



SO YOU WANT TO LOSE WEIGHT ... FOR GOOD

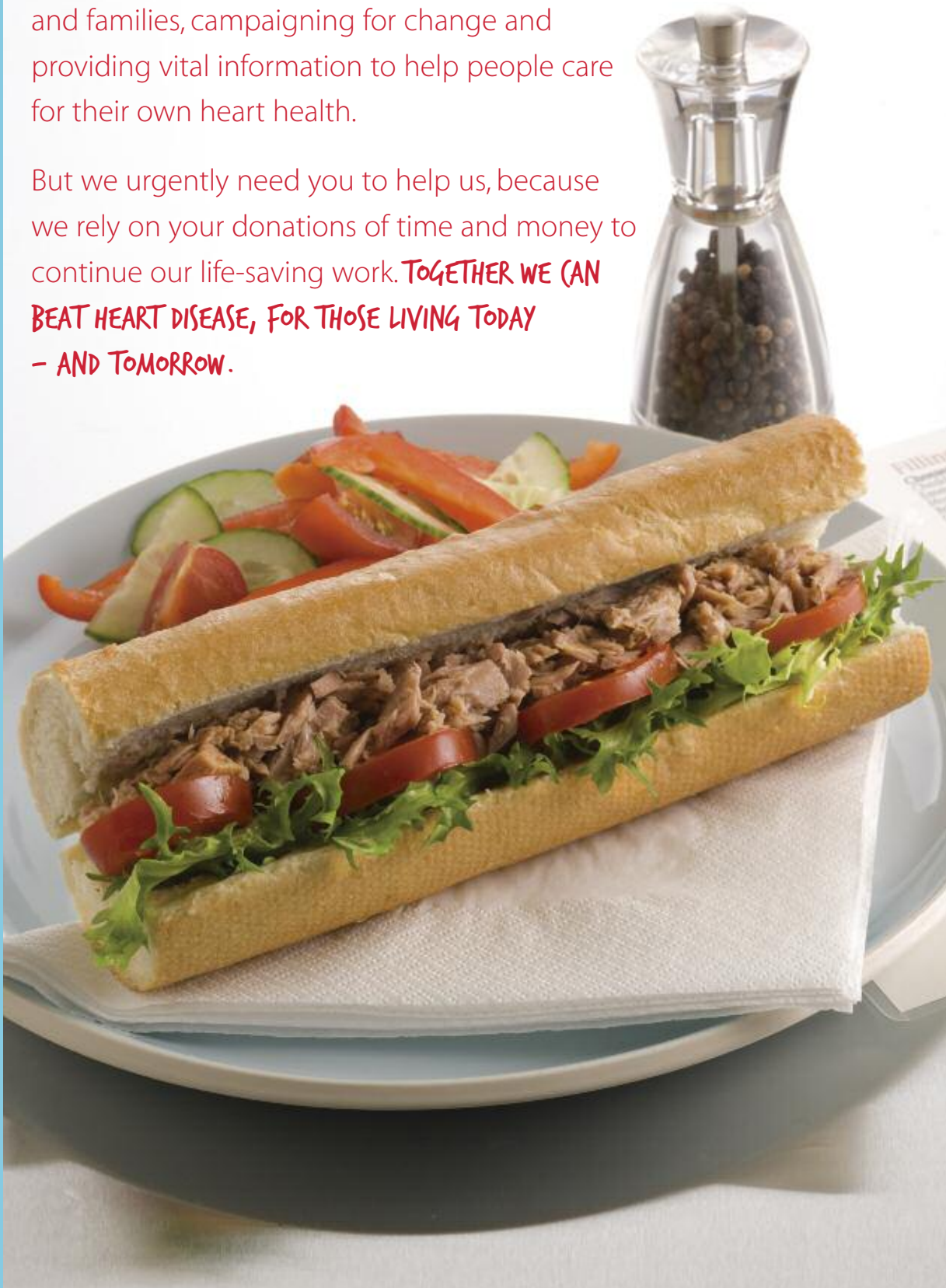
A guide to losing weight for men and women



BEATING HEART DISEASE TOGETHER

The British Heart Foundation is the nation's heart charity, dedicated to saving lives every day through pioneering research, caring for patients and families, campaigning for change and providing vital information to help people care for their own heart health.

But we urgently need you to help us, because we rely on your donations of time and money to continue our life-saving work. **TOGETHER WE CAN BEAT HEART DISEASE, FOR THOSE LIVING TODAY – AND TOMORROW.**





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THE BRITISH HEART FOUNDATION AND WEIGHT

The British Heart Foundation (BHF) takes your health and your weight very seriously. We don't guarantee quick fixes or magical cures for weight loss. In fact we're dubious about anyone who does. We prefer a sensible and permanent approach to losing weight. All the research findings suggest that losing it steadily and gradually is the safest way and the weight is much more likely to stay off than if you lose it quickly.

We're not keen on the word 'diet' either. It sounds restrictive and very short-term. We believe in a **weight loss plan for life**. That doesn't mean having to survive forever on salads and crispbreads! Our plan includes plenty of tasty and filling options which you can prepare easily and enjoy at home or elsewhere.

If you're interested in losing weight for health benefits, we've produced this booklet for you. Whether you're male or female, in your 20s or in your 60s, whether you have any signs of heart disease or not, the advice which follows is written for you. In fact the whole family could benefit from our tips on healthy eating for life.

And your health isn't the only thing which stands to improve. Getting in shape can mean getting fitter and feeling more energetic. Many people notice a boost to their confidence too as they can wear different clothes, play more with children or grandchildren and generally get more out of life.

"The best thing about the front of the booklet is the BHF logo. You immediately know it's going to be sensible."

39 year old overweight woman

HEART DISEASE AND WEIGHT

If you're very overweight you're more likely to have a heart attack, especially if your extra weight is around your middle. The good news is that by losing weight you can cut your risk of heart disease.

Research studies also suggest that many overweight people with angina, improved their blood pressure by losing weight, even after losing only some of their excess weight. Many of those who kept the weight off were able to reduce their medication or even stop it altogether.

What is heart disease?

The most common form of heart disease among adults is called **coronary heart disease**. It occurs when the coronary arteries bringing oxygen-rich blood to your heart muscle get 'furred up' by fatty deposits (atheroma). This causes them to narrow.

Angina is the discomfort that occurs when your heart does not receive enough blood and oxygen. An attack can be brought on by physical activity or emotional stress.

A **heart attack** occurs if a coronary artery becomes completely blocked, which usually happens when a blood clot forms in a narrowed coronary artery.

What increases the risk of heart disease?

Coronary heart disease is more likely to happen if you have certain risk factors. The main ones are:

- being overweight
- physical inactivity
- smoking
- high blood pressure
- high blood cholesterol
- diabetes
- family history of coronary heart disease.

