

Weight Off Your Mind

A different approach to weight loss



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Introduction to weight management

Weight Off Your Mind is a programme designed to support sustainable weight management and help you develop a healthier relationship with food. Alongside exploring practical strategies for managing your weight, we will encourage you to reflect on your eating habits, thoughts, and behaviours around food, to support your overall wellbeing.

At each session we will:

Check-in – How are you doing? What's gone well, and what challenges have you faced since the last session?

Check-out – Explore a new food, exercise and wellbeing topic and discuss practical ways to apply it in everyday life.

Check-up – Decide what action you will take before the next session and set a realistic goal to help you move forward.

The course runs twice a month and is delivered as a rolling programme, allowing participants to join at various points throughout the year. It consists of six colour-coded online sessions, plus an additional seventh bonus session, Masterclass, which brings together key learning and provides further practical strategies for long-term success. All sessions are facilitated by a Community Dietitian.

To help you get the most from the programme, you may find it helpful to keep a food diary, record your thoughts and reflections in a journal, monitor your progress using a set of scales or a tape measure, and identify a trusted friend or family member who can support and encourage you. These tools can help increase awareness of your eating habits, track behavioural changes, and keep you motivated throughout your journey.

Personal information

Studies have shown that to lose weight and maintain that loss, losing weight slowly and steadily is the best way. It is recommended that to lose 0.5-1kg (1 -2lbs) per week you should reduce your intake by 600kcal per day.

A realistic target of 5-10% weight loss may be achievable during this course and has many health benefits.

You can monitor your weight loss in a variety of ways, for example:

- Using electronic scales
- Non-weight measures (such as your waist circumference or clothes size)
- How far you can walk
- Your energy levels, sleep quality or quality of life

Record your details here now so you can track your progress.

Today's date:

Weight:

Getting the balance right

Historically, weight management was viewed simply as energy in versus energy out. Today, we recognise that supporting a healthy metabolism (basal metabolic rate, or BMR) is just as important. Eating a diet rich in **whole, minimally processed foods** helps because these foods require more energy for the body to digest, absorb, and process, giving metabolism a natural boost. A **regular eating pattern** is also important if you want to lose weight and maintain that weight loss. Missing meals often leads to overeating and snacking later in the day.

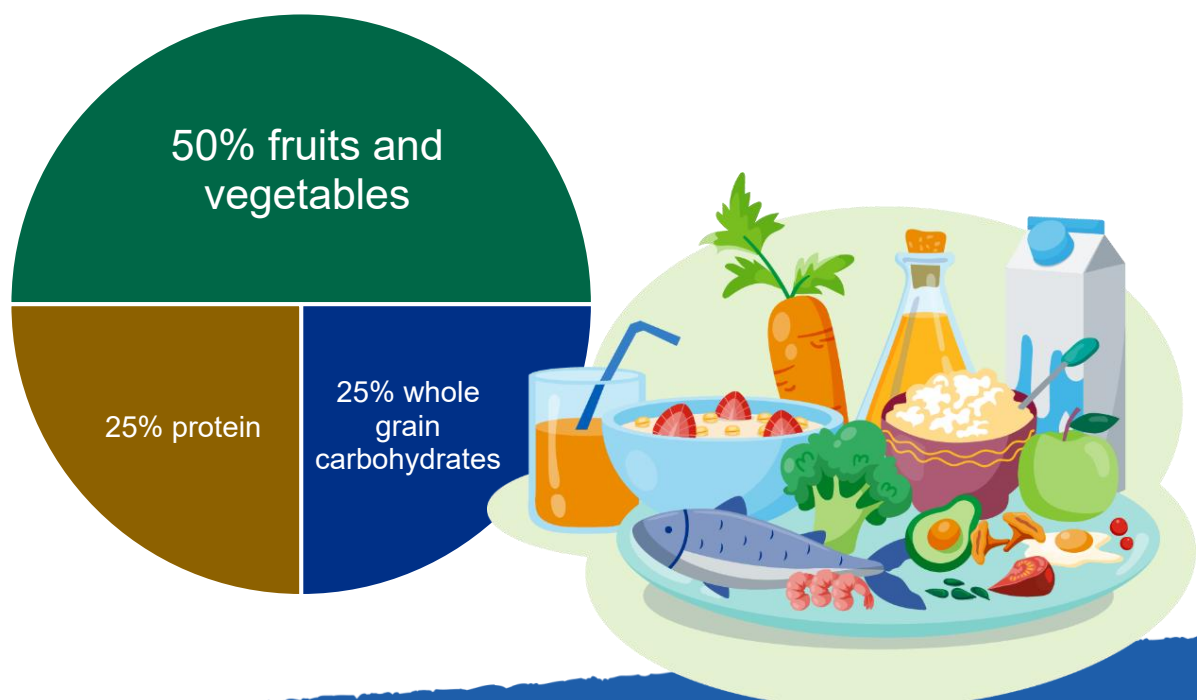
Protecting and building lean muscle mass is also essential, as muscle is metabolically active tissue. This means consuming adequate lean and plant-based protein sources and incorporating regular resistance exercise.

Without supporting our metabolism in this way, weight loss can become more difficult and may lead to weight plateaus. You can read more about plateaus in [Pink Week](#).

The Mediterranean Diet Plate is a simple visual guide that helps you build a healthy, balanced diet. Eating in this way can support heart health and lower the risk of cardiovascular disease. By encouraging a moderate carbohydrate intake and choosing more nutrient-dense foods, it may also help reduce insulin resistance, which can make weight loss easier.

Try to eat:

- regular, balanced meals throughout the day
- plenty of vegetables and fruit – ideally making up half of your plate at main meal
- wholegrains with meals, such as wholemeal bread, brown rice, oats, wholewheat pasta, millet, bulgar, fufu or quinoa
- milk and dairy foods, or fortified plant-based alternatives enriched with calcium and vitamin D
- good sources of protein foods at each meal - including lean meats, fish, eggs, beans, lentils, tofu, tempeh, or other non-dairy sources
- healthy fats, particularly nuts, seeds, avocado, tahini and olive oil
- aim for 8-10 cups of fluid daily, ideally water on non-caffeinated drinks



Food diary: Monitoring your progress

Keeping a track of what you eat, and drink has been shown to help with successful weight loss and maintenance. Recording what you eat and drink in a food diary will help you see where you can improve your food choices by identifying habits such as regularly snacking, emotional eating, eating large portions of foods or eating at irregular times.

Try to complete a food diary for three days at the start of the course. You can use the form below to help you record what you eat and drink in the day and night. Or you may prefer to use an App such as MyFitnessPal, NutraChek, Carbs & Cals, MyTummy, and MyNetDiary.

Feelings

Use the 'Feelings' columns to record any thoughts or emotions you're having before and after eating, or anything that upsets you. Doing this will help you to unravel some of the underlying reasons for your eating behaviour, and to plan ways of adapting it.

Activities

Making a note of your activities can help you see when you might feel most hungry. Think about how much time you are sedentary (sat down).

Analysing my food diary

Remember - focus on what you have achieved and avoid being over critical of yourself when analysing your food diary. Use the following prompts to analyse your habits:

- Am I actually hungry when eating?
- Am I eating at regular intervals?
- Am I eating too little or too much?
- Are there times that I eat excess or binge?
- Do I need to snack regularly throughout the day?
- Do I eat from stress, boredom or emotion?
- Do I use food as a reward?

	Food	Fluid	Portion description (how much)	Feelings	Activities
Breakfast					
Snack					
Lunch					
Snack					
Dinner					
Before Bed					

Blue Week

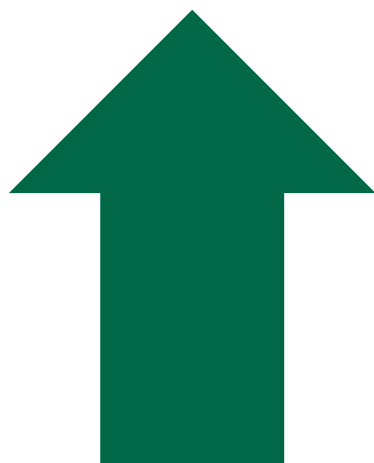
How to eat healthy fat

Fat contains more than twice as much energy (calories) as protein or carbohydrates, therefore cutting down on saturated fat and fatty foods can be a successful way of achieving weight loss and heart health.

There are two main types of fats in the foods we eat, saturated and unsaturated fat. Both types of fat contain the same number of calories.

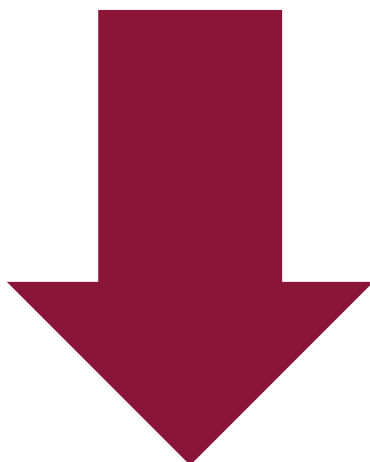
Saturated fat (and Trans-fat): This is sometimes referred to as 'bad' fat as it can build up in our bodies and eventually lead to high blood cholesterol which can increase your risk of heart disease.

Unsaturated fat: This is sometimes called 'good' fats because they can help lower cholesterol. Choosing more unsaturated fats - especially omega-3 polyunsaturated fats and monounsaturated fats - can also help reduce inflammation and support a healthy heart.



Beneficial

- Seafood Omega-3 (salmon, tuna)
- Plant Omega-3 (walnuts, flax seeds)
- Plant Omega-6 (sunflower, corn oils)
- Monounsaturated (olive oil, avocados)



Harmful

- Saturated fats (red meat, butter)
- Industrial trans fats (margarine)

Ideas to help you eat less saturated fat

- Spread less butter on bread - choose a low-fat spread or use sparingly.
- Choose cooking methods that don't need added oil or fat. Try boiling, air frying, steaming, microwaving, grilling, casseroles etc. If oil is used, measure with a teaspoon, limit the number of teaspoons used, or try an oil spray.
- Swap Ghee or coconut oil for olive oil or rapeseed oil (**1 teaspoon of oil = 45kcal**).
- Avoid adding butter or margarine unnecessarily i.e. to mashed potatoes or vegetables, to toast for baked beans on toast or with soup etc, or sandwiches with moist fillings.
- Switch to low fat varieties of mayonnaise, salad cream and oil-based dressings, or watch the amount you use (**1 teaspoon of mayonnaise = 55kcal**).
- If you use 'cook in' sauces, choose tomato-based versions sometimes as an alternative to creamy ones.
- Choose lean cuts of meat and trim visible fat before cooking. Reduce consumption of processed meat products such as pies, pate and sausages.
- Swap full fat or sweetened yoghurts for a low-fat natural yoghurt.
- Be mindful of cheese intake. It is fine as part of a meal but try and avoid nibbling on chunks of cheese between meals or while you are cooking. Use strong flavoured cheese - you will need to use less.
- A cooked breakfast is fine now and again. Try using grilled back bacon, poached or scrambled eggs and include some vegetable such as baked beans, mushrooms, tomatoes.
- Fill up on carbohydrate – Choose low glycaemic-index options such as wholegrain bread, wholewheat breakfast cereals, oats, potatoes (with skin), rice, pasta, fufu, wholegrain chapatti, plantain and yam. These are filling and will make you less likely to crave processed foods. Go for potatoes instead of pastry on a pie.
- If you're eating ready meals and processed foods, choose those with a lower fat content and add extra vegetables.
- Choose whole foods, or less processed foods where possible.

