

Kidney health: eating well

Dietetics

Information for Patients

Produced: February 2024
Updated: April 2025
Review: February 2027
Leaflet number: 1486 Version: 1.1

Introduction

Healthy eating is important for everyone, including people who have a kidney condition or kidney disease. This leaflet tells you about some key messages to be able to do this.

Having a healthy, balanced diet is even more important if you have a kidney condition or kidney disease.

Key points are shown below:

Aim for a healthy body weight

- Body Mass Index (BMI) charts will help you to see if you are a healthy weight for your height (see page 3)
- Eating a healthy, balanced diet and keeping physically active will help you achieve this
- If you need to lose weight you will need to eat less calories. If you need to gain weight you will need to eat more.
- Alcohol is high in calories. Most recent guidance on alcohol is that men and women should limit their alcohol to no more than 14 units per week. This should ideally be over 3 or more days rather than all at once.

Eat less salt

- Everyone benefits from eating less salt. This is even more important when you have problems with your kidneys. Aim to eat less than 6g salt per day (2.4g sodium (Na)).
- Fresh or frozen unprocessed foods will be lower in salt than processed foods.
- Check food labels for salt content

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

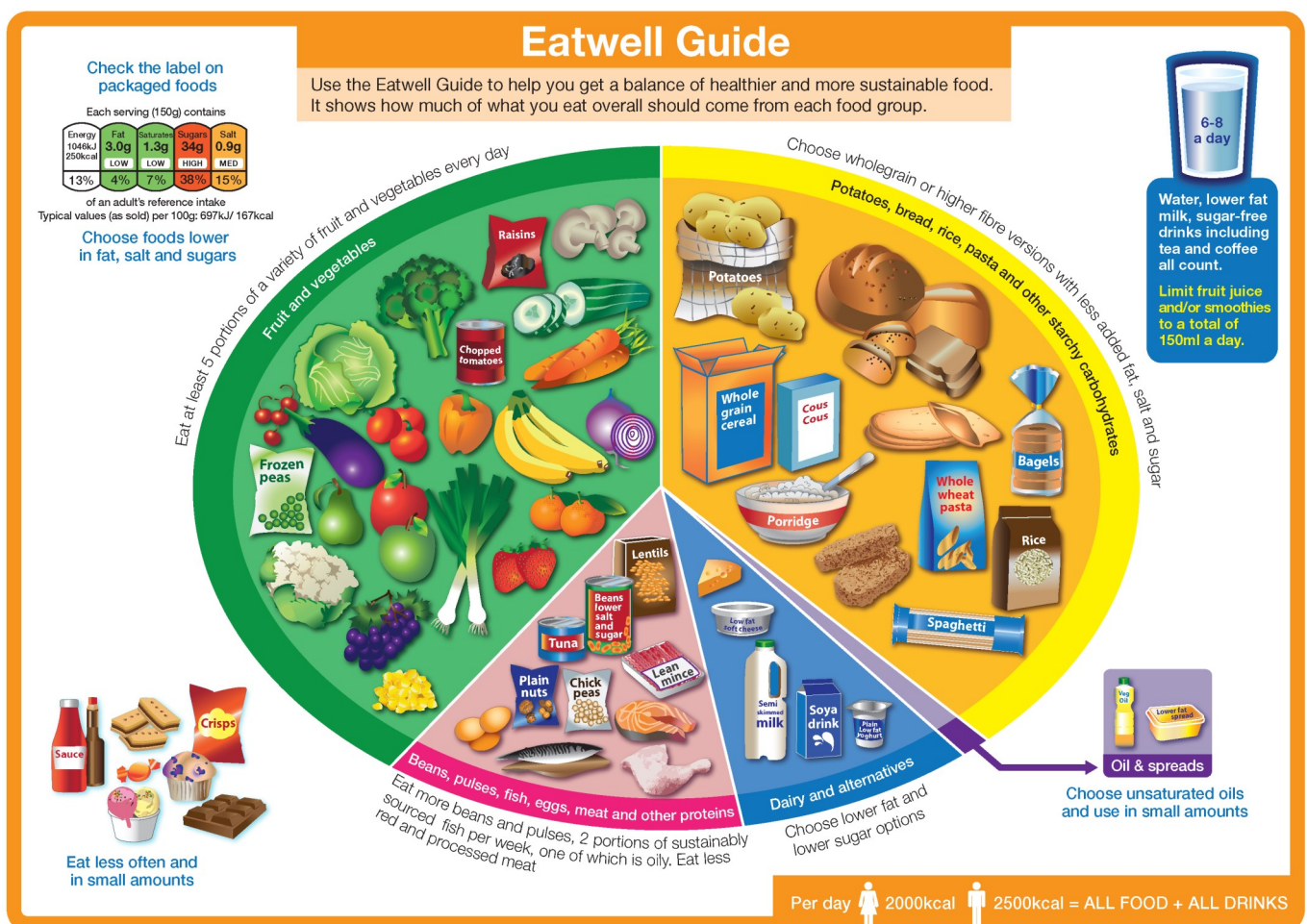
Keep hydrated

- 6 to 8 cups of drinks, in addition to the fluid in your food, will keep kidneys flushed through and avoid dehydration.
- If you exercise, you will need to drink more. This is to replace the water you lose from your body as sweat.

The Eatwell Guide - helping you eat a healthy, balanced diet

The Eatwell guide shows the proportions of different food types that make up a well-balanced healthy diet. These proportions can be over the period of a day or even a week, not necessarily each meal time .

The Eatwell guide is shown here but, you can see a full leaflet with more detailed advice here:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide



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

© Crown copyright 2016

Crown copyright. OHID in association with the Welsh government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

LEICESTERSHIRE NUTRITION AND DIETETIC SERVICE - REVIEWED JANUARY 2015
BODY MASS INDEX READY RECKONER FOR ADULTS

		Height (m)																	
		1.38	1.42	1.46	1.50	1.54	1.58	1.62	1.66	1.70	1.74	1.78	1.82	1.86	1.90	1.94	1.98		
weight (kg)	150	79	74	70	67	63	60	57	54	52	50	47	45	43	42	40	38	23st 8	weight (st / lbs)
	148	78	73	69	66	62	59	56	54	51	49	47	45	43	41	39	38	23st 3	
	146	77	72	68	65	62	58	56	53	51	48	46	44	42	40	39	37	22st 13	
	144	76	71	68	64	61	58	55	52	50	48	45	43	42	40	38	37	22st 9	
	142	75	70	67	63	60	57	54	52	49	47	45	43	41	39	38	36	22st 4	
	140	74	69	66	62	59	56	53	51	48	46	44	42	40	39	37	36	22st	
	138	72	68	65	61	58	55	53	50	48	46	44	42	40	38	37	35	21st 10	
	136	71	67	64	60	57	54	52	49	47	45	43	41	39	38	36	35	21st 5	
	134	70	66	63	60	57	54	51	49	46	44	42	40	39	37	36	34	21st 1	
	132	69	65	62	59	56	53	50	48	46	44	42	40	38	37	35	34	20st 10	
	130	68	64	61	58	55	52	50	47	45	43	41	39	38	36	35	33	20st 6	
	128	67	63	60	57	54	51	49	46	44	42	40	39	37	35	34	33	20st 2	
	126	66	62	59	56	53	50	48	46	44	42	40	38	36	35	33	32	19st 12	