High blood cholesterol increases your risk of getting coronary heart disease. The most common cause of high blood cholesterol levels is too much fat in the diet, especially saturated fat. Occasionally people can have high levels due to an inherited condition.

High blood pressure (the medical name is 'hypertension') increases your risk of getting coronary heart disease, strokes and kidney disease. The cause of most high blood pressure is not clear but the following can all contribute: being overweight; excessive salt intake; drinking too much alcohol; and physical inactivity.



"When I became a teacher, my lifestyle changed but my diet didn't. I've been sitting around much more, getting no time for exercise, and eating as much as ever, especially late at night. Since then I've been putting on about a stone a year."

29 year old overweight man



WEIGHT GAIN

You may be one of those people who has always been big and battled with your weight on and off for years. Or, you may have been steadily gaining weight over the years. Many people are less active as they get older because of family commitments, long working hours and other pressures. Leisure time is often spent in front of the television or computer, which doesn't help. Whichever is true, you're not alone. Over half of all adults in the UK are now overweight. So well done for choosing to do something for your health. And remember, just preventing any further weight gain is a very valuable and worthwhile goal in itself.

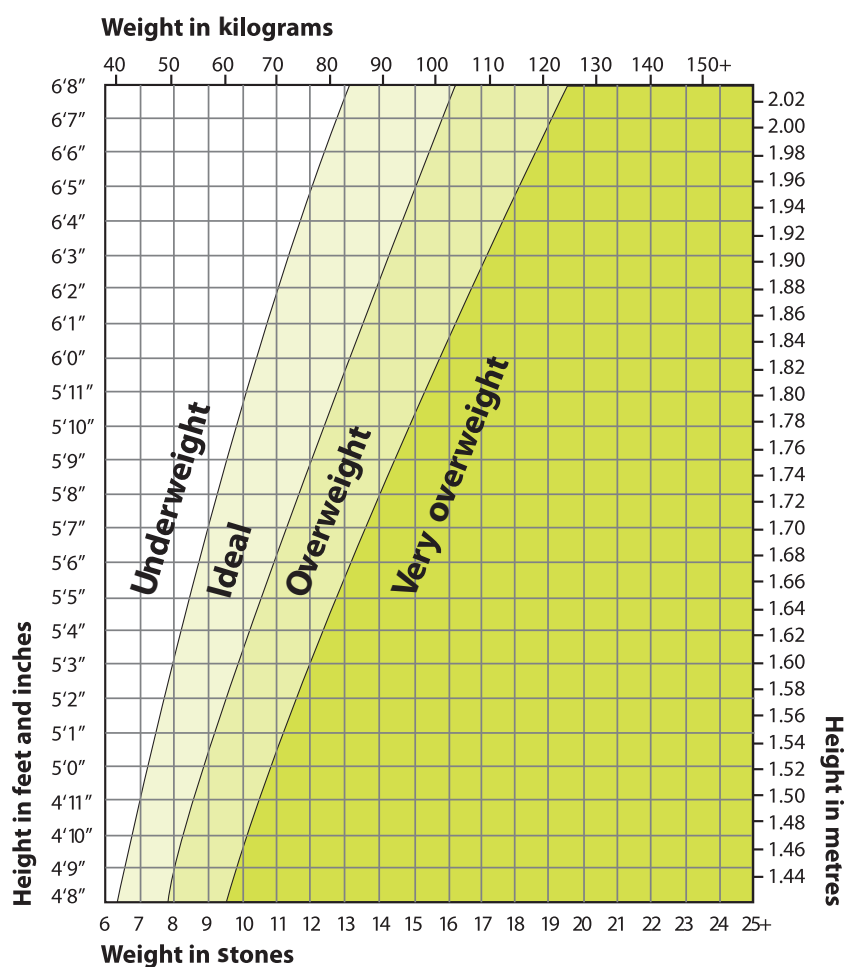
DO YOU NEED TO LOSE WEIGHT?

Most of us know if we're overweight by looking in a mirror or by the size or tightness of our clothes. You may like to check your weight on the chart below, which also takes account of your height. If your weight is within the 'overweight' or 'very overweight' sections, you are wise to be thinking about trying to lose some weight. Your long-term goal is to be in the 'ideal' section, but in the short term you may wish to set yourself a more realistic target of perhaps losing 5 or 10 pounds (2 to 4 kilos) because just a 10% reduction in weight can produce real improvements in your health. Don't be too ambitious in your goal, otherwise you are almost certain to be disappointed with the results. Remember that maintaining your current weight (that is, not gaining more) is an achievement in itself.

Your shape, as much as your weight, could be affecting your health risk. You can assess this simply by measuring your waist. Find the bottom of your ribs and the top of your hips, and measure around your middle at a point mid-way between these. For many people this will be at the level of the tummy button. If you measure more than 32 inches (80 cm) for a woman, or more than 37 inches (94 cm) for a man, your health is at risk. If the measurement is more than 35 inches (88 cm) for a woman or 40 inches (102 cm) for a man, your risk is much higher. For people of South Asian origin these figures are slightly different. A waist measurement of 32 inches (80cm) for women and 35 inches (90cm) for men puts health at high risk.

Other reasons for trying to lose weight may be as important to you as health. You might want to get fitter, get in shape, look better, feel better or just be able to get into clothes which no longer fit.

Whatever your reasons, you've made an important step by getting hold of this booklet. Read on to find out more about losing weight – for good.



Adapted from the height/weight chart by kind permission of the Food Standards Agency

ARE YOU READY TO CHANGE?

Everyone has different reasons why they decide to lose weight, but protecting yourself from heart disease is one very good reason to think about losing weight. Getting and keeping to a healthy weight also reduces your risk of other health problems like diabetes, some cancers and arthritis.

To lose weight, you need to use up more energy (calories or joules) than your body takes in from food and drink. Ideally you should combine taking in fewer calories from food and drink, and using more calories by getting more active. Most people find that this achieves the best results.

You may prefer to start off with changes to what you eat, and think about physical activity later. It's up to you. For physical activity to greatly reduce the risk of heart disease you need to aim for 30 minutes of moderate activity a day, at least five times a week. Moderate activity is any activity that leaves

you warm and breathing more heavily, but still able to hold a conversation with someone. Once you are used to this, continue to build up the amount you do in order to help with your weight loss. If this sounds impossible for you just now, remember that doing anything more than you do now is a step in the right direction and will certainly help.

But remember, however much you change your eating and physical activity patterns, a weight loss of one pound ($\frac{1}{2}$ kilo) a week is all you should expect. Losing weight too quickly may not be good for you (see page 28).

Another tip is to try not to base your success on weight alone. Instead, focus on the changes you are making to your eating and physical activity. Base your goals on these and reward yourself when you achieve them. We explain more about goals and rewards on page 30.

To greatly reduce the risk of heart disease you need to aim for 30 minutes of moderate activity a day, at least five times a week.