Fat: Food swaps

Food swaps are a great way of easily reducing your calorie intake without dramatically changing your food choices.

Here are some suggestions:

Swap		For		Save
Food	Calories (kcal)*	Food	Calories (kcal)*	Calories (kcal)*
Butter (teaspoon)	75	Lower fat spread	20	55
Mayonnaise (teaspoon)	99	Lower fat mayonnaise	43	56
2 chicken legs with skin	424	Chicken breast	192	232
Full fat milk (small glass)	132	Skimmed milk	64	68
Full fat cheddar (small chunk)	166	Reduced fat cheddar	109	57
Chips (180g serving)	340	Boiled potatoes	135	205
Potato crisps (25-30g packet)	140-160	Quaver/Wotsits/French fries	90	50-70
Ham and cheese sandwich	800	Ham salad sandwich	400	400
Chocolate bar (50g)	260	Chocolate digestive	84	176
Full sugar fizzy drink (can)	156	Diet fizzy drink (can)	2	154
Sugar (1 teaspoon)	20	Sweetener (1 teaspoon)	2	18
Creamy pasta sauce	210	Tomato pasta sauce	85	125
*per serving				

Mindful eating: Being in the moment

Assessment of thoughts – tick the statements that apply to you.

- ☐ Do I eat while standing up?
- ☐ Do I eat while driving?
- ☐ Do I stand in front of the fridge or cupboard and eat?
- ☐ Do I graze on food?
- ☐ Do I eat while I am working at my desk?
- ☐ Do I eat while I watch TV?
- ☐ Do I eat and read a book at the same time?
- ☐ Do I eat while I am talking on the phone?
- ☐ Do I not even realise I am eating because I am so distracted by something else?
- ☐ Do I eat while I am reading the newspaper?
- ☐ Do I eat while I am preparing a meal?
- ☐ Am I so busy that I feel as if I am always eating on the run?

Mindless eating is common in today's fast-paced world and can lead to eating more than your body needs. Modern technology can make this worse, as eating while using phones, watching television, or scrolling through social media can distract us from recognising when we are hungry, satisfied, or full. Practising mindful eating means giving your full attention to your food and limiting distractions while eating.

Mindful locations

Carefully think about where most of your mindless eating takes place and write down your thoughts.

Consider the environments where you are the most vulnerable, for example at work, around the refrigerator, while watching TV, in restaurants. Write down your thoughts.

Write about the environments that are most helpful, for example, eating with health-conscious friends, sitting down at your table, eating in the morning.

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Stress management

You cannot get rid of all the stress in your life. A little bit of stress adds some excitement and “get-up-and-go” to our lives, without it, life could be boring. Besides, certain events that are stressful can also be positive. It is when you cannot cope with it that stress becomes negative.

What are your **top three stressors**, both positive and negative? (An example of a positive stressor may be planning a wedding.)

1.
2.
3.

What are your healthy coping mechanisms?

Planning a daily or weekly 'declutter' can help to manage stress. Take note of what you were grateful for daily, brain dump, or journal any thoughts, or add in a 'letting go cue', such as "I've done enough for the day, time to rest".

What are your unhealthy coping mechanisms?

Putting it into perspective

Think of the most stressful event you have experienced. Now, if you think about your current stress level, how does it compare to your most stressful event?

How did you cope with the previous stressor? If that coping mechanism was helpful, could you take a similar approach in this circumstance?

Many people experience emotional eating or mindless eating. This becomes more challenging when it gets in the way of managing our health or becomes our main way of coping with difficult feelings. Over time, repeatedly turning to food can create a "default pathway" in the brain, making it easier to automatically reach for food even when it isn't what we truly need.

Adding a deliberate pause when we feel stressed or triggered can help break this cycle. Simple strategies - like writing down our thoughts, using a stress-management app, talking to someone we trust, or stepping outside for fresh air - can give us space to choose a different response before eating.

It also helps to tune in to our body's natural hunger and fullness signals. Using tools such as a 1–10 fullness scale, alongside intuitive or mindful eating, can reduce unnecessary snacking and prevent overeating at mealtimes. We will cover this in more detail in **Yellow Week**.

Building activity into your daily life

Building small activities into daily life is important because they make healthy habits more realistic, sustainable, and accessible for everyone. Not everyone has the time, energy, or confidence to commit to long exercise sessions or major lifestyle changes. Small actions, such as taking the stairs, stretching while the kettle boils, going for a short walk, or standing up regularly, can be easily woven into existing routines without adding pressure.

These small activities add up over time. Even brief moments of movement can improve physical health by supporting joint mobility, muscle strength, circulation, and balance. They also help reduce long periods of sitting, which is linked to poorer health outcomes. From a mental wellbeing perspective, small activities can boost mood, reduce stress, and increase energy.

Activity	Calories used	
	Per minute	Per half hour
Gardening		
Weeding	5	150
Digging	8	240
Mowing lawn	7.3	220
Walking		
Slowly	3.3	100
Uphill	4.6	140
Briskly	5.6	170
Half walk/half jog	7.1	215
Jogging		
Slow	6.6	260
Fast	11.6	350
Skiping	9.6	290
Cycling		
5mph (slow)	5	150
12mph (fast)	12	360

Yellow Week

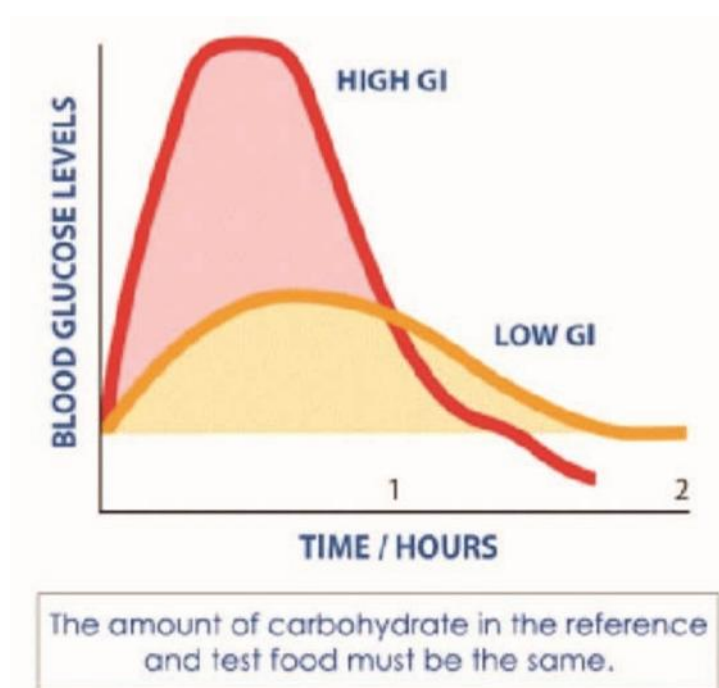
Carbohydrates and glycaemic index

Carbohydrates are found in foods such as bread, pasta, rice, potatoes, fruit, milk, yogurt, and many plant-based foods, and they are the body's preferred source of fuel, especially for the brain and muscles. Some people may benefit from reducing their carbohydrate intake.

Approaches such as the Mediterranean diet, which is a moderate carb-restriction, can be particularly helpful for individuals with insulin resistance, including those with pre-diabetes, type 2 diabetes, or Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS). Regardless of the chosen dietary pattern, prioritising high-fibre, minimally processed carbohydrate foods supports bowel health, heart health, satiety, and overall nutrition quality.

The glycaemic index (GI) refers to how quickly carbohydrates are digested and absorbed into your bloodstream. Carbohydrate foods that breakdown quickly during digestion release glucose into the bloodstream very quickly and have a high glycaemic index. Carbohydrate foods that breakdown slowly during digestion release glucose into the bloodstream more slowly and have a lower glycaemic index. Whether a food is raw or well-cooked will affect its GI as well as whether you are eating mixed-meals, and whether a food has been mashed or is in whole form.

Low GI diets can help with better weight outcomes, and in turn improve insulin sensitivity. Eating foods that digest slowly can reduce hunger between meals, preventing the need to snack and susceptibility to “crashes” of low blood sugar. Try to make low GI and high fibre foods a regular part of your daily food choices.



This image illustrates the blood glucose response of a high and a low GI food.

Examples of low GI foods

- **Fruit:** Such as apples, pears, grapes, oranges, grapefruit, berries, banana, peaches, kiwi, prune, plums.
- **Vegetables:** Most vegetables.
- **Cereals:** Oats and oat products.
- **Breads:** Wholegrain such as pumpernickel, soya, and linseed and sourdough rye.
- **Legumes:** Baked beans, kidney beans, and soya beans.
- **Grains:** Pasta, barley, bulgur wheat, wild rice, buckwheat, quinoa.
- **Dairy foods:** Milk, yoghurt, custard

Easy ways to eat the low GI way

- Alternate regular potatoes with yam/sweet potato, sweetcorn, or corn on the cob.
- Enjoy all fruits in sensible amounts. Berries such as blueberries, raspberries, and strawberries are especially low on the GI scale.
- Eat bread with the grainy bits. Try breads such as granary, sourdough, stone ground, and pumpernickel.
- Enjoy old-fashioned oats.
- Try other grains such as bulgur wheat, quinoa, wild rice and wheat kernels instead of rice.
- Make pulses a regular feature of your diet.
- Add pulses to soups, stews and salads. Dried roasted chickpeas is a good snack.
- Low fat dairy foods are a good source of calcium and protein.

What affects a food's GI?

1. Type of starch – Some starches digest more slowly. Foods like basmati rice, pasta and oats tend to have a lower GI because their starch is less “swollen” and breaks down more slowly.
2. Texture and structure – Foods with a firm or fibrous outer layer take longer to digest. Examples include beans, lentils, wholegrain bread and barley. Raw versions of foods also tend to have a lower GI.
3. Type of fibre – Soluble fibre forms a gel in the gut and slows digestion. Oats, beans, lentils and many fruits contain this type of fibre.
4. Fat content – Fat slows stomach emptying and slows down digestion. However, high-fat foods should be eaten in moderation, especially if weight loss is a goal.

Mindful eating

Sometimes letting go actually means having control.

The reason we cover mindful eating is that eating, like brushing your teeth or driving a car, doesn't require much conscious thought. There will be many times when you are not mentally present at the table during mealtimes, as other thoughts take over. When you don't consciously think about what you eat, when you eat and how much you eat, you can easily develop unhealthy habits around eating.