	124	65	61	58	55	52	50	47	45	43	41	39	37	36	34	33	32	19st 7	
	122	64	61	57	54	51	49	46	44	42	40	39	37	36	34	32	31	19st 3	
	120	63	60	56	53	51	48	46	44	42	40	38	36	35	33	32	31	18st 13	
	118	62	59	55	52	50	47	45	43	41	39	37	36	34	33	31	30	18st 8	
	116	61	58	54	52	49	46	44	42	40	38	37	35	34	32	31	30	18st 4	
	114	60	57	53	51	48	46	43	41	39	38	36	34	33	32	30	29	17st 13	
	112	59	56	53	50	47	45	43	41	39	37	35	34	32	31	30	29	17st 9	
	110	58	55	52	49	46	44	42	40	38	36	35	33	32	30	29	28	17st 5	
	108	57	54	51	48	46	43	41	39	37	36	34	33	31	30	29	28	17st	
	106	56	53	50	47	45	42	40	38	37	35	33	32	31	29	28	27	16st 10	
	104	55	52	49	46	44	42	40	38	36	34	33	31	30	29	28	27	16st 5	
	102	54	51	48	45	43	41	39	37	35	34	32	31	29	28	27	26	16st 1	
	100	53	50	47	44	42	40	38	36	35	33	32	30	29	28	27	26	15st 10	
	98	51	49	46	44	41	39	37	36	34	32	31	30	28	27	26	25	15st 6	
	96	50	48	45	43	40	38	37	35	33	32	30	29	28	27	26	24	15st 2	
	94	49	47	44	42	40	38	36	34	33	31	30	28	27	26	25	24	14st 11	
	92	48	46	43	41	39	37	35	33	32	30	29	28	27	25	24	23	14st 7	
	90	47	45	42	40	38	36	34	33	31	30	28	27	26	25	24	23	14st 2	
	88	46	44	41	39	37	35	34	32	30	29	28	27	25	24	23	22	13st 12	
86	45	43	40	38	36	34	33	31	30	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	13st 8		
84	44	42	39	37	35	34	32	30	29	28	27	25	24	23	22	21	13st 3		
82	43	41	38	36	35	33	31	30	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	12st 13		
80	42	40	38	36	34	32	30	29	28	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	12st 8		
78	41	39	37	35	33	31	30	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	12st 4		
76	40	38	36	34	32	30	29	28	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	12st		
74	39	37	35	33	31	30	28	27	26	24	23	22	21	20	20	19	11st 9		
72	38	36	34	32	30	29	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	11st 5		
70	37	35	33	31	30	28	27	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	19	18	11st		
68	36	34	32	30	29	27	26	25	24	22	21	21	20	19	18	17	10st 10		
66	35	33	31	29	28	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	18	17	10st 6		
64	34	32	30	28	27	26	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	18	17	16	10st 1		
62	33	31	29	28	26	25	24	22	21	20	20	19	18	17	16	16	9st 11		
60	32	30	28	27	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	17	16	15	9st 6		
58	30	29	27	26	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	18	17	16	15	15	9st 2		
56	29	28	26	25	24	22	21	20	19	18	18	17	16	16	15	14	8st 11		
54	28	27	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	17	17	16	16	15	14	14	8st 7		
52	27	26	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	16	15	14	14	13	8st 3		
50	26	25	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	17	16	15	14	14	13	13	7st 12		
48	25	24	23	21	20	19	18	17	17	16	15	14	14	13	13	12	7st 8		
46	24	23	22	20	19	18	18	17	16	15	15	14	13	13	12	12	7st 3		
44	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	15	14	13	13	12	12	11	6st 13		
42	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	15	14	13	13	12	12	11	11	6st 9		
40	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	15	14	13	13	12	12	11	10	10	6st 4		
38	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	14	13	13	12	11	11	11	10	10	6st		
36	19	18	17	16	15	14	14	13	12	12	11	11	10	10	9	9	5st 9		
		4' 6"	4' 8"	4' 9"	4' 11"	5' 0"	5' 2"	5' 4"	5' 5"	5' 7"	5' 8"	5' 10"	5' 11"	6' 1"	6' 3"	6' 4"	6' 6"		