YOUR WEIGHT LOSS PLAN

A regular eating pattern is an important part of achieving and maintaining a healthy weight. Research has shown that people who eat breakfast are more likely to be a healthy weight. Also, eating three meals a day enables you to eat a wider variety of foods, which makes it easier for you to get all the nutrients you need for good health.

The Eatwell plate

Eating and drinking fewer calories doesn't mean that you have to count them. The British Heart Foundation is as interested in the quality of the foods you eat as the amount. The *Eatwell plate* pictured on the next page, shows the best proportion of foods, from the five food groups, for healthy eating.

So try to eat:

- plenty of fruit and vegetables
- plenty of bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods – choose wholegrain varieties whenever you can
- some milk and dairy foods
- some meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein
- just a small amount of foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar.



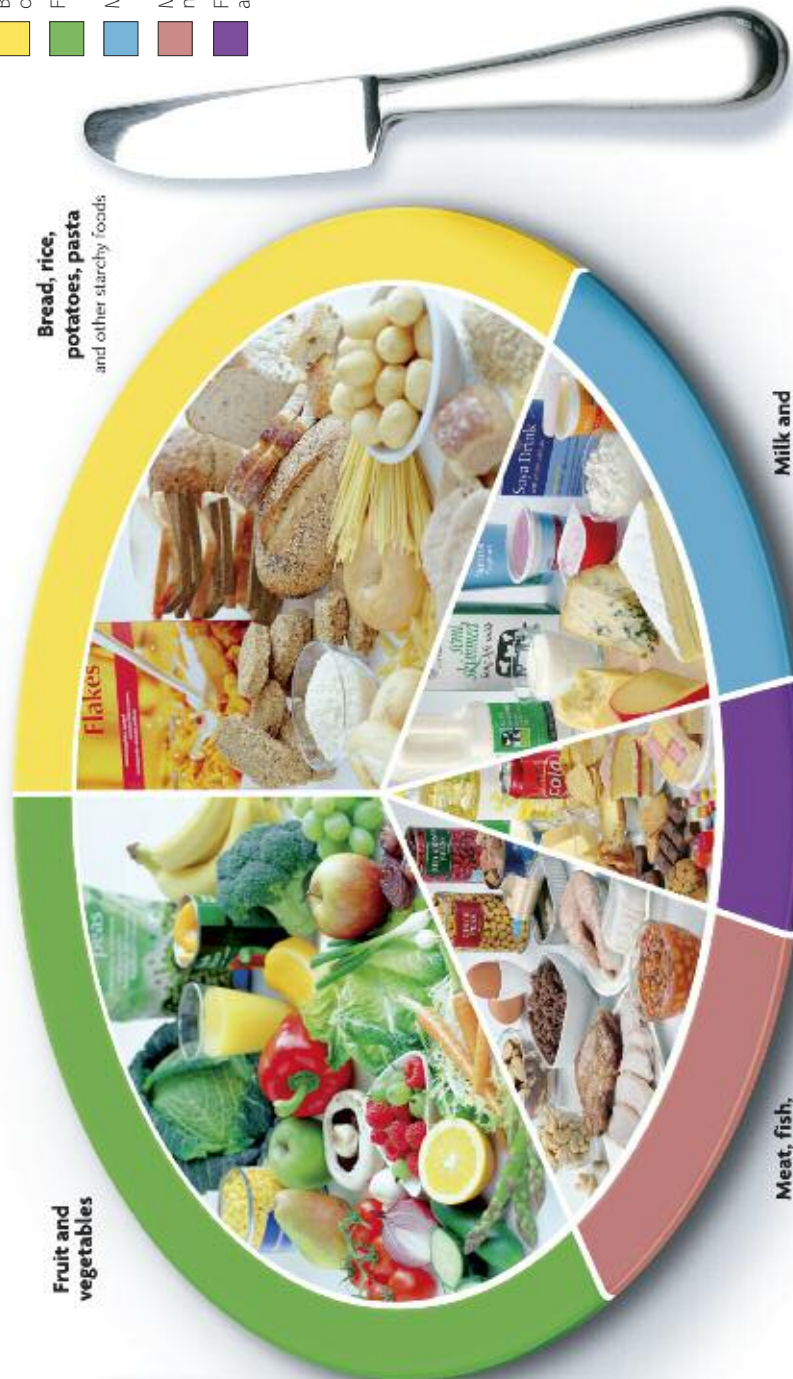
In essence, this is healthy eating. Eating these types of foods in the proportions shown will make sure you get the right balance of vitamins (like vitamin C) and minerals (like iron and calcium). It also provides lots of starch and fibre – keeping the bowels healthy, while keeping fat and sugar down – to reduce the risk of heart disease, some cancers, weight gain and dental problems.

Healthy eating for weight loss, however, means not only eating the right balance of food but also a suitable amount of food. Even if you think you are already eating very healthily, it may be that your portions are too large. The weight loss plan on the next pages helps you manage the quantities as well as types of food.

*Following the Eatwell plate
will give you the best
possible eating plan
for good health.*

The eatwell plate

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



The Eatwell plate appears courtesy of the Food Standards Agency. © Crown copyright material is reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO and Queen's Printer for Scotland.

How much is too much?

Following the *Eatwell plate* will give you the best possible eating plan for good health. It's more about what you *can* eat than what you can't. In fact, nothing is banned. It gives you the flexibility to choose the foods you enjoy and include things like chocolate, crisps and cakes now and then. Even the odd glass of wine or a beer is fine.

When watching your weight, you also have to plan the *amounts* of food you eat. It's not just the *quality* – the *quantity* matters too. Everyone is different, but as a rule, most people will lose weight if they eat or drink between 1,500 and 1,800 calories (kcal) a day.

Remember, this is not a crash diet. Weight loss should be slow and steady. Women tend to need fewer calories than men, so if you're female, choose 1,500 calories (kcal). If you're male, choose 1,800 calories (kcal). The table below shows how many portions of foods from the different food groups you could eat, for 1,500 or 1,800 calories (kcal) a day. It also includes an allowance for some extra 'occasional foods'.

You could write your own plan in the blank right-hand column. If you would like individualised advice, ask your GP to refer you to a dietitian or talk to your practice nurse.

YOUR WEIGHT LOSS PLAN – Daily portions based on the *Eatwell plate*

FOOD GROUP	1,500 CALORIES (kcal)	1,800 CALORIES (kcal)	YOUR PLAN
Fruit and vegetables	7 or more portions	8 or more portions	
Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods	7 portions	8 portions	
Milk and dairy foods	2 portions	2 portions	
Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein	2 portions	3 portions	
Spreading fats and oils (and dressings and sauces)	3 portions	3 portions	
High-fat/high-sugar foods and alcohol	up to 100 kcal	up to 200 kcal	

How much is a portion?