Assessment of thoughts – tick the statements that apply to you.

- ☐ There are times when I am not aware of what I am feeling or doing. I sometimes feel like a robot just going through the motions.
- ☐ I sometimes make unnecessary mistakes because I am not paying attention.
- ☐ I am focused on just getting there. I walk or drive where I need to get to without really noticing the scenery.
- ☐ I am not listening very closely when other people are talking.
- ☐ I graze on food.
- ☐ I often eat more than I wanted to or just don't listen to what my body needs.
- ☐ I don't pay attention to the taste of food.
- ☐ I often don't notice how food smells.
- ☐ I have some routines or habits regarding the way I eat.
- ☐ I try to ignore my hunger until I am famished or try to skip meals.
- ☐ I dwell a lot on the past.
- ☐ I think a lot about the future and as a result sometimes don't enjoy what I am doing right now.
- ☐ Sometimes I forget whether I have completed a routine task because I do them so mindlessly.

You can read more in the 'Preventing unplanned eating' chapter of **White Week** and 'Being in the moment' chapter of **Blue Week**.

Cravings often arise suddenly and feel urgent, which is often related to emotional hunger – and stems from feelings rather than physical need, making certain foods seem especially comforting.

Physical hunger	Emotional hunger	Sensory hunger
Builds gradually	Develops suddenly	Eyes (sight of food)
Strikes below the neck	Above the neck	Nose (smell of food)
Occurs several hours after a meal	Unrelated to time	Tongue (taste of food)
Goes away when full	Persists despite fullness	Touch (mouth feel of food)
Eating leads to feeling of satisfaction	Eating leads to guilt and shame	Sound (noise of eating, noise present when eating)

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) teaches us that emotional or mindless eating often begins with a trigger - this might be something in our environment, like seeing food; an emotional shift, such as feeling upset, low, or even happy; a mental prompt, like thinking about food; or a biological cue, such as hunger or cravings. Each trigger sets off a chain: a thought, then a feeling, and finally a behaviour or action.

The first step in changing this cycle is learning to identify our unhelpful or sabotaging thoughts and the feelings that accompany them, as these are what make it difficult to resist any kind of trigger. Once we become more aware of these patterns, mindful eating naturally follows, helping us to slow down, reconnect with the present moment, and make choices that align more closely with our true physical needs rather than automatic habits.

Thought: I haven't lost any weight

Feeling: Disappointed

Behaviour: Comfort eat

Turn this into a positive:

Thought: I may not have lost weight this week, I haven't gained either

Feeling: Positive

Behaviour: Carry on with lifestyle and dietary changes

Studies show that when people work on how they think about food and weight, they are more successful with losing weight and keeping it off. Mindful eating can also help by reducing binge eating, lowering cravings, addressing emotional eating, and worries about body image. Mindful eating can lead to healthier eating habits and to a more positive relationship with food.

The three main steps to mindful eating

1. Think about the physical characteristics of the food

Pay close attention to your senses. Notice how the food tastes. Think of the texture, temperature and smell. Ask yourself, "How does it really taste? What does it feel like in my mouth? Is this something I really want? Does it satisfy my taste buds? Is my mind truly present when I take a bite?" Focus on what is in front of you

2. Think about repetitive habits and the process of eating

Notice how you eat. Pay attention to when you are eating while on autopilot. In autopilot mode, you are more likely to act out of habit: eat a snack at the same time each day, multitask while you eat, or eat the same foods repeatedly. Ask yourself, "Is there something I do repeatedly that lends itself to mindless eating? Do I have ingrained habits concerning how I snack?" Ask yourself - do you eat too quickly or rush and gulp your food?

3. Think about mindless eating triggers

Be aware of what prompts you to start and stop eating. Is your kitchen a hot spot for snacking? Does a hard day lead to a food binge? Become an expert on the things that make you eat when you are not physically hungry. When you know your triggers, you can anticipate them before they happen and make better choices. Ask yourself, "What am I feeling? Am I physically or emotionally hungry? Is my environment, emotional state, or dining companion helping or hindering my efforts to eat mindfully?"

Grounding practices

Here are three quick ways to become more mindful.

- The 5-4-3-2-1 technique:
 - 5 things you can see,
 - 4 things you can touch,
 - 3 things you can hear,
 - 2 things you can smell,
 - 1 thing you can taste
- Go outside and smell or feel nature.
- Set daily intentions on your phone or in a journal.

Improving your relationship with food

Improving your relationship with food takes time, kindness, and understanding.

These simple strategies can help:

- **Notice your triggers** – Emotional eating often comes from stress, boredom or difficult feelings. A short diary of what you feel before and after eating can help you spot patterns. You can find a template on page 5.
- **Take the guilt out of food** – Try not to label foods as “good” or “bad.” All foods can fit into a balanced lifestyle without shame.
- **Eat mindfully** – Pause and ask, “Am I hungry?”. When you eat, slow down, avoid distractions, and focus on the taste and how your body feels.
- **Be kind to yourself** – Setbacks happen. Talk to yourself gently.
- **Eat regular meals** – Having consistent meals with protein, fibre and healthy fats helps keep you full and reduces urges to overeat.
- **Ride out urges** – If you feel like eating when you’re not hungry, have a glass of water and wait 15–30 minutes or try another activity.
- **Look after your sleep and alcohol intake** – Poor sleep and alcohol can make cravings and emotional eating stronger.
- **Build other coping tools** – Try journaling, breathing exercises, movement, or talking to someone instead of turning to food for comfort.
- **Do things you enjoy** – Activities that bring joy, purpose and connection can reduce the pull toward emotional eating.
- **Get support if you need it** – Therapists trained in CBT can be very helpful. You don’t have to manage this alone.

Everyday ways to keep fit

Evidence is emerging that sedentary behaviour, such as sitting or lying down for long periods, is bad for your health. People who do regular activity have a lower risk of many chronic diseases, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke and some cancers.

Adults (19-64) should do at least 150 minutes moderate intensity or 75 mins vigorous intensity per week (or a combination). Build strength on at least 2 days per week. Minimise sedentary activity and for older adults improve balance.

Reducing sedentary time

- Get up to change the channel on the TV, video, or stereo.
- Take activity breaks during commercials.
- Try simple stretching and toning exercises when watching TV.
- Limit time sitting watching TV to 1-2 hours/day.
- Use the stairs instead of lifts and escalators.
- Take several trips up the stairs rather than piling things on the stairs to do one trip.
- Walk for all journeys less than 1 mile (e.g. to the shops).
- Take the dog(s) for a walk.
- Take a 15-minute lunchtime walk (this can also reduce hunger, depression, and anxiety).
- Visit people's desks at work rather than e-mailing/phoning.
- Park a few streets away or further back in the car park, or get off the bus a stop early.
- Cycle to work or when visiting friends.
- Do your own gardening.

How can we increase formal exercise levels?

The important thing to remember is that people who are good at maintaining weight loss do on average an hour of moderate activity per day, and that the main form of exercise they do is walking. 60 minutes can be broken down into 10–15-minute slots.

Moderate: you should be able to talk whilst taking part in the activity. If unable to, then ease back, if you can walk and sing then you may need to increase your effort a little more.

Aims

- Monitor your progress using a pedometer or online trackers such as Strava or StepUp.
- Majority of people aim to walk 3-4000 steps/day.
- Log number of steps in a diary.
- Small goals e.g. increase by 500-1000 steps/day.
- Aim for 10 000 steps/day in the long-term (as able).
- Stay well hydrated.
- Join groups, e.g., walking groups.

Pink Week

Motivation: How to find or keep it

When you're trying to improve your health or lose weight, it can help to imagine your life six months from now (both if you make a change and if you don't).

Picture how your body might feel with more energy, mobility, confidence, and ease if you commit to small, steady habits today. Then contrast that with how things may stay the same - or even become more difficult - if nothing shifts.

Keeping this "future you" in mind can provide a powerful sense of purpose, reminding you that the choices you make now are shaping the version of yourself you'll meet in half a year.

	Pros	Cons
No change	• No effort	• No weight loss/possible gains • Energy levels low • Poor mood • No change in health
Change (Activity, food, and/or behaviour change)	• Possible health benefit • Weight stable/weight loss • Better sleep • Less stress	• Regular effort, e.g. meal and activity plans • Benefit may take time to see

Plateaus

Research shows that weight-loss plateaus typically appear after at least six months of consistent weight loss. A common pattern is steady progress for several months, followed by a period where weight loss slows or stops, and then weight regain often occurs. This usually happens because people lose motivation and feel their efforts are no longer working.

To break this cycle, it helps to understand why plateaus happen and what to expect when you reach one. A true plateau is when your weight stops changing after a long period of steady loss, despite continuing to eat healthily and move more. If you are only a few weeks into your journey and not losing weight, something else is likely going on.

Your daily energy output comes from four areas:

1. **BMR (Basal Metabolic Rate):** As you lose weight, you become lighter, so your body needs less energy each day simply to function.
2. **Thermic effect of food:** Eating less means your body uses less energy to digest food.
3. **EAT (Exercise Activity Thermogenesis):** When you weigh less, the same exercise burns fewer calories. As fitness improves, your body also becomes more efficient, further lowering energy burn.
4. **NEAT (Non-Exercise Activity Thermogenesis):** When eating fewer calories, people tend to unconsciously move less, reducing daily activity levels.

Altogether, these changes can mean that what was previously a calorie deficit may now be close to your maintenance level - so weight loss stalls.

To move past a plateau, remember Einstein's quote: "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results". If you've hit a plateau, your old approach may no longer work. Something needs to change – and the key is figuring out what.

Strategies to overcome a plateau

- **Keep an accurate food diary:** Track your intake carefully. Use kitchen scales and apps like NutraCheck to help.
- **Build lean muscle mass:** Resistance training, such as weight-lifting, increases BMR.
- **Eat more protein:** Protein is filling and has the highest thermic effect of all macronutrients. Tracking protein can help you reach your daily target.
- **Increase fibre:** Fibre supports appetite control and gut health. Slowly increase intake from 3–4 g per day up to about 30 g to avoid bloating or bowel discomfort.
- **Move more to increase NEAT:** Walk more, take the stairs, stand in meetings, and break up long periods of sitting.
- **Add variety to your exercise routine:** Rotate your workouts every 6–8 weeks to keep progressing and maintain metabolic demand.
- **Manage stress:** High cortisol can make weight loss harder. Mindfulness, stress-management techniques, and good-quality sleep all support better outcomes.
- **Take a break from losing weight:** Briefly increasing calories can help restore energy output and reduce stress on the body. A gradual "reverse-dieting" approach – adding 50–100 calories each week while monitoring weight - can support long-term success.

Protein

Protein is found in many foods, but is especially high in meat, poultry, eggs, fish, pulses, dairy foods, and nuts. These foods are essential for good health, helping to maintain muscle mass, and to support growth and repair. Aim to include 2 to 3 portions of protein-rich foods each day. Protein can also support weight management, as it helps you feel fuller for longer.

