Practical tips for a better diet

- Eat a varied diet with a wide range of foods.
- Eat more wholegrain's, e.g. wholemeal bread, brown rice, wholegrain cereals.
- Eat more fruit and vegetables, aiming for at least five portions a day. Frozen fruit can be cheaper and just as good particularly whizzed up in to a smoothie.
- Cut down on salt by eating less processed food, such as ready meals.
- Eat regular meals to help manage your diet and weight.
- Control your portion sizes to match your activity level.
- Try to be more physically active and aim for 30 minutes activity most days.
- Drink alcohol within recommended limits; the Department of Health recommends that both men and women should not drink over 14 units of alcohol per week.
- Buy seasonal fruit and vegetables as they tend to be cheaper and taste better.
- If cooking pasta or rice, add frozen vegetables, such as peas and sweetcorn.
- Batch cook or cook more for example pasta than you need for a meal, and mix other ingredients such as tuna, chicken, cucumber, tomatoes for lunch the next day.
- Make more food than you need and freeze some so you can grab it when you're busy and can cut down eating take-aways.
- Plan your meals for the week ahead so you reduce the chances of wasting food and have a better chance of eating planned healthier meals.
- Drink a minimum of two litres of water throughout the day.

Start off trying to do two or three of the above for a few days and gradually include more to form new, healthier habits!

Cholesterol

This factsheet is for people who want to learn more about cholesterol levels and health.

Why is high cholesterol a problem?
The main risk associated with high cholesterol is cardiovascular disease (CVD). This includes diseases of the heart and blood vessels. High cholesterol causes blood vessels to become narrowed with fatty deposits which can result in heart attacks, strokes and blood vessel problems.

What causes high cholesterol?
There are several factors that may contribute to high blood cholesterol:

- A diet that's high in saturated fat
- Lack of exercise
- Family history - people are at a higher risk of high cholesterol if they have a direct male relative aged under 55 or a female relative aged under 65 affected by heart disease
- Being overweight
- Age and gender - cholesterol generally rises slightly with increasing age and men are more likely to be affected than women
- Drinking more than the recommended amount of alcohol (ie more than 2 units per day)

Other health conditions such as poorly controlled diabetes, certain kidney and liver diseases and an underactive thyroid gland may also cause cholesterol levels to rise. Some medicines such as beta-blockers, steroids or thiazides (a type of diuretic) may also affect blood lipid levels.

How diet affects blood cholesterol

Only a small amount of cholesterol comes directly from your diet - the majority is produced by your liver. However, if your diet is high in saturated fats and cholesterol this can cause your liver to produce more bad cholesterol. The amount that diet influences cholesterol levels varies from person to person.

Measuring cholesterol

The amount of cholesterol in your blood is measured in units called millimoles per litre of blood, usually shortened to "mmol/litre" or "mmol/l". Current UK guidelines state that it is desirable to have a total cholesterol level under 5mmol/l.

Guidelines for a healthy weight

The most common benchmark of healthy weight for adults is based on height and weight, and is called body mass index (BMI).

BMI is a good indicator of the total amount of body fat, and it can be used to predict your likelihood of having a disease associated with being too heavy (or too light).

BMI is calculated with the formula:

BMI = weight (in kg) divided by height^2 (in m)

To work out your BMI, divide your weight in kilograms by your height in metres, and then divide the figure you get by your height in metres again.

Understanding your BMI

Underweight (BMI less than 18.5)
Some people in the underweight category (BMI under 18.5) are naturally lean and healthy. But being underweight can be bad for your health. If you are in the underweight category and have been restricting your diet, you should aim to gain weight and get back into the normal weight range for your height. If you are finding it difficult to put on weight, or you lose a lot of weight rapidly, you should see your GP.

Healthy weight (BMI 18.5 - 24.9)
If you are in the healthy range (BMI 18.5-24.9) for your weight and height, you should aim to maintain your weight through a combination of healthy diet and physical activity. Don't be tempted to try to get into the underweight category.

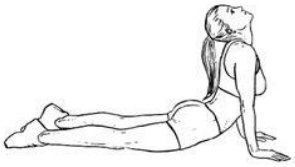
Overweight (BMI >25 - 29.9)
If you are in the overweight (BMI 25 - 29.9) range you should concentrate on not gaining any more weight. Try to cut down on sugary and fatty foods and on the amount you eat to get back into the normal weight range for your height. Increasing your levels of physical activity will help.

Obese (BMI >30 - 39.9) or morbidly obese (BMI > 40)
If you are in the obese (BMI 30 - 39.9) or morbidly obese (BMI over 40) range then your risk of health problems is high. It is important that you try to lose some weight and should consider asking for help from your doctor. "Morbidly" obese means that the amount you are overweight is harmful to your health.