With this weight loss plan, you won't have to count calories at all. And you won't have to weigh out your food. Instead, you just need to use the *Portion guide* on pages 13-16. This shows handy amounts – or portions – of common foods from all the food groups, so you can just choose as you wish. But remember, portions are a funny thing. One person's idea of a normal portion is often quite different from someone else's! If you're having a larger amount than the list shows, it could be a double or triple portion, so it would count as two or three.

We don't want to be negative. In fact we recommend that you *must eat* plenty of many foods. Five portions a day from the fruit and vegetable group is a minimum and you can aim for 6, 7, 8 or even more! They are low in calories and full of goodness. Any vegetables are fine, as are most fruits, but note the word of caution in the box below.



A WORD OF CAUTION

We encourage you to eat lots of foods from the fruit and vegetables group. However, there are just a few exceptions:

Avocado pears are high in monounsaturated fats and high in calories. Have as a salad garnish only once a week at the most and half an avocado only occasionally as a special treat.

Dried fruits are quite concentrated in natural sugar so have only one portion of these a day.

Fruit juice and **smoothies** are nourishing but quite concentrated in calories. Keep to only one portion of unsweetened fruit juice or pure fruit smoothie – a small glass – a day. Avoid sugary squash or fruit juice drinks which have added sugar.

Tinned fruit and vegetables can be included in your 5-a-day but make sure fruit is in natural juice, and vegetables are in water without sugar or salt added where possible.

Make sure you eat enough foods from the 'Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods' group. These starchy foods were once thought to be fattening. In fact, they're not! They are filling but don't contain too many calories – unless you add fat to them. If you add fat – such as spread on bread, oil on pasta, butter on your baked potato, or oil to fry your plantain in – remember that these amounts of fat come from your portion allowance in the 'Spreading fats and oils' section. Enjoy them but keep to your limit.

Can I indulge?

Nothing is banned in this weight loss plan, but foods from the 'high-fat/high-sugar foods and alcohol' group provide a lot of calories with little else. Think of these as foods to be enjoyed occasionally, rather than as everyday necessities. Although there is a limit to the amount of foods in this group you can have each day, you could save this up over the week if you prefer – having none on one day and more on another. Many people find they eat differently at weekends or when eating out, so this way you can keep your indulgences 'up your sleeve' for those times when you really need them!

We believe in a weight loss plan for life. That doesn't mean having to survive forever on salads and crispbreads!



PORTION GUIDE

This guide shows you how much is in one portion.

FRUIT AND VEGETABLES Have 7 or more portions a day (a portion is 80g).	
Vegetables, eg, cauliflower, cabbage, peas, carrots, mushrooms, tomatoes, leeks, swede, courgettes, broccoli, French beans, peppers	Three heaped tablespoons
Salad – mixed green, eg, lettuce, cucumber, onion, pepper	One dessert bowl
Whole fresh fruits, eg, apple, pear, orange, banana, peach	One fruit
Medium fruits, eg, satsumas, plums, apricots, tomatoes	Two fruits
Small fruits, eg, grapes, berries, cherries, lychees, cherry tomatoes	One handful
Large fruits, eg, melon, pineapple	One slice
Tinned fruit in natural juice, eg, peaches, pineapple, raspberries, pears	Three heaped tablespoons
Stewed fruit, eg, apple, rhubarb, cherries	Three heaped tablespoons
Dried fruit, eg, raisins (maximum one portion per day)	One heaped tablespoon
Fruit juice (maximum one per day)	One small glass or small carton (150ml)

BREAD, RICE, POTATOES, PASTA AND OTHER STARCHY FOODS	
Have 7-8 portions a day depending on your weight loss plan.	
These may seem like small portions but remember, you can use more than one of your portions per meal. Choose higher fibre/wholegrain options where possible.	
Breakfast cereal, eg, flakes, crispies, porridge oats	Three tablespoons
Muesli	Two tablespoons
Shredded wheat	One
Weetabix	One
Bread or toast	One large slice (medium thick)
Bread bun or roll	Half a large
Pitta bread	One mini or picnic size or half a normal size
Chapatti	One small
Crackers	Three
Crispbreads	Four
Plain naan bread	One small
Rice, plain boiled	Two heaped tablespoons

BREAD, RICE, POTATOES, PASTA AND OTHER STARCHY FOODS continued

Yam, boiled	Two egg-sized pieces or a 1½-inch thick slice, 100g (3½ ounces)
Plantain, steamed	One medium-sized
Pasta, plain, boiled	Three heaped tablespoons
Egg noodles, boiled	Three heaped tablespoons
Potatoes	Two egg-sized
Bagel, plain or cinnamon and raisin	Half
Crumpet/pikelet	One
English muffin	Half
Malt loaf	1 small slice (35g)

MILK AND DAIRY FOODS Have 2 portions a day.

Milk (semi-skimmed or better still, skimmed)	One medium glass, 200ml (⅓ pint)
Yoghurt, plain or flavoured, low-fat and low-sugar	One small pot, 150g (5oz)
Cheese – preferably lower-fat varieties (Brie, Camembert, Edam, reduced-fat cheddar, smoked Austrian)	One matchbox size, 30g (1oz)
Cream cheese – reduced-fat or low-fat varieties	The size of two small matchboxes, 80g (3oz)
Low-fat cottage cheese	One large pot, 200g (8oz)
Fromage frais	One small pot, 150g (5oz)



MEAT, FISH, EGGS, BEANS AND OTHER NON-DAIRY SOURCES OF PROTEIN

Have 2-3 portions a day depending on your weight loss plan.

Cooked lean meat such as beef, pork, ham, lamb, chicken (without skin and all visible fat removed)	Three slices (an amount the size of a pack of playing cards), 60-90g (2-3oz)
Fish – white (cooked)	150g (5oz)
Fish – oily	140g (4½ oz)
Fish fingers	Three
Eggs	Two
Baked beans in tomato sauce (low-sugar and low-salt if possible)	One small tin (200g) or half a large tin (400g)
Lentils	Four tablespoons, cooked
Beans, eg, red kidney beans, butter beans, chick peas	Four tablespoons, cooked
Nuts, peanut butter (unsalted)	Two level tablespoons
Quorn, tofu or soya	120g (4oz)

SPREADING FATS AND OILS (AND DRESSINGS AND SAUCES) Have 3 portions a day.

Spreading fats and oils

Low-fat spread	Two teaspoons
Oil (unsaturated oils, eg, olive, rapeseed, sunflower, corn)	One teaspoon
Butter or margarine spread or ghee	One teaspoon

Dressings and sauces

Mayonnaise	One teaspoon
Low-calorie mayonnaise	Two teaspoons
Blue cheese dressing	One teaspoon
Salad cream	One tablespoon
Low-calorie salad cream	Two tablespoons
Gravy or white sauce made with fat and flour base (roux)	One tablespoon
Gravy or white sauce (made with cornflour, no fat added)	Four tablespoons
Cream (double)	Two teaspoons
Cream (single)	Five teaspoons

HIGH-FAT/HIGH-SUGAR FOODS AND ALCOHOL

You can have up to the calorie limit for your weight loss plan – for example, up to 100kcal or up to 200kcal (see page 10). Or you can save this allowance up, having none on one day and more on another.

