

The Eatwell Plate

The UK's national food guide, the eatwell plate, defines the government's advice on a healthy balance diet. The eatwell plate is a visual representation of how different foods contribute towards a healthy balanced diet. The plate model has been tested extensively with consumers and health professionals.

The size of the segments for each of the food groups is consistent with government recommendations for a diet that would provide all the nutrients required for a healthy adult or child (over the age of 5).

The eatwell plate, based on the 5 food groups, makes healthy eating easier to understand by giving a visual representation of the types and proportions of foods needed for a healthy balanced diet.

Background Information

Choosing a variety of foods from within the 4 main food groups will add to the range of nutrients consumed. This includes:

- plenty of fruit and vegetables*
- plenty of bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods*
- some milk and dairy foods*
- some meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non dairy sources of protein*

Foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar are not essential to a healthy diet, and should be consumed only in small amounts.

Eight tips for healthy eating:

- 1. Base your meals on starchy foods*
- 2. Eat lots of fruit and vegetables*
- 3. Eat more fish – including a portion of oily fish each week*
- 4. Cut down on saturated fat and sugar*
- 5. Try to eat less salt – no more than 6g a day for adults*
- 6. Get active and try to be a healthy weight*
- 7. Don't get thirsty, drink plenty of water*
- 8. Don't skip breakfast*

(Source: NHS Choices, 2013, last reviewed 31 May 2013, *The eatwell plate*, viewed April 2014, <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/eatwell-plate.aspx>)

Who the eatwell plate is for?

The eatwell plate is appropriate advice for most people including people of all ethnic origins and people who are of a healthy weight or overweight. It is also suitable for vegetarians.

However, it does not apply to children under 2 years of age because they have different needs. Between the ages of 2 and 5, children should gradually move to eating the same foods as the rest of the family, in the proportions shown on the eatwell plate.

People under medical supervision or with special dietary needs might need to check with their GP, or a registered dietitian, to be clear about whether or not the eatwell plate is suitable for them.

Guidelines for using the eatwell plate

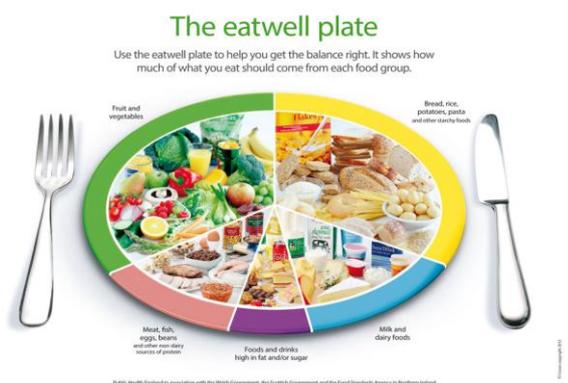
The eatwell plate is not meant to represent the balance required in any one specific meal or over a particular timescale; rather it represents the overall balance of a healthy diet. You don't need to get this exact balance at every meal but it's a good idea to try and get the balance right over a whole day or even a week.

The eatwell plate shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group. This includes everything you eat during the day, including snacks.

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*

Vitamin and mineral supplements are not a replacement for good eating habits. Most people can get all the nutrients their body needs by choosing a variety of foods, in the proportions shown, from the main 4 food groups in the eatwell plate.



