

**HELP** for  
**HEROES**

**RECOVERY COLLEGE:**  
SELF-HELP GUIDES  
TO RECOVERY

MOVE FORWARD:  
**EATING  
WELL**



# WHY EAT WELL?

What you eat can have a big impact on both your physical and mental wellbeing. And the good news is that just a few small changes can bring lots of benefits!

In this guide, you'll learn more about nutrition, and at the end we'll suggest some simple tools to help you keep your healthy eating on track.

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Eating well can improve your:

- + SELF ESTEEM**
- + SLEEP AND ENERGY LEVELS**
- + MOOD**
- + MEMORY & CONCENTRATION**

# MORE ON HEALTHY EATING

Eating well is all about being mindful of what we put in our bodies. A good start is to understand a little more about the basics of nutrition. Let's look more at:

- + FOOD GROUPS
- + PORTION SIZES
- + HEALTHY SNACKING
- + STAYING HYDRATED

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# 1. FOOD GROUPS

Foods can be broken down into two basic groups.

## MACRONUTRIENTS

Are the nutrients we need in larger quantities. They give us energy and can be split into three groups:

1

**Carbohydrates:**  
your body's main source of energy, found in pasta, rice, bread, vegetables, fruit, potatoes and pulses.

**Proteins:**  
essential for growth and to help your body to repair itself. These can be found in eggs, meat, fish, beans and lentils

**Fats:**  
a source of essential fatty acids, which the body cannot make itself. Fat helps the body absorb vitamins A, D and E. Too much fat in your diet, especially saturated fat, can have a negative impact on your health.



## **MICRONUTRIENTS:**

Are essential elements needed in small quantities, such as microminerals and vitamins. They help support your immune system and keep you healthy.

# 2



## 2. PORTION SIZES

While we should be mindful of what we put into our body; it is just as important to pay attention to how much we eat too. This is individual to each person based on many things such as age, size, and level of physical activity to name a few. You can actually use your own hands as a guide to getting your portion sizes right.



**PROTEIN**  
A portion of protein is your palm.



**VEGETABLES**  
A portion of vegetables is your fist.



**FAT**  
A portion of fat is your thumb.



**CARBS**  
A portion of carbs is your cupped hand.

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### **3.** **HEALTHY SNACKING**

**Snacking can form part of a healthy nutritional lifestyle, as long as you choose wisely.** A healthy snack between meals not only combats hunger, it provides the nutrients and energy to get you through to your next meal. However an unhealthy snack will have little nutritional value and may lead to further snacking. Healthy snacks include:

- + FRUIT**
- + VEGETABLES**
- + HUMMUS**
- + EGGS**
- + TUNA**
- + NUTS**

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**TIP:**

Keep healthy snacks handy. For example, if you already have an apple on your desk at work, the chances are you will eat it when hungry and be set until lunch. If the apple isn't there, it's likely you'll hunt down a less healthy choice in the biscuit tin or café. The key is to prepare and make sure you always have a healthy snack on hand and ready to eat!



## **4.** **STAYING HYDRATED**

**Staying well hydrated is as important as eating well, and yet it often gets overlooked.**

Too much caffeine can affect your sleep and sugary drinks can cause weight gain, so it's best to limit your intake of these.

Water, however, is great for hydration and helps to:

- + REGULATE YOUR BODY TEMPERATURE**
- + KEEP MUSCLES AND JOINTS WORKING WELL**
- + FLUSH TOXINS FROM YOUR BODY**
- + PREVENT HEADACHES**

When you are dehydrated, you may experience:

- + A DRY MOUTH**
- + MUSCLE CRAMPS**
- + DIZZINESS**

The great thing is this can be a really easy win! The recommended intake of water is approximately 1.2 – 1.5 litres of water a day. Have a think about your daily intake of water. If you're drinking less than the recommended guideline, start drinking more throughout out the day.

**TIP:**

Use a marked water bottle to keep track of how much you are drinking each day.



# PUTTING EATING WELL INTO PRACTICE

Often our day to day lives impact on what we eat. Being busy or tired at the end of the day can leave you with little motivation to cook a nutritious meal or being out of the house all day may lead to picking up unhealthy snacks to keep you going.

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But with a few small changes, you can be more mindful about what you eat.

Try jotting down the answers to the following questions:

- + Do you eat 5 pieces of fruit and veg a day?
- + Do you eat specific meals or snack most of the day?
- + Do you feel your diet is balanced?
- + Do you accompany your meal with vegetables?
- + Do you eat too much sugar or junk food?
- + Do your portion sizes suitably match your lifestyle?
- + Do you prepare your meals in advance?
- + Do you feel motivated to cook your own meals?
- + Do you feel you have the relevant knowledge to cook a healthy meal?

Asking yourself these questions can help you decide where to start to make small changes. For example, you may find that your meals are well balanced but your portion sizes are too big, or that you are only eating one or two pieces of fruit a day. Try setting yourself small goals based on your answers.

**TIP:**

Remember how we talked about setting SMART goals earlier? Try this method to set some for yourself around your eating habits. And remember, if you find yourself struggling, reevaluate your goals, take small steps and look for easy wins.



## **5.** **KEEP A FOOD DIARY**

Keeping a food diary can be a great way to understand your eating habits and easily identify where you might be able to make small changes.

Some handy tips for keeping a food diary:

- + Write everything down, no matter how small!**
- + Jot down how you're feeling as you eat. Reviewing eating patterns in this way can help you to identify and make small changes.**
- + Be honest! Remember, the only one who has to see your food diary is you.**

## 6. PLAN YOUR MEALS IN ADVANCE

Remember how earlier we talked about being prepared with healthy snacks on hand for those times you are hungry? The same preparation can really help with healthy eating in general.

### TIP:

BBC Good Food has lots of great healthy meal plans to try out



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	<u>Breakfast</u>	<u>Lunch</u>	<u>Dinner</u>
Day 1			
Day 2			
Day 3			
Day 4			



### TIP:

The key to improving your eating habits is to make changes that are sustainable. Steady, manageable, positive change is what you should aim for.

Here are a few small changes you can make to your day to day eating habits. Picking just one or two things from this list is a good way make manageable change:

- + **Start your day with a piece of fruit**
- + **Make sure every meal has at least two different coloured vegetables**

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- + Limit the amount of unhealthy food you have, i.e. one treat a day**
- + Create weekly meal plans, plan your meals in advance and shop accordingly**
- + Eat leftovers for lunch. Cooking a larger healthy evening meal means you can then use the leftovers for lunch the following day or later in the week, preventing you from picking up a quick less healthy snack**
- + Batch-cook healthy meals, so that you have a stockpile of easily accessible healthy food to access on busy days.**

## AND FINALLY...

**Remember that making just a few changes to the way you eat can have a big impact on the way you feel, both physically and mentally.** Aim for steady and manageable change and if you find yourself struggling, reevaluate your goals and look for the small steps and easy wins.

Remember too that we are here to guide you along the way. If you have any questions at all, take positive action by contacting a member of our Recovery team.

### **Additional resources:**

The NHS website has some good resources on eating well and living a healthy lifestyle, head to **<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/>** to find out more.

If you have any questions at all, take positive action by contacting a member of our Recovery team:  
**[getsupport@helpforheroes.org.uk](mailto:getsupport@helpforheroes.org.uk)**