10 – 99kcal

Sugar	One teaspoon	16kcal
Jam	One teaspoon	25kcal
Double cream	Two teaspoons	44kcal
Spirits	One pub measure	50kcal

100 – 199kcal

Ice cream, eg, vanilla	One small scoop	100kcal
Biscuits, plain	Two	100kcal
Sweets	One small tube or bag	100kcal
Glass of wine	150ml	100kcal
Slice of cake	One small slice (50g)	150kcal
Crisps	One small packet (25g)	150kcal
Lager, cider or beer (ordinary strength)	Half a pint	125kcal

200+ kcal

Mini pork pie	One	200kcal
Quiche/tart	One quarter (small)	250kcal
Chocolate bar	One	250kcal
Danish pastry	One	400kcal

If the foods you like aren't on the list, use the nutritional information on the packets to work out how much is suitable for your plan.

An example of a day's eating plan

The day's eating plan below shows the foods and drinks that someone having 1,500 calories a day might choose. Obviously no two days are ever the same, so this is just an example.

FOOD GROUP

		Fruit and veg	Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods	Milk and dairy foods	Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein	Spreading fats, oils, dressings and sauces	Foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar, and alcohol
MEALS							
For 1,500 calories	Number of portions	7 or more	7	2	2	3	up to 100kcal
BREAKFAST	Amount						
Bran flakes	6 tablespoons		2				
Semi-skimmed milk	200 ml (1/3 pint)			1			
Small fruit juice		1					
Cup of tea, milk no sugar							
MID MORNING							
Coffee, milk no sugar							
Apple		1					
LUNCH							
Tuna salad sandwich:							
2 slices of bread			2				
low-fat spread	2 teaspoons					1	
tinned tuna	140g				1		
mixed salad filling	bowl	1					
Mineral water							
Slice of malt loaf	35g		1				
MID AFTERNOON							
Pot of tea, milk no sugar							
Large glass of water							
DINNER							
Rice (boiled)	4 large tablespoons		2				
Small chicken breast (no skin)					1		
Sauce made with olive oil, onions, tomato and mushrooms		1				1	
Carrots		1					
Broccoli		1					
Peaches in natural juice		1					
Double cream	2 teaspoons					1	
Glass of wine	150ml						100kcal
Milk in tea/coffee throughout day	200 ml (1/3 pint)			1			
Total		7	7	2	2	3	100kcal



A word about fat

Keeping the fat in your diet low is the best possible aid to weight loss. By choosing low-fat options in all the food groups from the *Eatwell plate*, you will be keeping your fat intake well within the recommended limit for good health. But remember that fat is sometimes hidden in foods, so it may not be obvious. Watch out! And always count up the portions of spreading fats and oils and high-fat foods you have, to make sure you don't go over your daily or weekly limit. Here are some things to look out for in the different food groups in relation to fat:

Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods

Choose a vegetable-based or tomato-based sauce for your pasta rather than a rich cream sauce or a cheese sauce. Do you really need to add margarine to the mashed potato? Greasy chips? Try low-fat oven chips for flavour without fat. Experiment with different breads which are so tasty they don't need any spread. Choose steamed or boiled rice rather than fried.

Fruit and vegetables

Have your vegetables been stir-fried in oil or served with a knob of margarine? Count the fat! Has your salad been drowned in an oil-rich dressing? Choose low-calorie or fat-free instead. Wouldn't your fresh fruit taste even better without the cream?

Milk and dairy foods

Semi-skimmed milk is great, skimmed even better. Choose low-fat but remember that low-fat yoghurts aren't always low-sugar or low-calorie! Choose fromage frais and choose the very low-fat type. Watch out for creme fraiche which sounds very low fat but isn't! Use small amounts of strong mature cheeses in sandwiches and cooking to make a little go a long way – but remember to keep to the portion sizes in your weight loss plan.

Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein

Is your chicken breast or piece of fish coated in fried crumbs or basted in butter? How you cook your food is really important. Bake, grill, steam, poach or microwave without adding fat. Have red meat but keep it lean and make a little go a long way by using vegetables to bulk out the dish (eg, casseroles or stir-fries). Aim to include oily fish in your diet. Try to have two portions of fish a week and make one of these oily fish, or if you've had a heart attack, aim for 2-3 portions of oily fish a week. Where possible, choose fish that are sustainably sourced to minimise the impact on fish stocks and the environment. Choose a vegetarian meal from time to time but watch out for pastry and lots of extra cheese. Have eggs! Not fried, but poached or boiled. There is no recommended limit to the number of eggs a week. One portion of foods higher in cholesterol per day – such as eggs, prawns or liver – is fine if you normally eat these foods. Vegetarian alternatives to meat and fish, such as soya and beans or lentils, are nutritious, tasty and

much cheaper. Nuts are also a good source of protein for vegetarians but their fat content makes them high in calories so watch the portion size.

Foods and drinks high in fats and/or sugar

Use cornflour to thicken cooking sauces or gravies for meat or fish, so you won't need fat. Have mixed salads with low-calorie salad dressings rather than mayonnaise and oily dressings. Oil is better than lard for cooking but is still calorie-rich, so use as little as you can get away with, even if you're using olive or sunflower oil. What exactly are you spreading on your bread? (See page 20.)

Have bread-based pizza or bagels with low-fat cream cheese instead of fat-laden savoury pastries like sausage rolls and quiche. If you are going to have them at home or at work, individually wrapped biscuits, cakes and chocolate bars may help you keep to a small portion. Compare the labels of different savoury snacks such as potato crisps, tortilla chips and maize-curls. Choose the brand with the lowest fat in the pack.





A word about spreading fats

It's hard to keep pace with the full range of new 'fat spreads' on the market which are intended as alternatives to butter. In terms of fat there are two things to remember. First, reduce the total amount of fat you eat. Second, use the right kinds of fats. Remember that butter and margarine contain the same amount of fat and calories. A good rule of thumb is to avoid butter altogether if you can, because it is high in saturated fat. Use a margarine but spread it very thinly. Choose one which is based on unsaturated fats such as olive, rapeseed, corn or sunflower. This could be high in either polyunsaturates or monounsaturates – both are recommended. Also choose one which is labelled 'reduced fat' or 'low fat' – the lower the better. If you really can't resist butter, have it as a special treat occasionally. But despite what you may have read in the papers, butter really is bad news for the heart as well as the waistline.