Red meat is a particularly rich source of iron, which helps keep our blood healthy. However, red meat can also be higher in fat, especially saturated fat, so it is best to choose leaner cuts where possible.

It is recommended that you eat at least two portions of fish each week, including one portion of oily fish. Oily fish is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which are beneficial for heart health. Examples of oily fish include salmon, mackerel, pilchards, sardines, and anchovies.

Protein portions:

- The palm of your hand (140g) for white and oily fish
- A deck of cards (90g) for cooked meat
- Two-three medium eggs (150g)
- Four tablespoons (150g) of pulses, beans, tofu and plant-based meats
- One cupped handful (30g) of nuts or nut butter

A diet that includes a moderate number of low-fat sources of protein can help you lose weight, as protein helps to keep you feel fuller for longer. We also need adequate protein intake to protect our muscles when losing weight. However, eating an excess of protein can affect your health which includes but is not limited to:

- **Kidney disease:** Consuming too much protein can put a strain on the kidneys if they are damaged.
- **Cholesterol:** Saturated fat in red meat and processed meats has been linked to an elevated risk of cardiovascular disease due to raising levels of bad cholesterol in our blood.
- **Bones and kidney stones:** High protein diets have also been shown to cause people to excrete more calcium than normal in their urine. Over a prolonged period, this can increase a person's risk of kidney stones.
- **Cancer:** One of the reasons high protein diets increase the risks of certain health problems is because of the avoidance of carbohydrate-containing foods and the vitamins, minerals, fibre and antioxidants they contain. It is therefore important to obtain your protein from a diet rich in whole grains, fruit and vegetables. Not only are your protein needs being met, but you are also helping to reduce your risk of developing cancer.
- **Ketosis:** Prolonged very low carbohydrate diets can cause your body to go into a metabolic state called ketosis, where your body burns fat instead of glucose for energy. Staying in ketosis for long periods can have side effects such as reduced appetite, nausea, and bad breath. In some cases, eating excessive amounts of protein alongside a very low-carb diet can also put extra strain on the kidneys and may be unsuitable for certain health conditions.

Mindful eating: Inviting success

Assessment of thoughts – tick the statements that apply to you.

- ☐ I keep foods that trigger significant mindless eating nearby or in easy access, e.g. my car or desk.
- ☐ I buy a variety of snack foods, e.g. crisps, biscuits, nuts.
- ☐ I put all serving dishes on the table when I eat.
- ☐ I own a biscuit tin or sweet jar.
- ☐ My friends and family are mindless eaters.
- ☐ My culture focuses a lot on eating.
- ☐ I find myself having cravings when I see pictures of good food on magazines or on TV.
- ☐ I eat the same amount of food and at the same pace as my dining companion.
- ☐ I eat my children's leftovers.
- ☐ I tend to automatically have second helpings.
- ☐ I always clean my plate.
- ☐ I feel the urge to eat the entire serving, whether it is a bag, box or a bowl.
- ☐ I buy food packaged in large packaging e.g. breakfast cereals, pasta, crisps.
- ☐ I always buy products that are on special offer even if I don't need them.
- ☐ My plates and cereal bowls are large.

This session draws your awareness to your surroundings to see if they are derailing you from mindful eating. You'll look at how your access to food affects the way you eat, becoming more aware of how the environment may encourage unconscious eating.

It will help you to set up the environments within your home and at work so you can eat in a mindful way, inviting success. Mindless eating is about how you react to the cues in your environment.

Fact: Foods kept in plain view are much more likely to be eaten than those kept out of sight.

Solution: Hide snack foods and keep healthy foods in sight.

Fact: The closer in reach the food, the more likely you are to eat it.

Solution: Do not keep snack foods within arm's reach, or pre-portion snack foods to prevent over-eating.

Fact: The more choices, the more you eat.

Solution: Limit your choice of less healthy foods.

The mindful pantry

How does the type of food you buy influence your mindless eating?

What do you imagine a more mindful cupboard or fridge to look like?

Mindful shopping

Carefully think about your trip to the supermarket. What is your buying strategy?

How can you make your shopping trip a more mindful experience?

Do you make a list? What do you typically have on your list?

Addressing barriers to physical activity

Adults should do at **least 150 minutes moderate intensity or 75 minutes vigorous intensity per week (or a combination)**. Build strength on at least 2 days per week to protect against muscle loss, especially as you lose weight. Minimise sedentary activity and, for older adults, improve balance.

Barriers to exercise can include lack of time, low motivation, fatigue, health conditions, and limited access to safe or affordable facilities. Work, caring responsibilities, pain, disability, or fear of injury can make physical activity feel difficult or unmanageable.

When these barriers prevent regular exercise, people may experience reduced physical fitness, weaker muscles and bones, lower energy levels, and poorer mental health, including increased stress or low mood. Over time, inactivity can also increase the risk of long-term conditions.

What's your barrier?

Solutions may include:

- make time by getting up earlier
- 'protect' your planned activity like a doctor's appointment
- keep a diary – set goals
- choose activities you like
- choose activities that fit into your daily routine and make it purposeful, e.g., gardening
- start gently and pace yourself
- set realistic goals
- build up to moderate intensity activity
- reduce periods of sedentary activity
- share activities with a friend
- stay safe (speak to GP as required)
- memory joggers to make it to the door instead of collapsing in front of the TV (e.g., walking shoes by door, a notice on the sofa, or an exercise record on fridge door)

Look at **Yellow Week's** 'Everyday ways to keep fit' chapter for more ideas on how to increase activity levels around the home or workplace.

Results in a month could include being less out of breath, so more able to keep up with others, feeling firmer and more toned, improved mood and sleep, and sped-up weight loss.

My plan to get more active and stay more active

The type of activity I have enjoyed in the past:

The type of activity that I want to get involved in or do more of:

Personal resource

My main motivations for getting more active are:

The negative automatic thoughts (NATS) I often have about being active are:

I could deal with the NATS by using these strategies:

To believe that I can get more active, I need to remember:

Social resource

The people who I would ask to support me to increase my activity are:

If I am struggling or try to decrease my activity I will talk to:

Environmental resources

What I need to get going is:

My SMART goal for this month is:

Green Week

Fruit and vegetables

Fruit and vegetables are a source of vitamins, minerals and fibre which may help reduce the risk of diseases like heart disease and some cancers. We all know it is important for us to eat a variety of at least five portions of fruit and vegetables each day, but some may struggle to achieve this. Here are some ideas on how to improve your intake:

Start with one produce item at every meal

- Breakfast: add berries, banana slices, or a handful of spinach to eggs.
- Lunch: add salad leaves, cherry tomatoes, grated carrot, or sliced cucumber.
- Dinner: add a side veg like green beans, courgette, broccoli, or roasted peppers.

Use “easy add-ins”

These take less than 30 seconds.

- A handful of frozen peas or spinach thrown into pasta, rice, soups.
- A spoon of salsa, hummus, or chopped veg mixed into sandwiches or wraps.
- Pre-cut fruit (apple slices, grapes, melon) added to yoghurt or oats.
- Frozen and tinned count too—plus they are cost-effective.

Snacks are a win

Swap or pair usual snacks with produce:

- Veg sticks + dip (carrot, cucumber, pepper).
- A small fruit + handful of nuts.
- Rice cakes with avocado or tomato slices.

Build veg into main dishes

A great trick for people who don't love side veg.

- Add grated carrot or courgette to mince dishes.
- Top curries, pasta, chilli with spinach.
- Add roasted vegetables to grain bowls, couscous, or salads.

Convenience is your friend

For busy days:

- Prewashed salad bags
- Steam-in-bag veg
- Microwavable edamame beans
- Frozen fruit for breakfast

Make fruit visible and ready to eat

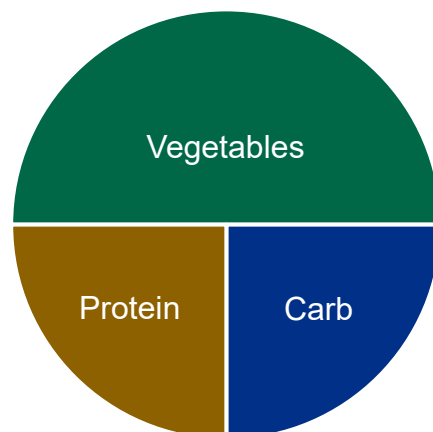
People eat more produce when it's washed, cut, and at eye level. A bowl of ready-to-eat fruit on the counter can boost intake by 2–3 servings per week.

Go for “half plate veg” at dinner

An easy visual rule (as per the graphic):

- ½ plate veg (at least two kinds)
- ¼ plate protein (fish, eggs, meat, beans, lentils)
- ¼ plate whole grain carbohydrate (potato, pasta)

(Plus, fruit and dairy, such as yoghurt.)



Volumetrics

The body and brain do not respond to energy (calories) in the way we might expect. Instead, they are influenced by the volume and weight of the food and drink we consume. To support weight loss, try choosing foods that provide a larger portion for less energy, as these are often more filling. For example, a whole strawberry is low in energy density and provides much greater volume than strawberry jam, which is high in energy density.

Energy density is the number of calories in a specified amount of food. Some foods especially fats are very energy dense. They have a lot of calories packed into a small size. If you eat foods with a high energy density, you rack up calories quickly. If you eat less energy dense foods, you can eat more and get fewer calories.

Low in energy	Medium	High in energy
• Fruit • Vegetables	• Lean meat and fish and pulses • Most potatoes and cereals • Low fat dairy foods such as skimmed milk and low-fat yoghurt	• Cheese and other full fat dairy products • Chocolate, crisps, and nuts • Pastries and fried products • Oils and spreads

Mindful eating: Judgemental thoughts

Assessment of thoughts – tick the statements that apply to you.

- ☐ I get mad at myself for worrying about eating so much.
- ☐ I label myself as bad when I eat mindlessly.
- ☐ I don't like to eat with other people because they may judge me or my body.
- ☐ I eat mindlessly when I am emotional.
- ☐ I feel fat and often label myself with this word.
- ☐ Guilt rules my decisions about what to eat or not eat.
- ☐ I get competitive or jealous of other people's bodies.
- ☐ My thoughts are often judgemental.

What is a non-judgemental attitude?

A non-judgemental attitude is one of the key elements of mindfulness and mindful eating. It means noticing things as they are, without adding criticism, labels, or value judgements.

We all judge many aspects of our lives, and eating is no exception. You might find yourself thinking, “I ate bad food,” “I’m such a failure,” or “I’ve ruined my diet again.” These thoughts can feel automatic, but they don’t reflect the full picture. When you practice a non-judgemental mindset, you separate your reaction from the event itself. This helps you see that your thoughts and feelings - especially around food - are not always accurate or helpful.

Mindless or automatic thinking patterns can influence what we eat without us realising it. The first step in changing this is simply recognising when these thoughts arise. Take a moment to notice the unhelpful patterns you tend to fall into.