PRINTABLE WORKOUT
Full body stretch

Butterfly Stretch

Cat Back Stretch

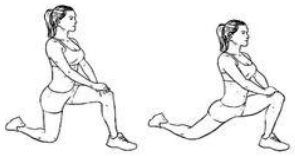


Cobra Abdominal Stretch / Old Horse Stretch

Gluteus / Glute / Gluteal Stretch

Hamstring Stretch

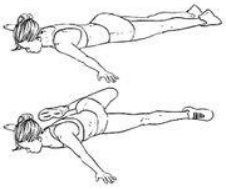
Knee-to-Chest Lower Back Stretch



Kneeling Hip Flexor Stretch

Neck Stretch

Overhead Triceps Stretch



Scorpion

Shoulder Stretch

Standing Quadricep Stretch

5 Exercises - Short Bodyweight Program

Warm Up
A brisk walk or light jog but always use active exercises (e.g., hops, rotations, arm swings etc.) to get our bodies ready. We need to get the blood flowing and muscles prepared to do more and reduce the risk of injury.

Do 10 repetitions of each exercise below and repeat with 8 and 6 repetitions. As it gets easier or you have more time, increase the number of repetitions and/or sets.

1

Front Lunges

- Keep your upper body straight, with your shoulders back and relaxed and chin up (pick a point to stare at in front of you so you don't keep looking down). Always engage your core (pull in your tummy and keep a good, tall posture to tap in to the muscles around your torso including the whole back and all the muscles around your ribs, tummy and pelvic floor, which we call your core).
- Step forward with one leg, lowering your hips until both knees are bent at about a 90-degree angle. Make sure your front knee is directly above your ankle, not pushed out too far, and make sure your other knee doesn't touch the floor. Keep the weight in your heels as you push back up to the starting position.

2

- Brace the core and slowly bend both arms, until you almost touch the ground with your upper body.
- Stretch the arms again, but not completely now touch one shoulder with the opposite hand hold up the hip, the back straight and the body in a line.
- Put the hand to the ground again and go over to the next push-up rep then touch the same or the opposite shoulder
- You can make this exercise easier by starting on your knees

3

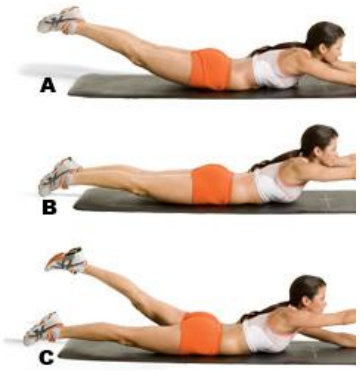
- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, hands behind your head, and elbows out to the sides
- Bend your knees and sit back as far as you can.
- Push back to start, then kick your right leg in front of you, foot flexed. That's one rep.
- Repeat, kicking with your left leg, and continue alternating.

4

- Begin in an elbow plank with your feet slightly wider than your hips.
- Twist your entire torso to the left reaching your left arm to the ceiling. Your pelvis will rotate, too, but do keep it level, and don't let it rise to the ceiling or sink toward the floor.
- Return to an elbow plank, and repeat the twisting motion to the right to complete one rep.

5

- Lie face down in prone position.
- Straighten legs and reach arms straight overhead.
- On one side, squeeze butt muscles then low back muscles as you lift and extend the leg while also lifting and extending the "opposing" arm.
- Quickly lower leg and arm then repeat with other leg and arm as if you were swimming with a "flutter kick."
- Be sure to keep legs "straight" during the kicks even when you get tired and to follow the muscle contraction sequence of: butt then low-back.
- Duration: Try working up to a 30-second set.



Cool Down

Our bodies benefit from stretches after we have already worked out - our muscles are more susceptible to them allowing us to stretch further and hold the stretches longer (see stretch sheet).

THE LIVER AND WEIGHT LOSS

Five vital points for the weight conscious!

1) The liver is the major fat burning organ in the body and regulates fat metabolism by a complicated set of biochemical pathways. The liver can also pump excessive fat out of the body through the bile into the small intestines. If the diet is high in fibre, this unwanted fat will be carried out of the body via the bowel actions.

2) If the diet is low in fibre, some of the fats (especially cholesterol) and toxins that have been pumped by the liver into the gut through the bile will re-circulate back to the liver. If this re-circulated fluid is high in fat and/or toxins, this will contribute to excessive weight. A high-fibre diet will reduce the recirculation of fat and toxins from the gut back to the liver. This is vitally important for those with excessive weight, toxicity problems and high cholesterol. The inclusion of plenty of raw fruits and vegetables as well as ground-up raw seeds will increase both soluble and insoluble fibre in the gut, and reduce recirculation of unwanted fat and toxins.