A word about sugar

Sugar can add a lot of calories to your diet, especially if you have sugary drinks. Try to wean yourself off sugar, or if you really need the sweet taste, try artificial sweeteners instead.

A word about salt

You should avoid eating too much salt as it is linked with high blood pressure. Table salt is made up of the minerals sodium and chloride. It is the sodium in salt that is linked to increased health risks.

The guidelines for daily salt intake are a recommended maximum of 6 grams a day for an adult, or about one level teaspoon. The majority of adults in the UK are eating over 9 grams a day and it's easy to see why. Salt is in many of the processed foods we eat such as bread, biscuits, crisps, tinned vegetables, baked beans, canned soups, takeaways, sauces and ready meals. About three-quarters of the salt we eat comes from processed foods.

There are some ways of reducing the salt that you eat.

- Don't add it to your food when cooking. Use herbs, spices and lemon juice to flavour food instead.
- Don't add salt to your food at the table. Your taste buds will soon adapt to the change and you may even find that you prefer the taste!
- Check the nutrition information labels when buying food. You will often see sodium listed rather than salt so watch out for that. To convert sodium to salt, multiply the amount of sodium (in grams) by 2.5.

About three-quarters of the salt we eat comes from processed foods.

Alcohol

Most people enjoy a drink or two and there's no reason why you shouldn't have an occasional drink when you're trying to lose weight. Remember, though, that alcoholic drinks are low on nourishment and high on calories. So the more you drink, the more extra calories you'll be taking in. Less is definitely better. Also, because alcohol is an appetite stimulant, some people notice they tend to eat more when they drink alcohol. High-calorie nibbles like nuts, crisps and cheese are especially damaging or worse still, a late night take away meal!

So, if you drink, count up the extra calories in your weight loss plan and keep within your limit. Avoid strong ales, alcopops, cocktails and cream liqueurs. Also, avoid sugary mixers and choose 'diet', 'lite' or sugar-free drinks where possible.

Of course the message which applies to everyone, whether trying to lose weight or not, is about alcohol and safety. Safety for your own health and others. Keep within the safe limits of no more than three to four units per day regularly for men or no more than two to three units per day regularly for women. Binge drinking should always be avoided.



The following amounts count as one UNIT of alcohol. (ABV = alcohol by volume.)

1 small bitter, lager or cider, 300 ml (1/2 pint)
(3-5% ABV)

1 small glass of white or red wine, 100ml (4 fl oz)
(10% ABV)

1 pub measure of spirits, 25ml (1 fl oz)

1 small glass of sherry, 50ml (2 fl oz)

Note that wine is only 100ml. Normal sizes for glasses of wine in the pub are either 175ml (small) or 250ml (large), so that means a glass will be more than one unit. If drinks are stronger than stated here, alcohol units per serving will also be higher. For more detailed information on the number of units in your usual drinks, log on to www.drinkaware.co.uk

Non-alcoholic and low-alcohol drinks

If you're keeping off the alcohol, or just don't like drinking alcohol, choose alternative drinks carefully. Alcohol-free does not mean calorie-free! If in doubt, read the label.

The best choices are:

- tap water with or without ice
- plain spring water or mineral water (choose the one with the lowest sodium content)
- sugar-free or 'diet' fizzy drinks (eg, coca-cola or lemonade) and mixers (eg, tonic, dry ginger or bitter lemon)
- flavoured waters with a hint of fruit (but check they don't have any added sugar)
- your own diluted fruit juice (1 part unsweetened fruit juice to 8 parts of water)
- tea or coffee, without sugar
- squash or cordials with no added sugar.

Things to beware of include:

- low-alcohol or 'lite' beers or lagers
- sugary fizzy drinks like lemonade or coca-cola
- fruit juice.

Looking at labels

The BHF has a separate booklet, called *Guide to food labelling* which may be of interest. Checking food labels will help you to identify hidden fats, sugars and salt in processed foods and may identify the types of fats in food. Remember that sugar-free doesn't mean low-calorie or low-fat. Such foods may be high in both. Also, beware of foods labelled '0% cholesterol', because these foods may still have plenty of fat and calories.

It can be difficult to read everything while you are out shopping.



Front-of-pack labelling has been introduced to make it easier to tell what is in products at a glance. The traffic light system assigns a colour (red, amber or green) to show whether the food (per 100g) is high, medium or low in:

- fat
- saturated fat
- salt
- sugar.

Although these labels don't guarantee that the product is perfect for your needs, they can help give you an idea of whether the product is right for you.

If the food doesn't have a traffic light label, use the nutrition information. Especially look at energy (calories), fat and saturated fat, per 100g or per serving.

Low – a healthier choice

Fat	3g or less per 100g
Saturated fat	1.5g or less per 100g

High – have these just occasionally

Fat	20g or more per 100g
Saturated fat	5g or more per 100g

Compare similar products and choose the brand with the lowest fat, salt and sugar. The fat content is probably the most helpful piece of information. The amount you can eat in a day depends on the total daily calorie level you are aiming for. We give some examples below.

	1,500kcal	1,800kcal
Total fat per day	57 grams	68 grams
Saturated fat per day	15 grams	20 grams

*...walking to the shops,
cycling to work, digging
the garden or playing
outdoors with the
children can make quite
a difference.*



Getting moving

Exercise and activity can make a real difference to your weight loss, as well as your state of mind. Being more active will help use up more calories as well as keeping your mind off food! It doesn't have to mean going to classes or taking up jogging. It's more about finding something which suits you – and which is safe and enjoyable. Aim to increase your activity levels gradually. Start by aiming for up to half an hour of moderate activity a day on at least five days of the week. Then build this up gradually to help with your weight loss.

You can build activity into your everyday life with a bit of thought and determination. Walking is particularly good because it doesn't cost anything

and you don't need a gym or any special kit other than sensible shoes for it! People have found that taking the stairs instead of the lift (up as well as down), walking to the shops, cycling to work, digging the garden or playing outdoors with the children can make quite a difference.

If more structured exercise appeals to you – such as swimming, the gym or exercise classes – find out if your local leisure centre runs sessions for people like you at a time which suits you. Remember that for weight loss and heart health you need to get slightly breathless (but still able to talk) and a little hot and sweaty for the exercise to be worthwhile. If you have any health problems, check with your doctor before starting a physical activity programme.

CHANGING BEHAVIOUR

As you know, changing your diet or getting more active both need a lot of careful thought and effort. Often we know what we should be doing, but somehow find it difficult to stick to changes. That's not to say it's always an uphill battle, but there are some things you can do to make it a bit easier for yourself. Many of these things involve a little planning ahead or thinking about things differently. They all help you feel more in control of what you are trying to achieve. For a lot of people these 'behaviour changes' are the key to successful and permanent weight loss.

The list below shows some simple actions which people have found helpful. Tick those which you already do.