When a mindless or judgemental thought appears, try saying to yourself, “This is an unhelpful thought, and it’s influencing my eating choices.” Then gently ask, “What would a more mindful, balanced thought be?” This small pause can help you choose how you respond rather than reacting on autopilot.

A thought diary can also be a useful tool. It allows you to explore your reactions to triggers - especially during times of stress, anxiety, or low mood. Writing your thoughts down helps your mind process them instead of pushing them away, which can reduce the urge to eat in response.

Let's explore some common thinking patterns in more detail:

All or nothing thinking

Does not allow any room for considering the middle ground. For example: "I am totally in control" or "I am completely out of control," "I am attractive" or "I'm ugly", "I am perfect" or "I am a failure".

A mindful thought: I may not be happy with every aspect of my eating habits, but I am not always eating mindlessly and out of control. I can eat mindful portions on a good day.

Worst-case scenario thinking

Is the overgeneralization of the potential outcome of the situation, "If I eat this brownie, I will gain five pounds".

A mindful thought: I will not gain five pounds from one brownie. I am striving to eat in moderation to help me feel better about myself. My body does not define my worth or my character. I choose to see myself with curiosity and kindness, not through limiting or harmful assumptions.

Overstating the facts

Involves making sweeping statements that use one rule and apply it to several situations, such as being overweight means you are lazy.

A mindful thought: Being overweight does not imply anything about my personality.

Overdoing it

Involves having thoughts that overemphasize the importance or relevance in the situation, such as "Everyone is looking at my body".

A mindful thought: "I am exaggerating. I am projecting my fears and judgements onto other people".

Notice the thinking pattern you're using and how strongly you're reacting to the trigger. Then ask yourself how you might view this same situation later today or next week. How might someone else see it?

Finally, decide whether the trigger is something you can change or influence - or whether it's outside your control, in which case you may choose to change how you respond to it instead.

The components of physical activity

Regular physical activity is beneficial for everyone. Combining regular physical activity with healthy eating can help you reach and maintain a healthy weight.

Research shows that people who keep weight off in the long term usually stay active as part of their daily routine. Being more active can also boost your energy levels, reduce stress, and generally, feel better about themselves.

Benefits of exercise can include:

- burning off calories, helping weight loss
- developing and toning muscle more
- greater stamina
- lower risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and osteoporosis
- improved physical strength and flexibility
- improved posture
- increased feeling of wellbeing
- improved sleep
- increased confidence
- reduced depression and anxiety
- combatting stress

If you have not been active for some time check with your doctor before starting an exercise programme. It is important that you start exercising gently and gradually build up your activities.

Moderate activity lasting for 5 - 10 minutes twice a day is a good start. Try to incorporate some resistance exercises twice weekly as well as cardio exercises into your regime.

Benefits of muscle and bone strengthening at different ages:

- 18 to 24 years: helps to maximise bone and muscle gains
- 40 to 50 years: helps to maintain strength and slow the natural decline in muscle mass and bone density
- Over 65 years: helps to preserve strength and independence

Small changes are beneficial; Try walking short distances instead of using the car, park your car further away from the entrance to a building, use the stairs instead of the lift.

Remember **FITT**:

Frequency	How often should I do physical activity? • 4-6 times a week • Do not skip more than 2 days in a row • Begin your physical activity programme by exercising every other day and increasing frequency as tolerated
Intensity	How hard to exert yourself during physical activity? The talk test is a simple way to measure relative intensity. As a rule of thumb, if you're doing moderate-intensity activity, you can talk but not sing during the activity. If you're vigorous-intensity activity, you will not be able to say more than a few words without pausing for a breath.
Time	How long to spend on physical activity? • 20-30 minutes to strengthen the heart, lungs, bone, muscle, joints. • 40 minutes or longer for a greater reduction in body fat. • Begin with a tolerable length of time for your body and increase the length of your activity periods by 1-5 minutes a week until you have reached your goal.
Type	What type of activity? • Choose an activity that you will be able to do for the correct amount of time. • Choose an activity that you like to do - you will be more likely to do it.

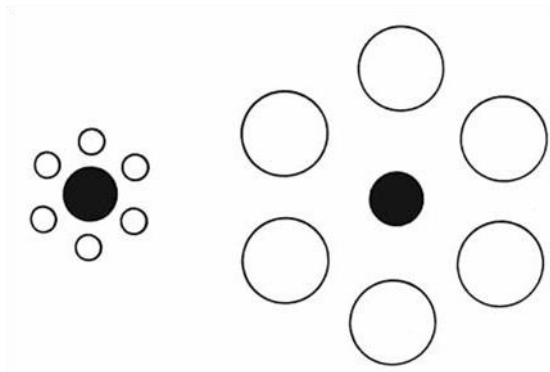
Purple Week

Portion distortion

Assessment of thoughts – tick the statements that apply to you.

- ☐ I put all serving dishes on the table when I eat.
- ☐ I eat the same amount of food and at the same pace as my dining companion.
- ☐ I tend to automatically have second helpings.
- ☐ I feel the urge to eat the entire serving, whether it is a bag, box or a bowl.
- ☐ I buy food packaged in large packaging e.g. breakfast cereals, pasta & crisps.
- ☐ My plates and cereal bowls are large.
- ☐ I buy foods that are labelled 'light' or 'lite'.
- ☐ I buy foods that are labelled 'no added sugar'.

Which black dot is bigger?



Plate, bowl and glass sizes affect portion control. Smaller plate sizes make portions look bigger. Smaller plates and bowls and taller and narrower glasses can aid us in controlling the size of our portions.

Fact: The larger your plate, the more you eat – even up to 25% more.

Solution: Use small plates and bowls.

Fact: Foods packaged in large package sizes prompts you to eat/prepare more foods.

Solution: Buy smaller packages especially snack foods or decant into smaller packets.

Over the last 30 years, portion sizes have increased largely due to food industry marketing, the perception of 'value for money', wider availability of cheap energy-dense foods, and changing social norms that have distorted perceptions of what a normal portion looks like. Larger plates, packaging, and restaurant servings encourage people to rely on external cues rather than hunger and fullness when eating.

At the same time, many food manufacturers have adopted a practice known as "shrinkflation", where the size or weight of a product is reduced while the price remains the same or increases. Although this can result in smaller portions of some packaged foods, it may go unnoticed by consumers and can make it harder to judge value for money. Comparing unit prices (such as cost per 100g) and checking pack weights can help consumers make more informed purchasing decisions.



Coffee

A standard cup of coffee 30 years ago was 220ml and had 45 calories. Coffees today can include chocolate and/or whipped cream.

How many calories do you think are in today's coffee?

120 200 300



Biscuits

A standard chocolate biscuit 30 years ago was 10g and had 53 calories. A chocolate biscuit today is 85g.

How many calories do you think are in today's cookies?

250 370 520



Popcorn

A standard bag of popcorn 30 years ago was 60g and had 290 calories. A bag of plain popcorn today is around 260g.

How many calories do you think are in today's popcorn bags?

700 1200 1500



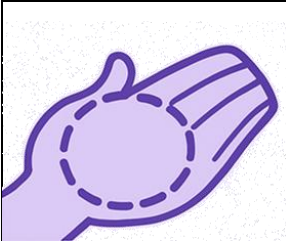
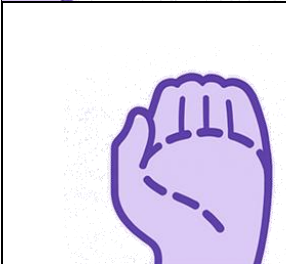
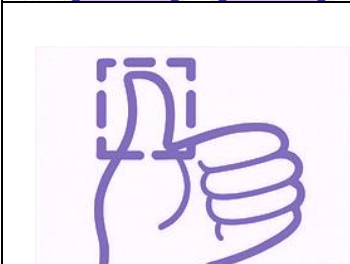
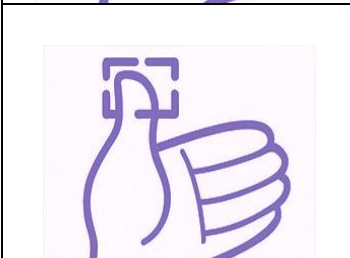
Fish and Chips

A standard portion of fish and chips 30 years ago was 350g and had 650 calories. Today an average portion is around 600g.

How many calories do you think are in today's portion?

1165 1390 1520

Portion size guidelines

	Clenched fist (1 cup) Carbohydrate (cooked pap, rice, samp, pasta, potato, fruit)
	Palm of hand Meat, fish, chicken
	Cupped handful Nuts and raisins
	Two cupped hands Fruit and vegetables
	Thumb Peanut butter or hard cheese
	Tip of thumb (1 teaspoon) Oil, mayonnaise, butter, margarine

Food labelling

What should you look for when you are shopping?

When you read a food label, you should look at:

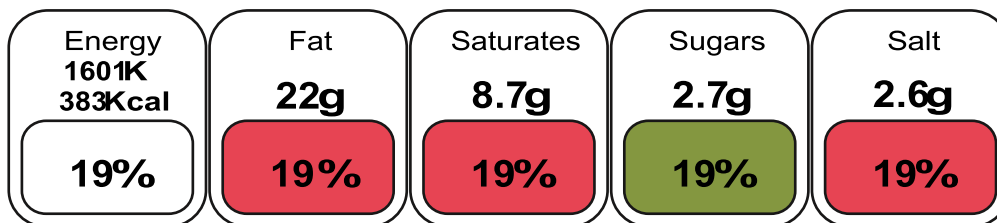
- the total amount of calories and fat in foods (this will be in both kilocalories (kcal) and kilojoules (kj))
- how much fat (particularly saturated fat) it contains
- how much salt it contains (this will be shown as salt and no longer as sodium)
- the ingredients it contains (all the ingredients of a product are listed in descending order of weight in an ingredients list)

Reference intakes (previously guideline daily amounts)

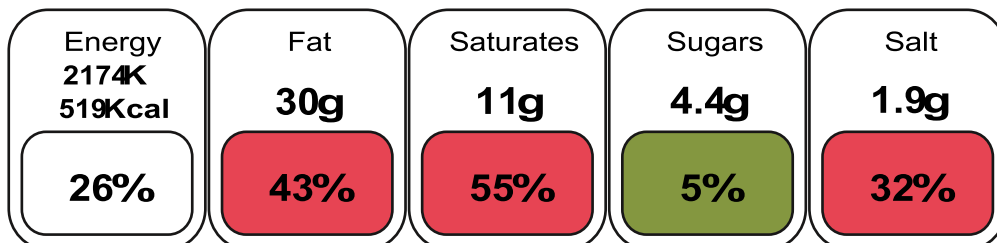
Most packaged foods include nutritional information on the label. This must be shown per 100g of the product and may also be provided per portion or as a percentage of the reference intake, which is based on a 2,000-calorie, low-fat dietary approach for the average adult.