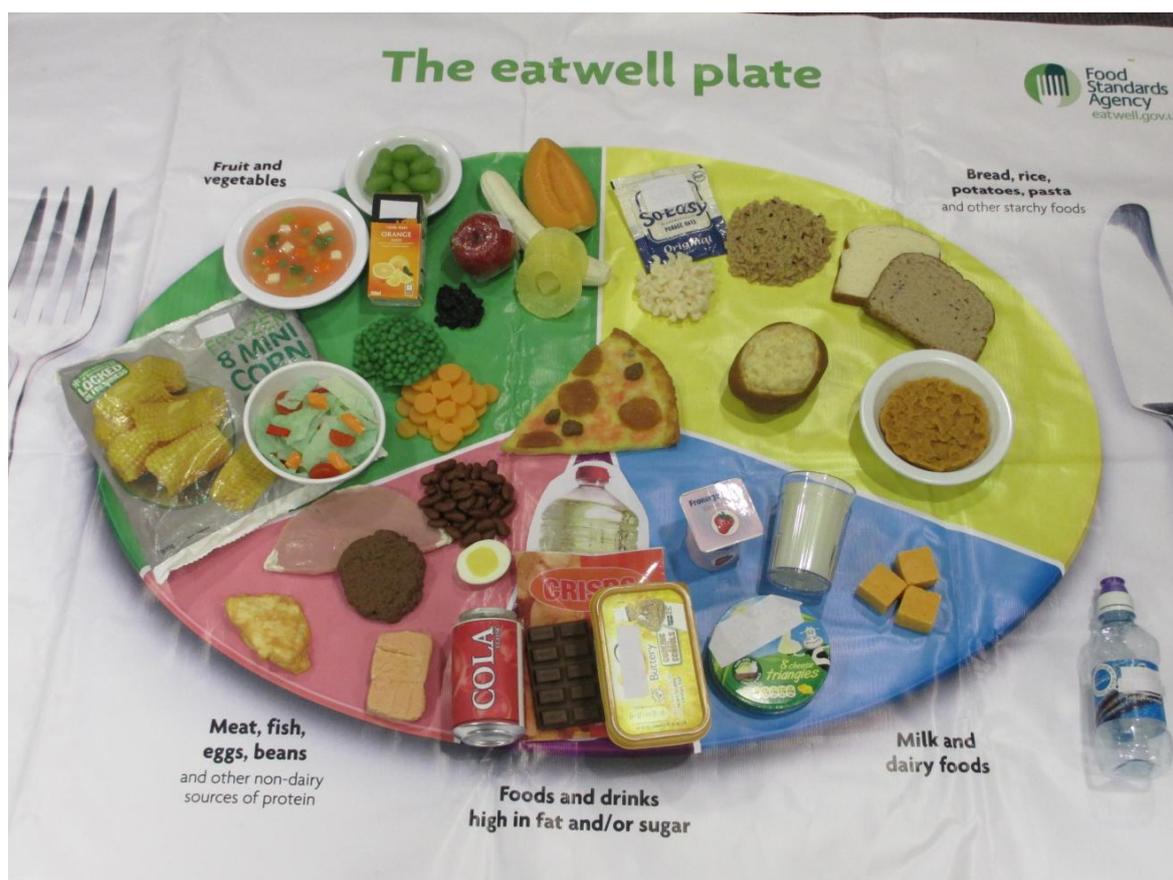
(Source: Public Health England, Updated 7th January 2014, *The eatwell plate: how to use it in promotional material*, viewed April 2014, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-plate-how-to-use-it-in-promotional-material> >)

How and Where To Use This Resource

This resource can be used in a vast number of ways and can be an effective tool to promote healthy eating messages amongst children, teenagers, adults and those with learning disabilities.

As a Display

The food models can be placed on the relevant sections on the mat and then used as a display within health centres, schools, colleges, workplaces or in community centres. It can also be displayed at specific events such as health fairs, parent's evenings and exhibitions or at training events.



Eatwell Plate – Food Groups (examples of what the box may contain, and where they fit on the mat)

Fruit & Vegetables	Bread, Other Cereals & Potatoes	Meat, Fish & Alternatives	Milk & Dairy products	Foods & drinks high in fat and/or Sugar	Composite Dishes
Fresh Orange Juice	Noodles	Roast Beef	Glass of Milk	Oil	Meatballs and Spaghetti
Peas	Rice	Chicken Breast or Leg	Yoghurt	Butter / Margarine	Burger on a Roll
Corn on cob/ Sweetcorn	Pasta	Pork Chop	Yoghurt Drink	Piece of Cake	Meat Pizza Slice
Carrot	Roll	Slice of Ham	Soft Cheese	Ice Cream	Chicken & Veg Stir Fry
Celery	Slice of white bread	Hot Dog	Cheddar Cube	Chips	Macaroni Cheese
Beetroot	Slice of Brown Bread	Burger	Cottage Cheese	Pork Pie	Ham Salad Roll
Bowl of salad	Slice of Toast	Tuna Fish – Food Model or tin	Rice Pudding	Roast Potato	
Mushroom	Flour Tortilla	Salmon Fillet or Tinned	Pot of Custard	Cookie	
Strawberries	½ Pitta Pocket	4 Fish Fingers		Soft Drinks (Fizzy)	
Tomato	Bagel	Haddock		Crisps	
Red pepper Slices	Cracker	Peanut Butter		Chocolate	
Grapefruit	Mashed Potatoes	Kidney Beans		Sweets	
Slice of Melon	Baked Potato	Lentils		Biscuits	
Prunes	Porridge Oats	Chickpeas			
Banana	Breakfast Cereal	Baked Beans			
Orange		Boiled egg			
Tinned Pears					
Peach					
Raisins					
Dried Dates					
Bowl of Vegetable Soup					