- ☐ Do nothing else while eating (Don't waste the calories – taste and enjoy them.)
- ☐ Eat at regular times.
- ☐ Eat sitting down.
- ☐ Pause during meals and put your knife and fork down between mouthfuls.
- ☐ Aim to be the last to finish.
- ☐ Shop on a full stomach.
- ☐ Write a shopping list and stick to it.
- ☐ Keep healthy snacks easily to hand (eg, fresh fruit in a bowl, chopped salad or vegetables in the fridge).
- ☐ Clean your teeth after a meal or when you get the urge to overeat.
- ☐ Serve your meal straight onto a plate and remove serving dishes from the table so you're less tempted to eat too much.
- ☐ Wait at least five minutes after finishing your meal before deciding whether to have second helpings.
- ☐ Practise refusing offers to overeat. Learn to say 'No thank you', politely but firmly and convincingly.
- ☐ Clear away any leftovers quickly after the meal.

As well as things you can do differently, there are also ways you can teach yourself to *think* differently. To understand more about your eating habits, you may find it helpful to keep a food diary, recording what you eat and drink each day. You could also note when you ate, where you were and how you were feeling at the time. You will probably find you get a lot of useful information from your food diary. Use that information to plan your coping strategies. Along with your food diary, using the suggestions below can help you get your 'mind over matter' and feel more in control of your weight loss plan.

Understanding patterns

Plan for the times of day when you know you are more likely to want to eat. For example, save some bread or cereal to have at 10pm if you know evenings are a danger time for you.

Real hunger?

Before you eat, check that you're really hungry (in your stomach) rather than just eating at a certain time or occasion out of habit.

Feelings

Be aware of how your feelings affect what you want to eat. For example, do you eat more when you're feeling angry, upset, lonely or bored? Noticing a pattern can help you plan how to cope.

Triggers

Be aware of triggers which are likely to lead you to overeat. For example, being at home alone, watching a cookery programme on TV, driving past a fast food restaurant, preparing a snack for your children or grandchildren or just certain times of the day. Planning ahead may help you cope.

Events

Plan ahead for special occasions when you know you'll be tempted. For example, eat a little less during the week when you're going to a party at the weekend, so you can indulge in a special dessert.

Cravings and urges to eat

It's quite normal to find you crave certain foods even when you aren't hungry. You might find this happens at certain times of the day or when you are feeling a certain way – for example, bored, upset or tired. If you aren't actually hungry these feelings will pass. Using distractions will help you to control your eating. For example, go for a walk, phone a friend, buy a magazine or flip through your photo albums.

Don't be hard on yourself

A lapse is not a collapse. If you break your plan for a few hours or days, it's not the end of the world! Try not to see your goals as 'all or nothing'. Try to learn from what went wrong and get back on track as soon as you feel ready.

A lapse is not a collapse. If you break your plan for a few hours or days, it's not the end of the world!



Gradual weight loss really is the safest and most effective way to lose weight.



YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Food combining seems popular.

Does it work?

At the end of the day, people who successfully lose weight on this type of diet seem to have done so simply because their calorie intake is restricted. Food combining involves eating foods containing protein, fat and carbohydrate in very strict combinations and sequences. Some people say it has worked for them and it certainly involves eating plenty of fruit and vegetables. But it does have drawbacks as it involves very careful planning. For example, a sandwich (carbohydrate) cannot include a protein filling like chicken, tuna or egg. It can only

have salad or fruit such as mashed banana. At other times meals must exclude carbohydrate, which means a roast dinner without potatoes or an Italian meal without the pasta or bread. This sort of food combining bans high-calorie foods that contain a combination of fat and carbohydrate. So that rules out all 'fatty and sugary foods' like chocolate, cakes, crisps, puddings and pastries. It is quite a restrictive diet so it's difficult to keep it up, especially when you're eating out or at someone else's house.

What about 'high-protein, low-carbohydrate' diets like the Atkins diet?

These are not recommended by the British Heart Foundation. The Atkins diet is a best-selling diet book in the UK and has been widely promoted by celebrities for whom it seems to have worked – at least in the short term. It is based on having large amounts of protein foods like meat, cheese and eggs and high-fat foods like cream and butter. It severely restricts carbohydrate foods – not only chocolate, cakes and puddings but also bread, potatoes, pasta, rice and cereals. It even restricts many fruits and some vegetables because of their carbohydrate content.

Although people seem to lose weight very quickly in the short term on this type of diet, it does not fit with the requirements for a balanced diet as set out in the *Eatwell plate* (see page 9). So while you might lose weight, we don't know what effect this might have on other aspects of your health. It's also worth remembering that a quick fix isn't usually the answer to people looking for a long term weight change. Because this type of eating plan is so different to most people's normal balance of foods it might be difficult to keep up the changes needed to keep the weight off.



Features of the Atkins diet	What it means	Why this can be a problem
High in protein	The kidneys have to work extra hard to break down protein in the body.	This protein burden may damage the kidneys, especially in people who, unknowingly, have kidneys that are not working as well as they could. There may also be a risk of kidney stones.
Low in carbohydrate, high in fat	<p>This means restricting the very foods we should eat 'plenty of', such as bread, potatoes, rice, pasta and certain types of fruits and vegetables.</p> <p>Butter and cream can be eaten freely.</p>	<p>Restricting foods such as fruit and vegetables and wholegrain cereals – which we know are associated with preventing coronary heart disease and diabetes – is cause for concern.</p> <p>Having too much butter and cream can affect blood cholesterol levels, especially in the weight maintenance phase.</p> <p>Low intakes of cereal and fibre can also cause constipation and other bowel problems.</p>

A vegetarian diet is not automatically a weight loss plan. It can be quite high in calories.

Would it help to become a vegetarian?

A diet based heavily on vegetables, fruit, cereals and grains is a very healthy way to eat. But a vegetarian diet is *not* automatically a weight loss plan. It can be quite high in calories because butter, oil, cheese and pastries tend to be popular with vegetarians. Fried vegetable dishes such as vegetable samosas, spring rolls and cheese and onion pasties are all high in calories.

If you don't eat meat, make sure you choose some healthy alternatives from the 'Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein' group, such as eggs, nuts, beans, peas and lentils. These foods are essential for the iron they provide. Iron helps carry oxygen around the body. Vegans, however, have to be especially careful not to become 'deficient' in important minerals and vitamins such as calcium, iron and vitamin B12.