The nutrition information shown on the front of a food package is usually based on a specific portion of the product, which will be stated clearly beside the label, for example, “per ½ pizza” (although you may eat more or less than this!). These front-of-pack labels (or “traffic-light labels”) are helpful for quickly checking or comparing, between products. However, it’s also important to look at the full nutrition label on the back of the packaging to see the total carbohydrate content, as this is not included in the front-of-pack summary.

These are examples of what you might see on a pepperoni pizza:



Of an adults reference intake
Typical values (as sold) per 100g Energy 1322KJ/316Kcal



Of an adults reference intake
Typical values (as sold) per 100g Energy 1322KJ/316Kcal

The colour coding is a UK wide government scheme for food and drink:

Per 100g	Low	Medium	High
Sugars	5g or less	5.1g – 15g	More than 15g
Fat	3g or less	3.1g – 20g	More than 20g
Saturates	1.5g or less	1.6 – 5g	More than 5g
Salt	0.30g or less	0.3g – 1.5g	More than 1.5g

Using “traffic-light labels” can help you make healthier choices. Where possible, opt for foods with more green and amber labels and fewer red labels.

Food-scanner apps can help make food labels easier to understand when shopping.

Apps like Open Food Facts and Yuka let you scan a barcode to see simplified nutrition information, highlight high levels of salt, sugar, or saturated fat, and offer healthier alternatives. They’re a helpful guide for raising awareness, but their scoring systems may differ from official UK advice – so they work best alongside UK guidance and packing information.

Food labels often use nutrition claims like “low fat” or “no added sugar.”

Here’s what they actually mean:

- **low fat** – the product contains less than 3g of fat per 100g or 100ml, making it a lower-fat choice
- **reduced fat** – the product has at least 25% less fat than a similar standard version, but it may still contain a moderate amount of fat overall
- **less than 5% fat (or 95% fat-free)** – the food has under 5g of fat per 100g, commonly used on items like dairy or lean meats
- **no added sugar** – no sugars have been added during production; however, the food or drink can still contain naturally occurring sugars (e.g., fruit juices)
- **low sugar** – contains no more than 5g of sugar per 100g or 100ml, making it a lower-sugar option
- **reduced sugar** – has at least 25% less sugar than the standard product, though it may still contain moderate sugar levels depending on the original recipe

Mindful eating: Managing food for pleasure

What we eat can support our physical health and mental wellbeing in many ways, particularly by providing our bodies and brain with the nutrients we need to feel well, e.g., B vitamins to release the energy from our food, vitamins, minerals and protein to support our immune system and essential fatty acids for our brain to function optimally.

Food can also be a source of pleasure and happiness in life. No sustainable healthy eating plan should be without foods for pleasure but these need to be managed while we are trying to lose weight or maintain weight loss.

Strategies

- Conscious eating, savouring the food.
- Indulging less often.
- Planning foods for pleasure into your eating plan.
- Choosing lower calorie alternatives.
- Having smaller portions.
- Urge surf cravings in between planned items.
- Replacing some foods for pleasure with non-food activities that make you happy.

Looking after yourself

Stress or strong emotions can sometimes lead to mindless or emotional eating, where food is used for comfort rather than nourishment. Before you reach that point, it can help to have “exit strategies,” which are alternative actions that interrupt the cycle and support emotional regulation. Examples include:

- breathing exercises
- distraction techniques
- a quick physical ‘shake off’ of stress
- mindful eating practices
- listening to music that matches or shifts your mood
- changing your temperature - a warm drink, hot water bottle, bath, or brief cold shower to stimulate the vagus nerve
- lighting a scented candle or using soothing scents (e.g., fragrant lotions on your wrist)

You can also reflect on how you currently care for yourself. What do you already do for your mental wellbeing? Do you speak kindly to yourself? How do you look after your body?

Use this table to consider what's working, what you might want to change, and how you can plan those changes. Alongside this, remember that regular eating and good sleep are essential foundations for emotional balance.

	What do I want to do more of?	How can I plan to make this happen?
Paying attention Noticing and recognising how you are and what you need/want		
Behaviour What you do for yourself		
Self-talk How and what you say to yourself		
Body and wellbeing How and what you do to look after your body		

Balancing food for pleasure with physical activity

The table below shows the energy used in a variety of activities to balance out a snack.

50 calories	Exercise cost*
1 carton diet fruit yogurt	5 minutes swimming
1 fruit shortcake or garibaldi biscuit	5 minutes walking upstairs
1 Jaffa cake	10 minutes slow cycling
1 fig roll	13 minutes cleaning
1 ginger nut or rich tea biscuit	4 minutes walking
100 calories	Exercise cost*
1 two-finger KitKat	13 minutes swimming
3 After-Eight mints	18 minutes of brisk walking
1 packet Wotsits or Twiglets or Quavers or Skips	22 minutes of Tai Chi
1 Harvest chewy bar	20 minutes of slow walking
1 carton Fromage Frais	30 minutes of bowling
150 calories	Exercise cost*
1 bread roll or English muffin	15 minutes swimming
1 packet Hula Hoops	19 minutes of digging in garden
1 currant bun	30 minutes water aerobics
200 calories	Exercise cost*
2 slices toast (spread from allowance)	17 minutes fast jog
2 crackers with 1oz/25g cheese	28 minutes half walk/half jog
1 scone (spread from allowance)	40 minutes slow cycling
Small slice fruit cake or sponge	42 minutes water aerobics
2 treat sized chocolate bars	60 minutes of bowling

*These figures are estimates based on an 11 stone (69kg) person.

White Week

Eating out and takeaways

Eating out is and should be a sociable and enjoyable occasion. If you only eat out occasionally then enjoy it. However, when you are trying to lose weight, eating out more regularly will make your progress more difficult unless you plan your eating choices well.

Tips:

- Don't be absolutely starving when you order, as you will get more than you need.
- Check out the nutritional content and menu choices before you go.
- Choose grilled meats/fish (rather than fried) and have a carbohydrate base and fruit and/or vegetables with each meal. Limit fries, fried foods, pies, and pastries.
- Choose smaller portions – avoid 'going large' and upsizing your meal – or consider splitting portions with a friend.
- Avoid thick rich sauces or cream sauces and instead go for low fat sauces and dressings and have them served on the side.
- Avoid the extras (garlic bread, cream on dessert, etc.) and sugary drinks.
- Take your time and enjoy your meal, the company and surroundings. Aim to be the last person to finish the meal.
- Sorbets and fruit desserts may be healthier choices than most other options which are likely to be high in fat and sugar.
- Don't feel guilty about leaving food when you are full.

Alcohol

Many bottles and cans of alcoholic drinks now state how many units of alcohol are in the drink. The Alcohol by Volume (ABV) figure is the number of units of alcohol in a litre of that drink. So, you can also work out how many units of alcohol are in your drink if you multiply the volume of your drink in millilitres by the ABV% figure and then dividing the results by 1,000.

For example, a 750ml bottle of wine has 12% ABV, so:

$$750 \times 12 / 1,000 = 9 \text{ units of alcohol}$$

Alcohol is high in calories. One unit contains 10ml of alcohol which provides 56kcal. However, other ingredients such as mixers, fruit juices, sugars, etc. can add even more calories. It is easy to forget these calories and as alcohol is an appetite stimulant it can also lead to overeating.

There are now more alcohol-free and low-calorie drink options available to buy. These drinks can offer clear health benefits while still allowing people to enjoy social occasions. Alcohol-free drinks avoid the negative effects of alcohol, such as dehydration, poor sleep, and reduced concentration – making them a good option for both physical and mental wellbeing.

Low-calorie drinks, such as spirits with sugar-free mixers or lighter beer alternatives, help reduce overall calorie intake, which can support weight management and reduce the risk of long-term health conditions.

If you are drinking when out or in the home, then try these tips to keep track of your alcohol intake:

- Use a spirit measure when making cocktails.
- Try drinking only with dinner instead of throughout the evening.
- Don't feel you must finish the bottle - use a bottle stopper or save leftovers for cooking, freezing, or vinaigrettes.
- Track drinks using the MyDrinkaware app to stay within <14 units per week (adult guidelines).
- Choose smaller servings: halves instead of pints, small wine glasses, spritzers or shandies.
- Space your drinks with water or soft drinks; take water if you're dancing or try a mocktail.

	Better choices	Try to limit
Indian	• Tandoori or plain tikka dishes • Plain rice/ chapatti/ dhal	• Creamy curries, such as masala or korma • Pilau rice/ naan bread/ biryanis • Samosa/ bhajis/ pakoras
Italian	• Bread sticks/ vegetable soups • Thin crust pizzas – ask for mozzarella cheese • Tomato based sauces for pasta	• Garlic bread • Extra cheese • Fatty meats, such as pepperoni • Creamy sauces
Burgers	• Plain burgers/ grilled meats • Salads with dressings on the side	• Fries • Extra burger toppings • Shakes • Pies and doughnuts
Chinese	• Chop suey/ chow mein • Dishes made with chilli, oyster sauce, yellow or black bean sauce, or soy-based dishes • Boiled rice	• Spring rolls • Battered meats • Prawn crackers/ toast
Sandwiches	• Plain bread (no spreads) • Plain meats/ fish/ egg and salad fillings • Cottage cheese • Packaged sandwiches/ salads less than 350kcal	• Croissants • Thickly spread butter • Fillings mixed with mayonnaise • High fat meats/ pate • Packaged sandwiches/ salads more than 500kcal
Chicken shops	• Choose grilled chicken breast or butterfly chicken • Swap chips for grilled vegetables as a side • Ask for sauce on the side • Try chicken wraps with salad	• Breaded or deep-fried chicken • Fries or chips • Garlic breads, as well as potatoes

Assessment of thoughts – tick the statements that apply to you.

- ☐ I tend to overeat when I eat out with friends.
- ☐ I have larger portions when I am out than I would have at home.
- ☐ I am tempted by high calorie foods when out.
- ☐ I feel pressurised to eat and drink more when out with friends.
- ☐ I see going out as a pleasure, so I tend to overeat.
- ☐ If there is bread on the table, I will eat it.
- ☐ I tend to have three courses when I eat out.
- ☐ I will return to the buffet table several times to refill my plate.
- ☐ I drink more alcohol when eating out or on special occasions.
- ☐ I eat when I go to the cinema.

Why plan your eating?

- Reduce overeating at meals.
- Eliminate eating for reasons other than hunger.
- Ensure balanced diet and healthy food choices: if you don't plan, it is harder to make good food choices when hungry.
- Save money and reduce waste by removing the temptation of eating food before it goes off (check 'use by' dates when shopping and, if safe, freeze things that expires soon).
- Reduce erratic eating patterns.
- Tolerate occasional hunger and food cravings and learn that you can manage them.
- Remember what you are going to eat and when.
- Make decisions about food before you encounter triggers e.g. being tempted with pudding around a friend's house.

End overeating

For you to lose weight and keep it off, you must know how to identify when you are no longer hungry so that you can stop eating.

