
Getting the Food and Activity Balance Right

A guide for 12-18 year olds to achieve and stay a healthy weight



7 steps to a lifestyle that promotes good health

1

Set yourself a challenge

- Whether you want to get fit or eat less junk food set yourself a specific goal such as running your fastest 5K or limiting takeaway food to just once a month.
- Whatever your goal is, write it down, make a poster for your bedroom wall or instead have it as your screen saver on your phone or laptop. This will act as a visual reminder to help keep you motivated to stick to your goal and raises awareness for your friends and family to be supportive.
- Other examples of goals could be drinking at least 6-8 glasses of water a day; stopping sugary drinks; having 5 portions of vegetables and fruit a day; or joining an after school physical activity club once a week.

2

Be careful with your calories

- Weight gain happens when you eat more calories than your body uses up. Extra calories every day add up. For example, taking in an extra 500kcal a day by eating a chocolate bar and drinking 300ml cola every day for a week is more than your body needs and could result in you gaining ½ a kilogram in weight. You would have to cycle at least an hour a day to burn off that same number of calories. Download a calorie tracker to your smart phone to be mindful about your daily eating and drinking habits, or simply write down everything that you eat and drink in a book. Don't forget to think about the reason you are eating e.g. it's breakfast time, you are feeling hungry or you have got into the habit of eating late at night. Think of ways to overcome unnecessary eating, by distracting yourself for at least 20 minutes.



3

Read labels and make better choices

- It's easy to ignore nutritional labels but this could help you manage your energy intake as the amount of fat, salt and sugar varies in foods and between brands.
- To help understand nutrition information, look for an easy traffic light system label. This is usually on the front of packaging and shows whether a food or drink is high, medium or low in fat, salt and sugar per 100g or per portion. Go for green which are the healthiest choices!
- If there is no easy way to understand the label, check out the nutritional information table (usually on the back) and use the table below to work out whether a food is a healthier choice or not.

Per 100g	LOW a healthier choice	MEDIUM okay most of the time	HIGH okay now and again
Sugars	5g or less	5.1 - 15g	More than 15g
Fat	3g or less	3.1 - 20g	More than 20g
Saturated Fat	1.5g or less	1.6 - 5g	More than 5g
Salt	0.3g salt or less (0.1g sodium)	0.31 - 1.5g salt (0.1g - 0.6g sodium)	More than 1.5g salt (more than 0.6g sodium)

Always read the small print. Watch out for items that display nutritional information based on a different weight to that of the item as eaten (usually done to make it appear healthier).

4

Think before you drink

- Calories from soft drinks easily add up. e.g. 500ml lemonade everyday can contribute to an extra day's worth of calories over a week (1470kcal). Remember, calories are a measure of energy and are listed as kilojoule (kJ) or kilocalorie (kcal).
- Tooth enamel can be damaged by what you drink (even with fruit juices and diet soft drinks).
- Make water more tasty by adding fresh fruit like strawberries or lemon for flavour.
- Have semi-skimmed or skimmed milks instead of full fat (per 100ml this could save you between 1.5g to 3.4g of fat a day or 15 to 30 calories a day).
- Watch out for hot and cold drinks from your favourite coffee shop. Some have almost the same number of calories as a meal (especially those with extra cream and syrups). Ask for the calorie content, look up the nutritional information online or on your calorie counter on your phone if you're unsure and try skinny varieties or ask for more ice in your cup.

5

Fruit and vegetables: more than just 5-a-day

- Go super green and make vegetables and fruit a third of what you eat in a day (at least 5 portions).
- Create the perfect snack e.g. a typical banana has 110 calories and a carrot has 25 calories which is a filling low calorie win!
- Juices and smoothies can be high in sugar so drink no more than 125ml (1 portion) a day – it's better to fill up on whole vegetables and fruits and drink plain water.
- If you are not keen on vegetables then try sweeter or raw types such as sweet or baby corn or carrots.
- Load up at least half of your plate with vegetables (even if the main dish contains some cooked vegetables).