To Calculate BMI: $\frac{\text{Weight (kg)}}{\text{Height (m)} \times \text{Height (m)}}$

Key:

- BMI <18.5 Underweight
- BMI 18.5-24.9 Desirable
- BMI 25-29.9 Overweight
- BMI 30-34.9 Obese (Class I)
- BMI 35-39.9 Obese (Class II)
- BMI >40 Obese (Class III)

Tips for eating less salt

Around 75% of the salt we eat comes from manufactured or processed foods. The table below lists foods which are high in salt:

Cheese	Prawns
Chinese meals	Ready meals including pizza
Cooking sauces including pasta sauces	Regular baked beans
Crumpets	Salt fish
Foods tinned in brine such as vegetables and fish	Shop bought sandwiches
Gravy granules and stock cubes	Soup – tinned and fresh
Meats products: e.g. sausages, bacon, salami, ham & tinned meats, chicken nuggets	Snack foods: crisps, corn snacks, salted nuts, Indian savouries such as sev, gathia, Bombay mix
Meat and vegetable extract	Soy sauce
Pickle or chutney	Tomato ketchup, mayonnaise and other sauces

- Try to choose more fresh or frozen unprocessed foods, such as fresh or frozen fruit and vegetables, fresh meat, poultry, fish, eggs or pulses
- Reduce the amount of salt you add to food. Give yourself time to adjust and you will get used to the new flavours.
- Try to get out of the habit of adding salt at the table.
- Flavour your food with herbs and spices instead of salt. Try using garlic, pepper and mustard

Food labels

Low (green)	Medium (Amber)	High (Red)
Less than 0.3g per 100g food	0.3 to 1.5g per 100g food	More than 1.5g per 100g food

Look at labels on food packaging. Using this table to check which foods are low, medium or high in salt. Colour coding can also be a quick way to check this.

