

Nutrition.



Best options for modern living.

**“Let food be your medicine and medicine be your food”
(Hippocrates AD 390)**

Why is nutrition important?

One of the cornerstones to good health is good nutrition. According to UK health statistics, diseases such as heart disease, cancer, arthritis, Alzheimer’s and osteoporosis are rapidly increasing amongst adults. In many cases, poor nutrition plays a vital part.

Unfortunately eating habits are deteriorating in the UK. We now eat less fruit and vegetables than before the 2nd World War and rely heavily on convenience foods, over-processed foods and high fat snacks to supplement our diets. You can take responsibility for your own health through good nutrition.

Improving your health and vitality doesn’t have to mean a radical shift in diet and lifestyle; there are many small and practical changes that you can fit into your routine, which can start to make a difference to the way you feel both mentally and physically.

By improving your overall nutritional intake, you can enhance sleep quality, reduce the effects of stress, perk up your digestive system and boost your mental function – all of which will contribute to better health and vitality.

So what can you do?

The main thing to remember is that there are no “good” or “bad” foods. The key to a successful and long-term healthy eating plan is balance and moderation.

This does not mean you can never eat chocolate or crisps again, but you should reconsider the balance of the foods you eat and eat certain foods only in moderation in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Make a start by following basic healthy eating guidelines:

- Eat the right amount to be a healthy weight
- Eat regular meals and choose from a variety of different foods
- Eat plenty of starchy carbohydrate foods
- Don’t eat too much fat or sugary foods
- Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables
- Keep alcohol within sensible limits
- Drink plenty of water

It is important not to skip meals and it’s true that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. If you don’t feel particularly hungry in the morning, try to have just one slice of toast or a few pieces of fruit.

Starchy foods (complex carbohydrates), along with fruits and vegetables should make up the main part of your diet and should be included in each meal. They are low in fat and often high in fibre. Starchy foods often make you feel full, as they cause the body to retain more water. For this reason they have received a lot of bad press and many “fad” diets exclude carbohydrates. But carbohydrates are ‘filling’ foods – they don’t have to be ‘fattening’.

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Complex carbohydrates include bread, breakfast cereals, potatoes, rice, pasta and oats. The high fibre varieties will help to increase satiety and are particularly beneficial for those who are trying to lose weight. Try granary or rye bread rather than white, switch to brown rice and have jacket potato rather than boiled. If you don't like high fibre breakfast cereals, you can add some dried fruit or a banana to your cornflakes.

Sugar & Fats

Watch your sugar and fat intake. A diet rich in fat, especially saturated fat, is associated with a higher risk of heart disease and is the main cause of weight gain. Try to reduce the total amount of fat eaten and switch to unsaturated fats and oils (such as olive oil or walnut oil). Fats and sugars feature a lot in packet and processed foods and cause weight gain, lethargy and fatigue. They also affect hormone balance and skin health. Replace high fat snacks (crisps, chocolate, biscuits) with fresh fruit, a cereal bar or oatcakes.

Remember that "reduced fat" products are not necessarily low in fat or calories. Realistically, sausages, cheese and biscuits are never "low in fat", however, the reduced fat variety will contain "less" fat and is therefore the better choice. Don't be fooled by the labels. Low fat does not mean low sugar and many low fat foods are often high in sugar and therefore have the same calorific value as the standard versions.

Try and keep a food diary for one week:

- How does your food diary look?
- Are all the main food groups covered?
- How much processed or fast foods are you eating?
- How much 'green' food do you see?
- Are there plenty of fruits?
- How healthy are your snacks?



Don't forget fluids

Don't mistake thirst for hunger. Water is vital for thousands of chemical processes that take place in the body's cells. It is needed to regulate body temperature, promote good digestion, flush out toxins and help prevent headaches. Amazingly, in the UK it is estimated that 80% of the population is dehydrated!

Drinking at least 8 glasses a day will not only improve vitality, it will also improve the health of your skin. If there is one habit you change - make it this: DRINK MORE WATER!

Nutrient Robbers

It's really important to know the "Nutrient Robbers". These affect the way your body uses the nutrients it has. In most cases, nutrients that would help your body function are diverted to deal with these factors - hence their name. The knock-on effect of these nutrient robbers is to reduce your digestive capacity, affect your energy levels and upset your mental function as well as disturbing the synergy of all the body's systems. Nutrient Robbers are:

- Refined sugars - snack bars, biscuits, cakes, and sugar
- Caffeine - tea, coffee, fizzy drinks, and chocolate
- Alcohol
- Nicotine - tobacco, cigarettes and 'recreational' drugs
- Saturated fats
- Pollution
- Stress

You might not be able to control all the factors, but adopting good eating habits can reduce the overall effect of these nutrient robbers.