3) If the liver filter is healthy, it allows dietary cholesterol to be shunted into the liver for metabolism or excretion through the bile. A healthy liver filter is essential to properly regulate blood cholesterol levels. Poor liver function may increase your chances of cardiovascular diseases such as atherosclerosis, high blood pressure, heart attacks and strokes. If the liver does not regulate fat metabolism efficiently, weight gain tends to occur around the abdominal area and a protuberant abdomen (pot belly) will develop. This is not good for the waistline! Another sign can be a roll of fat around the upper abdomen. This is often a sign of a fatty liver. It can be almost impossible to lose this abdominal fat until the liver function is improved. Once this is done the liver will start burning fat efficiently again and the weight comes off gradually and without too much effort from you.

4) Many middle-aged people with excess fat in the abdominal area have a "fatty liver". In this condition the liver has stopped burning fat and has turned into a fat storing organ. It becomes enlarged and swollen with greasy deposits of fatty tissue. Those with a fatty liver will not be able to lose weight unless they first improve liver function, with a Liver Cleansing Diet and a good liver tonic. If you have a fatty liver it is vital to be patient, as it can take between 3 and 12 months, depending upon the amount of fat deposited in the liver, to remove the excess fat from the liver. After this accumulated liver fat has been removed, weight loss will occur easily. If you have a very severe case of fatty liver it can take several years to lose all of the excessive weight. However, this is very successful in the long term and provides the best chance of restoring your figure and your health.

5) If you overload the liver with the wrong type of hormone replacement therapy, drugs or toxins, the liver's biochemical pathways will have less energy reserves left over to perform their function of fat metabolism. Thus these things can lead to weight gain. For menopausal women with a weight problem, the best type of hormone replacement therapy is that which bypasses the liver, namely hormone patches, creams or buccal lozenges (troches).

Helpful Foods or Food Components for the Liver

The best vegetables for the liver are carrots and beetroots because they contain antioxidants including beta carotene, other carotenoids and healing flavanoids, which give colour to vegetables. These vegetable antioxidants have a healing and cleansing effect on the liver.

The following foods are also good sources of dietary fibre…

- Wholemeal, granary and softgrain varieties of bread
- Jacket potatoes, new potatoes in their skins and baked potato skins
- Wholegrain breakfast cereals, eg. Weetabix, Shredded Wheat, unsweetened muesli, and porridge oats
- Wholemeal pasta and brown rice
- Beans, lentils and peas
- Fresh and dried fruits – particularly if the skins are eaten
- Vegetables – particularly if the skins are eaten
- Nuts and seeds
- Wholemeal flour

Blood pressure

Blood pressure is a measure of force that the blood applies to the walls of the arteries as it flows through them. It's normal for blood pressure to increase when you exert yourself, or when you feel stressed or anxious, but if your blood pressure is consistently higher than normal at rest, this is high blood pressure.

Blood is pumped around the body by the heart carrying oxygen and nutrients. As a result of the pumping action of the heart and the size and flexibility of the arteries that carry blood, the blood is under pressure. This blood pressure is an essential and normal part of the way the body works.

High blood pressure develops if:

- the walls of your larger arteries lose their elasticity and become rigid
- the small blood vessels become narrower

Measuring blood pressure

Blood pressure is measured with a monitor called a sphygmomanometer. The cuff is placed around the upper arm and inflated to a certain level, then deflated slowly. A sensor in the cuff provides the result is expressed as two numbers, such as 120/80mmHG (millimetres of mercury).

- The top figure - the systolic blood pressure - is a measure of the pressure when your heart muscle is contracting and pumping blood. This is the maximum pressure in your blood system.
- The bottom figure - the diastolic blood pressure - is the pressure between heart beats when the heart is resting and filling with blood. This is the minimum pressure in your blood system.

In the UK, high blood pressure is defined as a consistently increased systolic blood pressure of 140 or over and/or a diastolic blood pressure of 85 or over.
If you suffer from diabetes, it is even more important that your blood pressure is lower than this - ideally less than 130/80.

Symptoms

Most people with high blood pressure don't have any symptoms. People with severe high blood pressure may also experience headaches, blurred or impaired vision, fits or black-outs.

Complications

People with high blood pressure have an increased risk of major illnesses including:

- cardiovascular disease such as angina, stroke, heart attack or atrial fibrillation
- kidney damage
- damaged sight

Lifestyle changes

First, your doctor or nurse is likely to discuss lifestyle changes which might help lower your blood pressure. He or she might, for example, advise you to:

- Stop smoking
- Change your diet to a low fat, low salt diet that includes fruit and vegetables
- Cut down on alcohol
- Get some regular moderate exercise
- Lose any excess weight

It may also help to try to reduce the stress in your life to avoid short-term rises in blood pressure - try relaxation techniques, meditation, yoga or pilates.