Experiment with overloading your plate and purposely leaving a portion of food on your plate. You can also experiment with putting food which you are not supposed to eat on your plate and leaving it there.

If you are craving extra food, remind yourself of your reasons for losing weight. Think about whether you are hungry and why you want to continue eating. Think about how you will feel if you eat the extra food and how that may affect your weight loss.

When you've finished eating the food you were supposed to eat, clear your plate. Throw out the extra food or save it for another meal. If you found it hard to do this experiment it may be worth repeating it until it becomes easier.

Change your definition of full

When you are eating a meal, how do you know when your body's hunger has been satisfied: can you recognise the difference between feeling overfull, full and no longer hungry?

One way of determining whether you have overeaten is to think how easy it would be to take a walk at a moderate to brisk pace just after you have eaten. If you can't easily do this, you may have eaten too much and feel overfull.

It may be helpful to think about the feeling of fullness on a scale, with 0 being hungry and 10 being stuffed - practice stopping when you are no longer hungry, rather than waiting until you are overfull. Remember that your body's signals of fullness take about 20 minutes to register; eating slowly and mindfully will help to hear them.

In summary, to maintain your weight when eating out or considering a takeaway:

- Stay positive even when things don't go exactly to plan. Self-compassion goes a long way towards letting you come out healthy and happy at the end of the day.
- Be realistic with what you can and cannot tackle. 'I'm not going to eat chocolate' is unrealistic for most of us, but 'I'm not going to eat chocolate at the office' is more doable.
- Plan your social events. Focus on the people and activities at these events. Plan your food choices well and if you choose to drink alcohol, decide in advance how many alcoholic drinks you will have. Include low-calorie or no-calorie drinks to help you stay hydrated.
- Anticipate obstacles. Following your plan may feel challenging, especially when meals are served buffet-style. Try to anticipate these situations and prepare an alternative strategy. For example, you might choose to stick to just one plate of food from the buffet. Enjoy the meal by eating slowly and mindfully.
- Be realistic. When planning for social eating, be realistic about the situation and what you feel able to manage. It's perfectly acceptable to ask someone you trust for ideas, encouragement, or moral support.
- Lean on home habits to keep on track. Use your usual healthy habits at home to guide your choices when eating out. This can help reduce unintentional indulgences and support you in maintaining positive habits most of the time, which is important for managing your weight and overall health.
- Celebrate your wins. Positive feelings make healthy habits stick and boost motivation.
- Learn from your slip-ups. Small challenges are normal, so don't panic. Think about what you could do differently next time.
- Adapt as life changes. For long-term progress, learn from both your successes and setbacks. Life changes - new routines, new jobs, new places - and your strategies may need to change too. Keep adjusting, and the lessons you learn each year will stay with you. This flexible approach will help you enjoy social eating while supporting your health.

Mindful eating: Preventing unplanned eating

Managing food cravings can be difficult. The first thing to remember is that a food craving like an emotion will pass. We can either tackle it by improving our skills to rid out the food craving or by avoiding the situations that trigger a food craving.

There are a variety of tools that can be effective:

- **Problem solving:** Identify situations that cause unwanted snacking and experiment with a variety of solutions until you find the one that works for you.
- **Stimulus control:** Avoid known triggers for snacking or overeating.
- **Urge-surfing:** This is a technique to help manage food cravings. When you feel the urge to eat, pause and recognise it as a *craving*, not hunger. Tell yourself you'll wait 5 minutes. Do something to distract yourself during that time. If the craving is still there after 5 minutes, try waiting another 5–15 minutes. Each time you delay a craving, it usually becomes easier to handle the next time. It can also be helpful to think about when you last ate and when your next meal is planned. Could you use urge surfing strategies until that planned meal?
- **Check your thinking:** Are you eating for emotional reasons. Challenge all or nothing thinking. Avoid thoughts like, "These foods are naughty so I might as well have a 'bad' day today and finish them all off now and start again tomorrow again with none."

For urge-surfing, keep a list of other things to do such as go for a walk, call a friend, clean the car, go to the gym, paint your nails, try a new hobby, listen to music, have a relaxing bath or shower, read a book or magazine, or try a new sport.

Alternatively, try the '**No Choice**' rule.

There are things in life that you don't give yourself a choice over, such as brushing your teeth, so you don't struggle over the decision whether to do that.

Most people struggle when tempted to eat something they hadn't planned. If you experience this, you may have thoughts such as, "I really want to eat this, but I know I shouldn't" or "I know it's not on my food plan, but I am going to have it anyway".

These thoughts can create tension and often deciding to eat it can reduce this tension, but **deciding not to eat it can also reduce the tension.**

Your written food plan will help you make your decision ahead of time, but it won't help with the indecision you may feel when faced with tempting food.

Other strategies to prevent unplanned eating:

- Put the leftovers in the back of the refrigerator or freezer and wrap the food in foil so they are harder to open and see.
- Use harder to open ways of resealing foods. Using tape to close a bag of crisps is more of a deterrent to an impulse splurge than an easy to open clip.
- Move your chair. After you are initially finished with a meal, push back your chair a few inches to put the remaining food out of reach.
- Don't ask for bread in a restaurant.
- Eat snack foods only in the kitchen or at the dining table using carefully controlled portions.
- Most supermarkets situate fresh healthy foods such as fruit and vegetables meat and dairy along the walls. Avoid the centre aisles which tend to be filled with processed foods.
- Shop with a list and do not linger in the supermarket.
- Only buy foods on a full stomach and avoid buying snack foods for future use.
- Repackage jumbo sizes into smaller bags and plastic containers.
- Buy snack food items in handy portion size packaging.
- Allow time to eat.
- Try to be the last to start eating.
- Eat at the pace of the slowest eater.
- Distract yourself before you snack.
- Eating straight from a box or bag is a recipe for disaster.
- Leave serving dishes in the kitchen (or anywhere except on the dinner table).
- Move tempting foods down to a remote, almost 'off limits' storage area such as a hard-to-reach cupboard.

Physical activity: What's on offer locally?

Using local schemes and village-based exercise groups can make getting active easier and more enjoyable because they are convenient, affordable, and often social. Activities such as walking groups, community classes, or local sports sessions can help you feel supported and motivated, while reducing barriers like travel time or low confidence. Your GP or another healthcare professional may also be able to recommend exercise-on-referral schemes available in your area. You can also check your local council's health and wellbeing programmes for free or discounted leisure activities.

For ideas and safety guidance, see the NHS UK exercise pages:

www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise

Using a pedometer, smartwatch or Apps such as StepUp, Strava or Couch to 5K can also help. They offer a simple way to track your daily steps, set realistic goals, and see your progress over time. This can boost motivation, increase awareness of activity levels, and encourage you to move more throughout the day.

Masterclass

Strategies for successful, long-term weight loss

- **Get support** – Involve friends, family or join a support group.
- **Be consistent** – Stick to your plan every day, including weekends.
- **Limit screen time** – Spend less time sitting and more time moving.
- **Exercise daily** – Aim for about an hour of activity, like brisk walking to boost metabolism and mood.
- **Act quickly after lapses** – Adjust portions, track intake, or add extra activity if weight creeps up.
- **Eat balanced, healthy meals** – Focus on filling, heart-healthy foods like the Mediterranean style.
- **Eat regularly, including breakfast** – Keeps energy steady and prevents overeating.
- **Monitor your weight and habits** – Monitor regularly, stay aware and make small adjustments early.

How are you going to do these steps?

Write your ideas in each box:

Healthy balanced eating	
Be as active as possible every day	
Regular eating (including breakfast)	
Monitor your weight and meal choices	

What might make it difficult (e.g., other people, places, situations)?

What can you do to overcome these difficulties?

How will you reward yourself?

Weight management and maintenance review

Weight (kg):	☐ Up ☐ Down ☐ Maintained	Date:
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List all your achievements over the past week. Remember to give yourself credit for everything that has gone well, not just weight loss or maintenance.

Quick checklist – the toolbox

	Using	Not using	What has been more challenging for you? Is there anything you used to do that you have stopped doing?
Eating mindfully	☐	☐	
Watch portion size	☐	☐	
Plan meals and snacks	☐	☐	
Set goals and self-monitor	☐	☐	
Eat regularly and healthily	☐	☐	
Think positively	☐	☐	
Manage emotions	☐	☐	
Handle plateaus	☐	☐	
Problem solve	☐	☐	
Seek support	☐	☐	
Increase exercise	☐	☐	

Weekly log

Use this space for any specific information you record regularly (e.g., exercise):	Set yourself two specific and realistic goals for the next week:
	1.
	2.

Cooking and keeping healthy on a budget

Planning

- Keep a list of your favourite recipes so that you're not stuck for inspiration
- Plan your meals before you go shopping so that you can mix and match ingredients to avoid wasting leftovers. Be realistic about what you will want to cook and eat.
- Plan to use fruits and vegetables that are in season, as these tend to be cheaper.
- Choose high fibre carbohydrate such as wholegrain pasta, rice, oats, bread, or potatoes as these tend to be both filling and cheap.
- Make a list to help you avoid impulse buys
- Use the "No choice" rule to avoid unplanned snacks
- Take a packed lunch to work

Shopping

- Choose frozen fruit and vegetables and canned legumes to prevent wastage of fresh food. Freeze protein and bread until use.
- Buy less pre-prepared food that can bump up the cost of your shopping.
- Avoid temptation – only visit the aisles you need to and don't shop when tired or hungry.
- Look out for special offers, but only on healthy foods that are on your plan.
- Compare prices between branded foods, own-brand foods, and local markets.

Preparing and storing

- Cook the right amount for a single meal or prepare meals in bulk and freeze extra portions.
- Regularly rotate your store cupboard so that older produce is used up first.
- Label leftovers so that you know when they should be eaten by. Most food can be kept in the fridge for two to three days.
- Making meals at home rather is often cheaper and healthier than a ready meal/ takeaway.
- Make meat go further by adding extra vegetables or pulses e.g. mushrooms and grated carrot in a bolognese or chickpeas and red peppers to a chilli.
- Frozen, dried and canned fruit and vegetables count towards your 5-a-day and have a much longer shelf life.
- Save energy whilst cooking e.g. by using pan lids and not over filling the kettle.

Further tips and recipes

- *Budget Bites* cookbook by World Cancer Research Fund
www.wcrf.org/budget-bites-cookbook
- Healthier Families (NHS UK) – Healthy recipes
www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes
- British Heart Foundation – Eat well
www.bhf.org.uk/nutrition

Quick tips to increase your steps

- Take walking breaks instead of sitting during the working day.
- Use the stairs whenever you can.
- Park further away (at work, shops, errands).
- Get off the bus one stop early or later.
- Walk your dog – or join a friend who walks theirs.
- Have walking meetings or walk while on your phone.
- Walk children to school.
- Take items upstairs/downstairs right away.
- Stand up and walk for 3–5 minutes each hour.
- Walk during TV ad breaks.
- Add an extra flight of stairs each time you climb.

