



## **Nutrition advice for people at risk of falls**

### Introduction

If you are well nourished and hydrated, you will have better strength and balance. This will help reduce your risk of having a fall.

This leaflet gives you advice on nutrition and hydration and what to eat and drink to help prevent falls.

### What's included?

- Hydration/ fluid intake.
- Achieving a nourishing diet.
- Maintaining bone strength.

### Hydration/ Fluid intake

Your body needs water to work properly. We lose about a pint of water each day due to breathing, passing urine and sweating.

### Dehydration

Dehydration increases our risk of falls by causing fatigue, dizziness and light-headedness. We become dehydrated when our bodies do not have enough fluid.

You may be dehydrated if you have one or more of the following symptoms:

- Thirst.
- Headaches.
- Light-headed/ dizziness.
- Tiredness/ lack of energy.
- Dark urine.
- Infrequent urination.

### How much should I drink?

- As a rule we should aim for eight 200ml glasses per day.
- The amount of fluid you need varies depending on your body size, the weather and how much physical activity you do.
- Anyone who has been advised to restrict their fluids or has oedema should seek clarification from their doctor regarding their specific fluid needs.

### What counts?

- All non-alcoholic fluids including water, squash, juice, tea, coffee, malted drinks, milk and soup.
- Avoid using only tea or coffee to meet your fluid needs as you will be better hydrated with having some fluids that do not contain caffeine.



## Achieving a nourishing diet

If you are worried about any recent weight loss or if you need to gain weight, you should try to eat a diet that is as nourishing as possible. This is needed to provide enough calories and protein to maintain your body weight.

This will help improve your energy levels, strength and balance and protect your bones if you have a fall.

You could try to eat little and often. Aim for 4 to 6 small meals or snacks throughout the day if you think this would be easier.

## Achieving a nourishing diet

- Choose high calorie foods and avoid those labelled 'low-fat' or 'diet'.
- Add extra butter, cream, grated cheese and milk to foods.
- Have a pint of milk (full cream provides more energy) every day as drinks and on cereal.
- Have protein rich foods such as meat, chicken, fish, egg, cheese, yoghurt, nuts, beans, lentils or vegetarian products at least twice a day.

If you are unable to manage a main meal, try having a snack instead e.g. a sandwich or cheese on crackers.

## How do I get enough protein?

Aim for 2-3 portions of high protein foods per day.

Sources and portion sizes of high protein foods include:

- 60–90g of cooked meat or poultry (about the size of a deck of cards).
- 140g of cooked fish (the size of the palm of your hand) e.g. tinned, fresh or frozen.
- Two medium-sized eggs.
- A small (200g) tin of baked beans
- Four tablespoons of lentils.
- One tablespoon of peanut butter.
- A handful of nuts.
- A handful of Quorn or soya alternatives to meat.
- Milk, yoghurts and milk puddings and cheese are also high in protein.

## Maintaining bone strength and health

- Getting enough calcium and vitamin D is needed to help your bones stay strong and minimise the risk of fractures if you fall. Eating foods rich in calcium and obtaining enough vitamin D will help protect your bones if you do have a fall.



## Calcium and vitamin D supplements

- Calcium supplements may be useful if you have a high risk of bone fractures. Calcium supplements should not exceed 1500mg daily as high doses may cause abdominal pain or diarrhoea.

### Calcium

The best sources of calcium are dairy products including milk, cheese and yoghurt. Aim for 2-3 portions of dairy a day.

A portion is equal to:

- A glass of milk.
- An ounce (25g match box size) of cheese.
- A small 125g pot of yoghurt.

Other sources of calcium include:

- Breakfast cereals fortified with calcium
- Calcium enriched milk alternatives eg Soya, rice, oat, nut, coconut etc.
- Drinks made from enriched milk alternatives.
- Bread products.
- Fish - when you eat the bones of fish e.g. tinned salmon, sardines and pilchards.

### Vitamin D

Vitamin D is needed so your body can absorb and use calcium.

Sunshine is the main source of vitamin D. Our skin makes vitamin D when exposed to sunshine between April to September. Try to spend 15 minutes outside in sunshine 2-3 times a week (without sunscreen).

The following people are recommended to take vitamin D supplements of 10µg (micrograms) per day :

- People aged over 65.
- Anyone with dark skin.
- People who do not go outdoors very often e.g. people who are housebound.

If you fall into one of categories talk to your G.P. for further information. Your current medication may already contain vitamin D and calcium.

