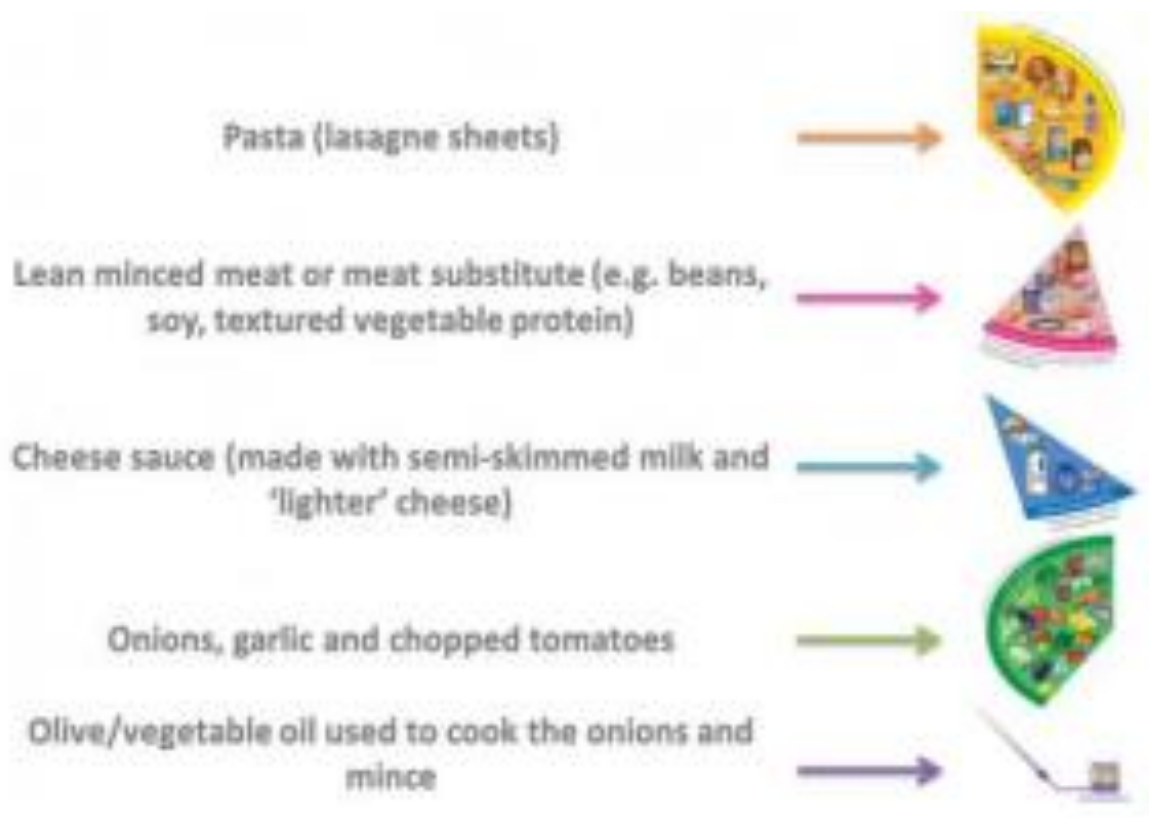
- Most of what we eat should come from ingredients shown in the two biggest food groups - starchy carbohydrates and fruit and vegetables.
- The beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins group, and the dairy and alternatives group are smaller, showing that we should eat foods from these groups in moderate amounts.
- The oils and spreads group illustrates that although some fat is essential in a healthy, balanced diet; we are generally eating too much saturated fat. Most of the fat in our diet should come from unsaturated oils and spreads, but all these foods are high in calories and so should only be eaten in small amounts.

The Eatwell Guide also displays foods high in saturated fat, salt and sugars outside of the main image, meaning they are not needed as part of a healthy, balanced diet. Eating too much of these foods may be bad for our health, so if they are consumed, it should only be done infrequently and in small amounts!

This is fine and fairly easy to follow when it comes to simple one-ingredient foods, but what about mixed dishes? Lots of the dishes we eat contain many ingredients that are combinations of the food groups in the Eatwell Guide.

For these kinds of meals, all you need to do is identify the main ingredients and think about how these fit into the food groups.

This will help you achieve a healthy, balanced diet. Here is an example for a lasagne



Later in this course we will be covering how different cooking styles also affect the quality of the food you eat as well.

Finally, don't forget that the amount and type of food you eat and should alter if you change your lifestyle (for example - if you join a fitness group 😊). You will naturally be burning more calories and therefore need to replace these with something healthy and useful for your body