Salt is often labelled per 100g so check the weight of your portion. This is to make sure you use the information correctly. Try to limit the number of foods coded as red and aim to eat mainly foods that are coded green and amber.

Adults should aim to eat less than 6 grams of salt a day.

Frequently asked questions

Question: I have heard that protein is bad for my kidneys - is this true?

Proteins are large, complex molecules that play many different roles in the body. They do most of the work in cells. They are needed for the structure, function and regulation of the body's tissues and organs. As a nation, we tend to eat more protein than we need. The body has to get rid of the breakdown products of protein through our kidneys. When kidneys are working well, this does not tend to be a problem.

Kidney function is measured in your blood tests and is shown by eGFR—this stands for: 'estimated glomerular filtration rate'. This gives an estimate of how well your kidneys are working.

To help you understand your result, the number given for your eGFR can be considered as a percentage (%) of function for example, If your eGFR is 50 then you can assume your kidneys are functioning at about 50%. The highest number you can get as your result is more than 90 showing completely normal kidney function. Do not be alarmed if your result is lower than this as you can be well at quite low levels. But, reduced kidney function will need to be checked.

If you have reduced kidney function (low eGFR) you should avoid eating a high protein diet. It can cause a build-up of the end products of protein digestion. This can be harmful and put stress on your kidneys.

It is important to get the balance right. Protein is important for some of your bodies vital functions. Too little can cause health problems such as malnutrition, muscle weakness, tiredness, and weight loss.

Answer: Protein is not bad for the kidneys but if you have a kidney condition or kidney disease, you should have an average amount of protein to meet your body's needs. Do not have too much, as this can cause stress on your kidneys.

An average protein portion size at mealtimes would be :

- Up to 4oz per 100g of meat or fish - This is about the size of the palm of your hand
- 2 eggs
- 5 tablespoons beans or pulses

Ask your doctor or dietitian if you would like to know about the amount of protein that is right for you.



Question: I exercise to keep fit and keep my muscles strong. Should I eat lots of protein?

Many people who exercise or go to the gym believe that muscle bulk and strength will be greater if they eat a high protein diet. Best results come from a balance of dietary protein and exercise, a mix of aerobic and strength training. Supplements such as protein powders are often not needed and may be harmful if you have kidney disease. Too much protein in people with reduced kidney function may overload the kidneys.



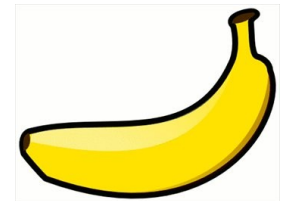
Answer: Eat enough protein to meet your needs, but try to limit taking too much of it.

Ask your doctor or dietitian if you would like to know about the amount of protein that is right for you.

Question: Can I eat bananas?

Fruit and vegetables are an important part of a healthy diet. Bananas are a rich in potassium.

Most people with kidney conditions or kidney disease have no problem with potassium in their diet. When kidney function is reduced as shown by a reduced eGFR, potassium can build up in the blood and cause harm.



Answer: Feel free to include bananas in your diet unless you are advised to follow a low potassium diet.

Ask the doctor or dietitian if you would like to know about specific aspects of your diet.

Other resources for healthy living:

Websites:

www.lnds.nhs.uk - Leicestershire Nutrition and Dietetics Service

www.nhs.uk/live-well - NHS website. There is a section on kidney health.

www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/category/healthy - BBC website of healthy recipes.

www.nhs.uk/better-health - NHS website which gives you information on all aspects of healthy living such as smoking, exercise, food, alcohol, recipes

bda.uk.com/foodfacts/home - Association of UK Dietitians with of food information

Apps:**MyFitnessPal** - this app allows you to log your food and activity**Calorie counter +** - this app allows you to log your food.**Food scanner** – NHS app to help guide you to better food choices.**NHS weight loss plan**—12 week diet and exercise plan

If you have any questions, write them down here to remind you what to ask when you speak to your doctor or healthcare professional.

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

જે તુમીં ઇચ જાજવારી વિમે હેર જામ્મા વિચિ ચાહુંદે હે, ઝાં વિરખા વરવે હેઠાં દિંતે ગાદે નંબર 'ਤੇ ટેલીફોન વરે।
Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

Previous reference:

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk