



## **FOOD CHOICES: 10 STEPS TO GET THE RIGHT BALANCE**

Finding the best way to lose weight may seem confusing. Drastic crash diets, meal replacements and cutting out meals do not work in the long term.

### **1. Eat regularly including breakfast**

#### **2. Base your diet on starchy foods**

Examples are bread, chapattis, potatoes, yam, plantain, green banana, rice, pasta, noodles, porridge and unsweetened breakfast cereals.

Choose high fibre varieties wherever possible. For example, wholemeal bread/chapattis, Branflakes, Weetabix, Shredded Wheat, brown rice and pasta. The best choices are those that are highest in water such as pasta, rice and boiled potatoes as these will fill you up without being too high in calories.

Try jacket potatoes with the skin instead of chips. These foods are not fattening, although the calorie content increases if you add fats or oils or if you fry them.

#### **3. Eat plenty of fruit & vegetables**

Aim for at least five portions per day. A portion is a small glass of unsweetened fruit juice, a small banana, a medium apple, three satsumas, a handful of grapes, small bowl of side salad, three heaped tablespoons of vegetables such as peas, carrots, and broccoli.

Remember, a wide variety of colours and textures will ensure you obtain a variety of vitamins and minerals and adequate fibre. Choose from fresh, frozen or tinned vegetables (with no added salt/sugar or fruit in natural juice). Limit fruit juice to one serving a day.

#### **4. Eat less fat**

Spread butter and margarine thinly or use a low fat spread. Choose low fat dairy products such as semi-skimmed or skimmed milk, plain low-fat yoghurts or flavoured yoghurts low in fat and low in sugar, reduced fat cheeses or lower fat cheeses (cottage cheese, light cream cheese).

Remove fat from your meat and choose lean cuts. Grill or bake without adding extra fat. Aim for no more than 80 - 110g (3-4oz) of meat as a portion and no more than 110 - 140g (4-5oz) of fish. Avoid pastry, mayonnaise, Yorkshire puddings and crisps. Replace some meat with pulses like lentils, red kidney beans and chickpeas in casseroles, as they are low in fat.

#### **5. Avoid sugar and sugary foods:**

Avoid adding sugar to drinks or cereals. If you have a sweet tooth, use a sweetener. Try to limit sweets, chocolates, cakes, and biscuits, saving them for an occasional treat.

#### **6. Be drink wise:**

Making sure you drink enough fluids is as just as important for your health as eating well. Aim

for about eight drinks a day. Water is the best and cheapest drink. Choose diet or no added sugar drinks and, if you drink coffee or tea, try it without sugar.

Drink alcohol in moderation: Sensible limits are three to four units per day for a man and two to three units per day for a woman. If you are trying to lose weight you need to cut down even more on alcohol, because it contains a lot of calories. Try to drink more diet/ low sugar soft and non-alcoholic drinks or mix your drink with diet mixers. A unit is: half pint of lager/ cider/ bitter, a small glass of wine (125ml) or a small measure of spirits.

### **7. Physical Activity:**

Try to include some form of activity each day. Thirty minutes five times a week will keep you in good health and help with weight control, although aiming for an hour a day is more effective for weight loss. If you can't do it at once then try it in small bursts of five to ten minutes. Exercise doesn't mean you need to join the gym. It could be walking, swimming, gardening, dancing or even household activities.

### **8. Changing Habits:**

Making small changes will keep you focused on your weight loss plan. Examples are preparing a shopping list in advance, keeping food out of sight, making meals as enjoyable as possible by including a variety of different foods, planning what you will do when the meal is finished and planning an extra walk or trip up the stairs each day.

### **9. Tips to keep you going:**

- Look at what you have achieved so far
- Remind yourself of all the reasons why you want to change
- Give yourself a non-food reward for achieving each step towards your goals
- Seek encouragement from those who support you.
- Some people find it helpful to keep a food diary. This means recording what, when and why you eat so you can understand more about your eating patterns. It can help you to identify triggers for eating and areas for change.
- Monitor your progress by checking your weight regularly, i.e. once a week. Measuring your waist can help to keep you motivated too.

### **10. Lapses and slip ups**

Despite your best efforts to keep on track, it's quite normal to have times when you have a 'slip-up', and are tempted back to less healthy ways of eating.

When this happens:

- Stay positive
- Identify the cause of the lapse
- Think about what to do differently next time, to prevent this happening again
- Move on

Ideally, you need to eat 500-600 calories fewer than your daily calorie needs to lose a healthy 0.5kg/1lb per week – you may lose more if you're more active.