## What if I am overweight?

Being very overweight can affect your balance and mobility as extra pressure is placed upon your joints, in particular on your knees.

If you are trying to lose weight, aim for 1-2lbs of weight loss per week as steady gradual weight loss is more likely to be successful in the long term.



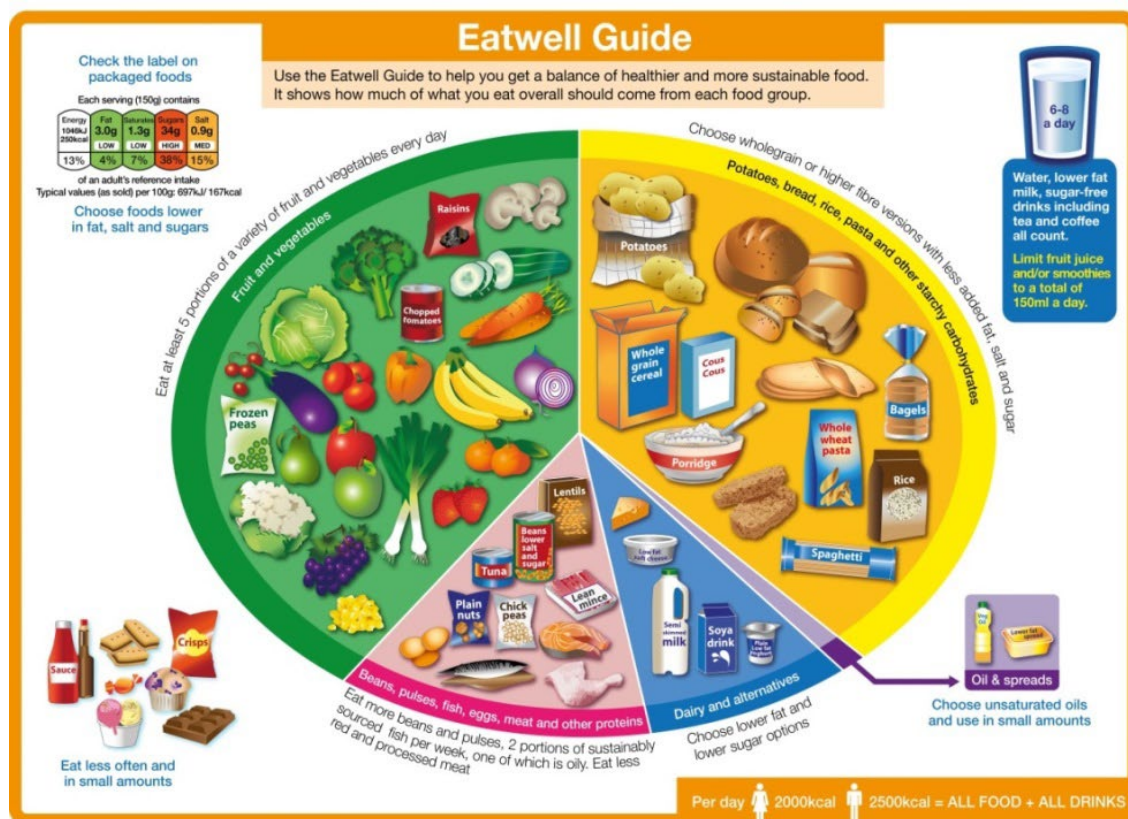
To lose weight you should aim to follow a healthy balanced diet which includes having a regular 3 meals per day and can include a snack between meals and a light supper.

However, losing weight can reduce your muscle strength. To avoid this, include a portion of high protein foods at each mealtime and include 2-3 portions of dairy foods or alternatives per day.

## The Eatwell Guide

The Eatwell Guide shows the different types of foods and drinks we should consume and in what proportions to help you follow a healthy, balanced diet.

## Guidelines for a healthy balanced diet



Source: Public Health England in association with the Welsh Government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

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- Choosing a variety of foods helps you to get a wide range of nutrients.
- Meals should contain a starchy carbohydrate (bread, rice, pasta, potato or cereal) at each meal. Choose high fibre options if possible
- Aim for a combination of 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day. These can include fresh, frozen, tinned or dried
- Include 2-3 portions of protein daily e.g. lean meat, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, nuts.
- Include 2-3 portions of dairy foods i.e. a milky drink, yoghurt or some cheese.
- If you struggle to cook or prepare meals try ready meals, frozen or tinned foods, meals on wheels, or see if family and friends could prepare meals for your freezer.