Outsmart overeating and holiday weight gain

Holidays and celebrations often involve lots of delicious food, and it's completely normal to feel unsure about how to maintain your weight during this time. The good news is that you can enjoy the season without stress. With a few simple, dietitian-approved tips, you can move through the festivities feeling comfortable and confident.

- **Alcohol:** It can be tough to skip drinks when everyone else is enjoying one, but alcohol can make you hungrier, lower your willpower, and add extra calories without filling you up. For example, beer, wine, and spirits usually range from 100–150 calories. If you'd still like something in your hand, try lighter options like a small drink of spirits with a calorie free mixer or a wine spritzer.
- **Bring your own dish:** Bring a healthy dish to share at a holiday dinner. Most people will bring a bottle of wine or desserts, so why not bring a veggie crudité and a trio of healthy dips, a lighter cranberry sauce or a large fresh fruit salad.
- **Holiday snacks:** Try to keep “trigger foods” out of the house if they're hard to resist. When these foods aren't visible or easily available, we're much less likely to eat them. If homemade goodies are tempting, consider skipping the baking or letting someone else bring them instead.
- **Honour you hunger:** Eat when you're hungry and stop when you're full to avoid overeating. Slow down your pace of eating to allow your body to register its fullness.
- **Politely decline:** Just because food is offered, doesn't mean you have to eat it.
- **Continue to stay active:** Don't put your health on pause just because the Christmas season gets busy. Even a little movement on festive days can make a big difference!

Buffets and barbecues

Buffets and barbecues are great fun, but if you go to them often, they can make weight management harder. These tips can help you enjoy the food and keep your choices lighter.

Tips to avoid overeating and stay on track

- Don't arrive hungry: have a small snack beforehand.
- Use a smaller plate or glass if you can.
- Decide what you'll eat before you start and fill your plate once.
- Follow the plate guide (half vegetables/salad, quarter lean protein, quarter carbohydrates).
- Pick lower fat choices and limit pastry, fried foods, creamy salads, fatty meats, and batter coated items.
- Think before adding something to your plate, "Do I really want this?"
- Eat slowly: chew well, finish each bite, and enjoy the company.
- Leave food if you're full – no guilt needed.
- Practice saying "No, thank you," to pushy friends.
- Watch the extras: crisps, dips, cheese, onion rings, and garlic bread add up quickly.
- Choose lighter dips like yoghurt or tomato-based options.
- Pick healthier desserts like fruit or sorbet.
- Choose low calorie drinks when possible (make wine spritzers with soda water or choose long drinks with low calorie mixers, or alternate alcoholic drinks with water or low calorie soft drinks).

Relapse action plan

List below three warning signs that would indicate to you that you are relapsing. Decide on an action that each warning sign will trigger.

Warning sign 1:	When this happens, it will trigger me to:
Warning sign 2:	When this happens, it will trigger me to:
Warning sign 3:	When this happens, it will trigger me to:
These are activities that I enjoy that make me feel better:	

Dietary goals	Achieved?
1.	☐
2.	☐
3.	☐
Activity goals	Achieved?
1.	☐
2.	☐
3.	☐
Behaviour goals	Achieved?
1.	☐
2.	☐
3.	☐

Self-monitoring

The first step to changing habits is just to notice any automatic behaviours or daily routines that contribute to the problem. When you catch yourself doing these, just point it out to yourself.

Pay attention to **when and why** the behaviours pop up in your day.

After completing the mindfulness self-assessment exercise, you will have a better gauge of your strengths and areas in need of improvements. Hopefully it has given you some new insights or at least a direction in which to begin your journey.

- Don't forget to acknowledge what you do well and continue to do more of it.
- Place the most attention on the skill area you struggle with the most.
- Keeping a food, thought, and activity diary.

Food diary

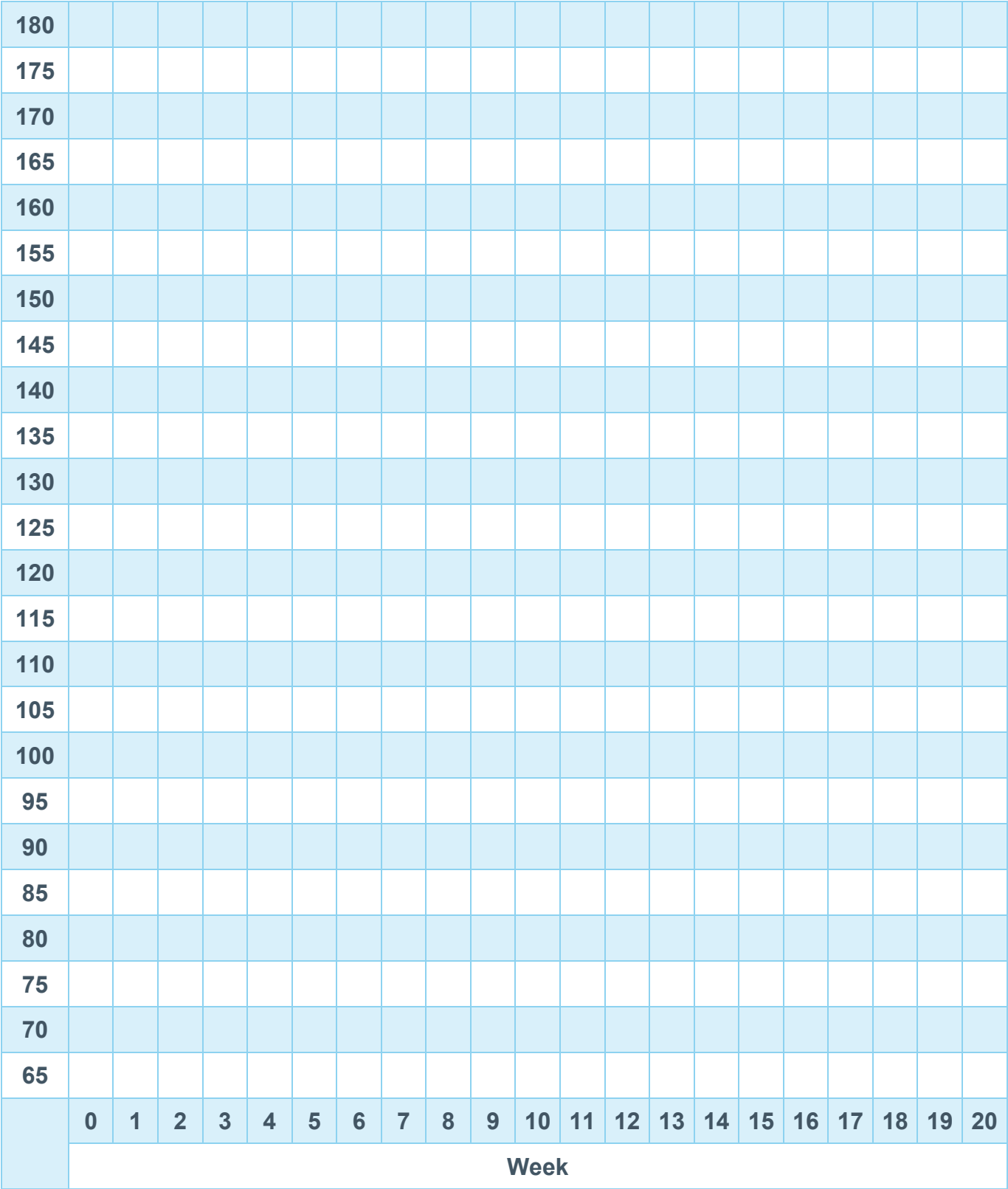
A great way to raise your awareness of mindless eating is to keep a food diary. You will learn a lot from it. Research shows that one of the best ways to change your eating habits is to write down what you eat. Just knowing someone is watching (even if it is you) helps you to make changes. It is less about what you write down and more about noticing and keeping mental track of what is going on.

Height (m)						
5% weight loss target (kg)						
Final target weight (kg)						
Date						
Waist (cm)						
Weight (kg)						
Body mass index (BMI)						
Est. energy requirement						
Clothes size						

Plan for managing triggers

Situation	This triggers me to overeat or eat things I hadn't planned	This helps me stick to my eating plans
Home		
Work		
Friend's house		
Family member's house		
Restaurants or other eating places		
Journeys		
Other environments or daily patterns		

Weight (kg) progress chart



Setting goals

When you are mindful you focus on process goals rather than outcome goals. A process goal includes behaviours that would make the desired outcome happen. Focus on only one or two goals for the next session.

Goals should be **SMART**, which stands for:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Timed

An example would be to increase vegetable portion sizes at lunch three times a week for the next two weeks.

What I intend to do as a new habit:

Why this might be difficult:

What I intend to do as a new habit:

Why this might be difficult:

What I intend to do as a new habit:

Why this might be difficult:

What I intend to do as a new habit:

Why this might be difficult:

What I intend to do as a new habit:

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Why this might be difficult:

What I intend to do as a new habit:

Why this might be difficult:

What I intend to do as a new habit:

Why this might be difficult:

Useful information

For more details about the Nutrition and Dietetics Service, please visit our website:

www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/nutrition-and-dietetics



Websites

BDA (The Association of UK Dietitians)

Food fact sheets written by dietitians to help you learn the best ways to eat and drink to keep your body fit and healthy.

www.bda.uk.com/food-health/food-facts.html

British Heart Foundation (BHF)

Read more articles about eating well, including topics like intuitive eating, and budget recipes.

www.bhf.org.uk/nutrition

Carbs & Cals

Information about low-carb diets.

www.carbsandcals.com

Diabetes UK

Find diet-specific meal plans and recipes.

www.diabetes.org.uk/meal-plans

Drinkaware

Explore tips to manage your alcohol intake.

www.drinkaware.co.uk

Glycemic Index (The University of Sydney)

A database to help you determine the glycaemic index (GI) of foods.

www.glycemicindex.com

NHS Berkshire Talking Therapies

Self-refer for mental health support.

www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/talking-therapies

NHS Better Health

Further information on weight loss, smoking, activity and alcohol.

www.nhs.uk/better-health

Apps

Carbs & Cals App

Make informed food choices to eat more healthily.

MyDrinkaware

Helps you track your drinking patterns, calculate units and calories, and set goals to help you drink less.

MyTummy

Track your diet with a focus on intuitive eating, rather than calorie counting.

Fitness and exercise

- Couch To 5K
- My FitnessPal
- NHS Weight Loss Plan
- StepUp
- Strava

Mental health support and mindfulness

- Calm
- Headspace
- MindShift CBT

Books

Mindless Eating: Why We Eat More Than We Think

Brian Wansink

ISBN: 978-0553384482

The Volumetrics Eating Plan

Barbara Rolls

ISBN: 978-0060737306

Carbs & Cals – Carb & Calorie Counter

Chris Cheyette and Yello Balolia

ISBN: 978-1908261151

Carbs & Cals – World Foods

Salma Mehar, Dr Joan St John, Chris Cheyette, and Yello Balolia

ISBN: 978-1908261250