Eatwell plate notes/script guidance for group leaders

This is a guide to assist in the delivery of an eatwell plate session.

The red script can be used by facilitators as a guide to the kind of questions you may wish to use when working with groups or individuals.

*****The black script provides the information that should be relayed to participants'***

You need to eat a range of foods to make sure your body gets all the energy and nutrients it needs to function properly.

Eating a healthy, well balanced diet may:

- Improve energy levels and general well-being
- Help provide the body with essential nutrients
- Improve the bodies immune system
- Help to control body weight
- Reduce the risk of conditions such as coronary heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and some types of cancers.

Q: Why do you think foods are split into different groups?

A: This makes it easier to make sure we eat a variety of foods. Each food group affects our bodies in different ways and it's the variety of foods working together that keep us healthy. For example, although fruit and vegetables are great, if that was all we ate it would not give us all the nutrients we need. In the same way, if we only eat high fat, sugary foods we will not get all the nutrients we need to be healthy. *That is why we need to eat something from each of the food groups every day.*

Q: Why are the sections on the mat different sizes?

A: The mat is divided into sections; each section represents the **proportion** of foods from each group.

Q: Do you know what the groups are?

A: Allow each person to take a food model/picture and place it where they think it should be on the mat. When all the models/pictures have been placed, discuss all the individual food sections.

Each section should be discussed, as below.

Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods

Q: Why should we eat foods from this section?

A: Sometimes called the starchy or carbohydrate section. Starchy foods play an important role in a healthy diet. We should try to base meals around starchy foods; they should make up about a third of the food you eat. When possible we should choose high fibre, wholegrain varieties, as they can help to keep you fuller for longer. Starchy foods are a good source of energy.

What kind of foods do you think would be in this group?

A: Refer to above food group table

Fruit and vegetables

Q: How many portions of fruit & vegetables should we eat in a day?

A: We should aim to eat 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables everyday.

Q: Why do we need to eat fruit & vegetables?

A: Fruit and vegetables are good sources of vitamins, minerals and fibre. Fruit and vegetables help our bodies work efficiently, protect us against infections like the cold and help wounds to heal. Although one glass of fruit or vegetable juice and one portion of dried fruit count towards your five a day, they only count once and should be eaten with a meal, as the sugars they contain are highly concentrated and can contribute to dental erosion/decay. Fresh, frozen, juiced, tinned and dried varieties all count towards your five a day.

Q: Does anyone know how much a portion is?

A: A good way to remember what is a portion; is to think what you can comfortably hold in your hand, e.g. apple, small bunch of grapes, 2 – 3 spoons of vegetables, a bowl of vegetable soup, 150ml of unsweetened fruit or vegetable juice.

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

Q: Why do you think we need to eat food from this section?

A: Protein foods such as fish (tuna), meats (mince, cold meat, chicken, pork and lamb), beans, lentils, nuts and eggs are required for growth, development and bone/muscle maintenance. Red meat is a good source of iron which can help to keep our blood healthy. We should try to eat some of these foods everyday. Aim to eat 2 portions of fish a week, one of which should be oily fish such as salmon, mackerel or fresh tuna. Try to choose meats that are lower in fat, go for the leanest options.

Milk and dairy foods

Although milk, yoghurt and cheese are dairy foods, they also have an amount of protein in them.

Q: So why do you think they are in a separate section?

A: Milk and dairy products are great sources of calcium and protein. Calcium helps to keep our bones healthy and strong, which are why they have a section all of their own. You could take milk as a drink or include it with a breakfast cereal, have yoghurt as a dessert and use cheese in some of your recipes or as an occasional snack. Choose lower fat milk (skimmed or semi-skimmed) and dairy products when possible. About 3 portions will make sure you have enough calcium. (You could investigate other sources of calcium)

NB: You only need a small matchbox size of cheese for a portion.

