

Come dine with us

# Managing Nutrition for Voluntary Lunch Clubs



Wealden District Council and Action in Rural Sussex have produced this booklet as part of a project to support the Voluntary Lunch Clubs within the Wealden area.

The volunteers provide lunches and social activities for older people in over 30 lunch clubs across the Wealden area, many in very rural locations. Wealden District Council and Action in Rural Sussex are very grateful to all the volunteers, as these clubs provide a vital link in the community for many older people.

Particular thanks go to the lunch clubs who helped us to make this project a success:

- Maresfield
- Rotherfield
- Herstmonceux
- Hartfield
- Uckfield Housebound Club
- Old Heathfield Country Lunches
- Open-Door Crowborough
- Age Concern Crowborough
- The Companions Lunch Circle, Maresfield

The project was made possible by a grant from the Food Standards Agency in recognition of the importance of voluntary lunch clubs in providing safe and nutritious food in the community.

**If you, or somebody you know, would like the information contained in this document in large print, Braille, tape/CD or in another language please contact Wealden District Council on 01323 443322 or [info@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:info@wealden.gov.uk) quoting code number D&P /12.10**

## Introduction

The volunteers who organise and run the various lunch clubs around the Wealden District provide a vital service to residents, offering them good food, company and something to look forward to. This booklet aims to give you up-to-date information on nutrition, which may help you to plan lunch club menus and also to pass on good advice on nutrition to others.

## Older people

Eating a varied and balanced diet is important for anyone. It helps to make eating more enjoyable and will help you to stay healthy and active. As age progresses and body weight and energy expenditure decreases, people tend to eat less and hence may find it difficult to satisfy all the nutrient requirements.



It is important, therefore, that older people are encouraged to remain active and to maintain a good energy intake unless they are obese. They should also have foods that are concentrated sources of protein, vitamins and minerals.

Although people only attend your lunch club once a week, fortnightly or monthly, it is an ideal opportunity for the volunteers planning the lunch menu to consider the 'Eight Tips for Eating Well' and the 'Eatwell Plate'. An example of this is shown in this booklet and can also be found on the [www.eatwell.gov.uk](http://www.eatwell.gov.uk) website.

## Eight Tips for Eating Well

The Eight Tips for Eating Well are practical tips which can help people make healthier choices. The two keys to a healthy diet are eating the right amount of food for how active you are and eating a range of foods to make sure you are getting a balanced diet.

A healthy balanced diet contains a variety of types of food, including lots of fruit, vegetables and starchy foods such as wholemeal bread and wholegrain cereals; some protein-rich foods such as meat, fish, eggs and lentils; and some milk and dairy foods.

The eight tips for eating well are:

1. Base your meals on starchy foods
2. Eat lots of fruit and vegetables
3. Eat more fish
4. Cut down on saturated fat and sugar
5. Try to eat less salt – no more than 6g a day
6. Get active and try to be a healthy weight
7. Drink plenty of water
8. Don't skip breakfast



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## What to eat

Make sure when you plan the lunch club menu you include:

### Foods rich in starch and fibre



Bread, rice, pasta, cereals and potatoes are good examples. As well as being low in fat they are good sources of other essential nutrients: protein, vitamins and minerals. The fibre from these helps to prevent constipation which reduces the risk of some common disorders in the intestine. Oats, beans, peas, lentils, fruit and vegetables are also sources of fibre.

### Iron-rich foods

Eating plenty of iron-rich foods will help keep up the body's store of iron, the best source of iron is red meat. It can also be found in pulses (such as peas, beans and lentils), oily fish (such as sardines), eggs, bread, green vegetables and breakfast cereals with added vitamins. Liver is a good source of iron, however, it is also a rich source of vitamin A and having too much vitamin A can be harmful. It's a good idea to avoid drinking tea or coffee with iron-rich meals because this might affect how much iron the body absorbs from food.

### Foods and drinks rich in vitamin C

These might help the body absorb iron, so you could have some fruit or vegetables or a glass of fruit juice with an iron-rich meal. Fruit, especially citrus fruit, green vegetables, peppers, tomatoes and potatoes are all good sources of vitamin C.



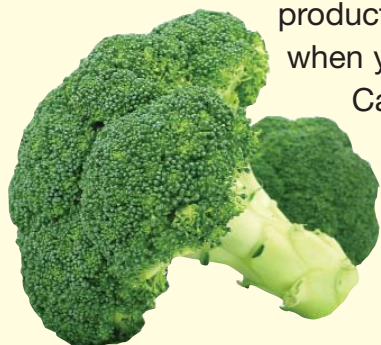
### Foods containing folic acid

These help maintain good health in older age. Good sources are green vegetables and brown rice, as well as bread and breakfast cereals that have vitamins added.

### Calcium-rich foods

Osteoporosis is a major health issue for older people, particularly women. This is where bone density reduces and so the risk of fractures increases. Good sources of calcium are dairy products such as milk, cheese and yoghurt, remember to use lower-fat varieties when you can or if you use higher fat varieties, then do so in smaller amounts.

Calcium is also found in canned fish with bones, such as sardines. Other sources of calcium include green leafy vegetables (such as broccoli and cabbage, but not spinach), soya beans and tofu.



# Vitamins

## Vitamin A

Having too much vitamin A (more than 1.5mg of vitamin A a day, from food and/or supplements) might increase the risk of bone fracture.

Liver is a rich source of vitamin A, so you should avoid eating liver or liver products such as pâté more than once a week, or you could eat smaller portions. If you do eat liver once a week you should avoid taking any supplements containing vitamin A or fish liver oils (which contain high levels of vitamin A).



## Vitamin D

Like calcium, vitamin D is important for good bone health. We get most of our vitamin D from the effect of summer sunlight on our skin, but vitamin D is also found in oily fish, eggs and foods with added vitamins such as some breakfast cereals and margarines.

If you aren't getting enough vitamin D, you might be more at risk of the harmful effects of too much vitamin A.

If you're 65 or over, you should consider taking

10 micrograms (mcg) of vitamin D supplements a day.

Some other groups of people are at a higher risk of being short of vitamin D and so should consider taking 10mcg of vitamin D a day. These include people who:

- are of Asian origin
- rarely get outdoors
- always cover up their skin when they're outside
- eat no meat or oily fish



## Potassium

You should avoid taking potassium supplements unless on medical advice. This is because, as we get older, our kidneys become less able to remove potassium from our blood.

Potassium on the other hand has a beneficial effect on blood pressure, and fruit and vegetables such as bananas, tomatoes and avocados are a good source of potassium.



## Cutting down on salt

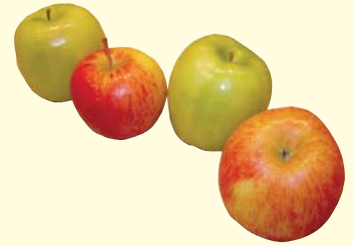
On average, you should aim to keep your salt intake to less than 6g per day (about 2.4g of sodium). Most of the salt we eat is already in foods, and so it is important to be aware of the salt content of ready-prepared foods, which can be a major source. Also avoid adding salt to your food when cooking and at the table.

## The Eatwell Plate

The eatwell plate is based on the five food groups.

- Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods
- Fruit and vegetables
- Milk and dairy foods
- Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein
- Foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar

The eatwell plate encourages you to choose different foods from the first four groups every day, to help ensure you obtain the wide range of nutrients your body needs to remain healthy and function properly. Choosing a variety of foods from within each group will add to the range of nutrients you consume. Foods in the fifth group – foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar are not essential to a healthy diet.



Use the eatwell plate to get the balance right. It shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group.