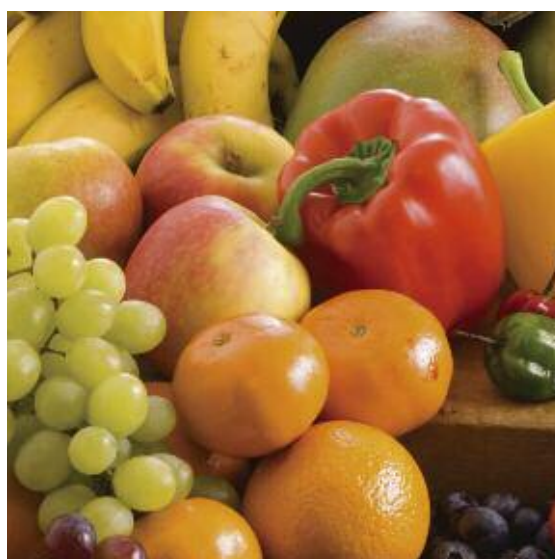
Isn't quick weight loss more rewarding?

Many people want to lose weight quickly in just a few weeks, ready for a special event or a holiday. Unfortunately our body rebels against this kind of crash dieting in a number of ways. First, eating so little means feeling hungry, listless and sometimes

faint, so it is difficult to sustain it for long. It also means the body is unlikely to be adequately nourished because such a small food intake can't provide enough vitamins and minerals for good health. Secondly, losing weight quickly involves losing essential water and muscle as well as fat. So, although the scales may show you've lost some weight, your body has not lost much fat! Thirdly, your metabolic rate slows down and it becomes even harder to lose weight. Gradual weight loss really is the safest and most effective way to lose weight.

Support

Many people like the idea of getting some support with their weight loss plan, from someone they know well, like a friend, relative or colleague or by going to a group. If you know someone else who wants to lose weight, you could ask them to be your 'buddy'. You can then help keep track of each other's progress and offer support when things aren't going so well. At the British Heart Foundation we believe this could really make a difference to your chances of success.



MEAL IDEAS

Of course, your weight loss plan will mean making changes, but that doesn't mean you have to stop eating your favourite meals. Nor does it mean you have to spend hours in the kitchen preparing special foods. In fact many healthy and tasty meals are easy to prepare. What could be quicker than baking fish dishes, boiling some pasta or stir-frying a mixture of chopped vegetables with thin strips of meat for flavour?

Cost and convenience may also matter to you. Choose wisely (see *Looking at labels*, on page 22) and you'll find that foods like low-fat ready-made cooking sauces, and 'ready meals' can all be included in your weight loss plan. If you have a microwave oven, use it to speed up cooking time as well as cutting out the fat. Cut your shopping bill by buying smaller amounts of lean meat and chicken and bulk it out with fillers like baked beans, chick peas or red kidney beans.

Here are a few meal ideas:

- Baked beans on toast
- Baked potato with a chicken portion, peas and sweetcorn
- Smoked mackerel risotto with a large green salad
- Sliced ham with lettuce, beetroot, tomato, grated carrot and warm crusty bread
- Potato and bean curry on a bed of rice, with sliced banana and grated cucumber
- Strips of cooked chicken with red kidney beans and sweetcorn on a large bed of mixed salad, served with a granary bread roll
- Beef and vegetable casserole with boiled potatoes, mashed swede and carrot
- Pasta quills with tomato and mushroom sauce.



When watching your weight, you also have to plan the amounts of food you eat. It's not just the quality – the quantity matters too.



TRACKING YOUR PROGRESS

You may find it useful to fill in a progress chart to keep track of your weight loss. Don't be tempted to weigh yourself more than once a week. Weigh yourself on the same scales and at the same time of day, without clothes if possible. The *Progress chart* on page 31 will help you to record your weight loss and to monitor your progress in other ways. Set your own goals and try to be realistic! For example, there may be a favourite item of clothing you could aim to fit into or an activity you would like to be able to do such as a 10-minute walk. Or your goals may be about your feelings of self-confidence. Very specific goals such as 'eating three pieces of fruit each day' or 'only eating chocolate once a week' are helpful, as they are easy to measure, realistic, and you will definitely know whether you have achieved them or not.

We think rewards are also a good idea, to keep you going when it gets tough, and to give yourself a pat

on the back when you get there. Rewards should be non-food-based. Use them for reaching 'behaviour' goals, rather than weight goals. For example, your goal could be to stick to your eating plan each day for a week or to keep up with your planned physical activity for a month. Your reward could be to buy a new book or to go and see a film. The best rewards are those which really would be a treat for **you**. Decide in advance what your GOALS and REWARDS will be and fill in these columns in your *Progress chart* before you start your weight loss plan. Record your ACHIEVEMENTS after each week or month, whichever you prefer.

The *Progress chart* on the next page is only for 12 weeks (3 months). When you finish it, you can draw out another one for your new goals over the next 12 weeks on a separate sheet of paper.

PROGRESS CHART

WEEK	Date	GOALS		REWARDS	ACHIEVEMENTS	
		Weight	Behaviours/ activities		Weight	Behaviours/ activities
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						

KEEPING AT IT

Some people say losing weight is not too difficult. It's keeping it off that's the hard bit. If you have a tendency to gain weight, it's true that you'll always have to keep an eye on your weight. Remember, as we said at the start, this is a **weight loss plan for life**.

To keep to a healthy weight, or to prevent weight gain, keep following the rules of the *Eatwell plate* as we've described throughout this booklet. You may find that it becomes easier over time and that filling up on foods from the main four food groups leaves you with less space for the high-calorie 'fatty and sugary foods'. Think of yourself as someone who isn't a big eater and practise saying 'No' when people offer you bigger portions or second helpings. Remind yourself how good it feels to have reached some of your goals. If your weight goes up a bit, don't despair. We're all human. You may well be able to learn something from your lapse. By reassessing things, making a few small changes, and getting support, you will start to lose a few pounds again.

Need more help?

If you would like help from someone who can talk through your weight loss plan personally, ask your doctor to refer you to a dietitian, or talk to your practice nurse.

There are also some websites where you can get more help and information:

www.bdaweightwise.com

www.weightconcern.org.uk

www.units.nhs.uk



Other BHF resources

The British Heart Foundation (BHF) also produces other educational resources that may be of interest. To find out about these or to order your *Heart health catalogue* please go to bhf.org.uk/publications or call the BHF Orderline on **0870 600 6566** or email orderline@bhf.org.uk. You can download many of our publications from bhf.org.uk/publications

Have your say

We would welcome your comments to help us produce the best information for you. Why not let us know what you think? Contact us through our website at bhf.org.uk/yoursay

What you can do for us

We rely on donations to continue our vital work. If you would like to make a donation to the BHF, please ring our donation hotline on **0300 330 3322** or contact us through our website at bhf.org.uk/donate or send it to us at the address on the back of this booklet.

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For information and support on anything heart-related



WHATEVER'S ON YOUR MIND, WE'RE HERE TO HELP

As the nation's heart charity we're pioneers in heart research and it's our job to provide care and support for those living with heart disease. You don't need to be unwell to call us, you can chat to us about anything you like. Whether you need help, heart health information or if you just want to talk to someone.

BEATING HEART DISEASE TOGETHER



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