Food and drinks high in fat and/or sugar

Q: Why is this smallest section on the mat?

A: This is the smallest section on the mat as we only need a small amount of these foods in a day. This can be difficult as there are lots of food we may enjoy in this group such as sweets, biscuits, crisps and chips.

Fat

*Too much fat can contribute to us putting on weight or even increase our risk of developing heart disease. All fats are high in calories, **saturated fat** is the kind that is solid at room temperature and usually found in butter, pies, pastry, sausages and biscuits. We should try and have less of this kind and replace them in part with unsaturated fats. Unsaturated fats are usually liquid at room temperature, e.g. olive, rapeseed and sunflower oils.

Sugar

*Eating a lot of sugary food and drinks can lead to dental decay. It is best to keep sugary food and drinks to mealtimes only.

It is important to cut down on **how much** and **how often** you eat and drink foods containing sugar to reduce the risk of developing tooth decay. Tooth decay is caused by acid attack. Dental plaque, the sticky white stuff that forms on our teeth, is the bacteria in our mouths converting the sugar that we eat to form acid. This acid attacks our teeth. The more times we eat sugar the more our teeth will be under attack from the acid and eventually a hole, or a cavity, may appear. This could lead to toothache and bad breath. It is best to keep sugary food and drinks to mealtimes only.

Combination Foods:

Q: What about foods that are a combination, such as spaghetti bolognese, a pizza, or apple crumble. Where do they fit on the mat?

A: These are known as composite foods; which means they contain a combination of foods from different food groups or sections.

The cooking methods of foods will also affect where foods go on the mat e.g. frying, and making potatoes into chips.

Q: Where do drinks such as water fit on the mat?

A: Although the 'eatwell plate' model does not include a section for drinks such as water and tea, participants can discuss the importance of including water in the diet. See below for further information.

Important Discussion Points:

- Why are foods classified in certain groups?
- What is a composite food and where do they fit on the plate?
- Why are the sections on the plate different sizes?
- Why is it important to include a wide variety of foods each day?
- If one food group was excluded from a diet – would this matter?
- Does cooking foods in different ways or adding sauces affect which food group they fall into?
- What about low fat foods or low sugar/diet food and drinks?
- Where do foods like ice cream, eggs, potatoes, chips, pies, pastry, sugary or fizzy drinks, fit on the eatwell plate?
- Where do drinks such as water, fit on the plate?

NB: The eatwell plate does not include a place for water. However you can discuss the importance of drinking plenty of fluid (see page 10)

Other Points for Discussion:

Fluids

The eatwell plate only shows some fluids – a glass of milk in the dairy section and a glass of fruit juice in the fruit and vegetable section. There is no place on the mat for drinks such as water, tea, coffee or sugar free drinks although these are major contributors to our overall fluid intake. Most people should be encouraged to drink **6 to 8 glasses** of fluid each day although more fluids should be consumed during hot weather, during exercising or when you're ill.

Alcohol

Alcohol is not illustrated on the eatwell plate but it can be incorporated into a healthy diet, as long as it is taken in moderation.

Many experts agree that light drinking - one or two units a day – can have certain health benefits. There's evidence that it can help protect against coronary heart disease for men over 40 and post-menopausal women.

The UK Government advises that men drink no more than 3-4 units per day and women no more than 2-3 units per day, with 2 alcohol free days per week.

Regularly drinking 4 or more units for men, and 3 or more units a day for women, isn't advisable because of the progressive health risks it carries.

What is a unit?

It's the strength and size of a drink that determines how many units it contains. It's not as simple as one drink equals one unit.

As a general guide, 1 unit equals approximately:

½ pint of ordinary strength beer, lager or cider

1 small glass of wine (125ml)

1 single measure of spirit – whisky, gin, vodka.

1 small glass of sherry or port

For further information on alcohol, visit: www.drinkaware.co.uk

Linking food to the eatwell plate

Activities

Purpose

To raise awareness and increase knowledge of an individuals eating habits and food choices.

You may need:

- blank paper
- pens
- blank eatwell plates (see page 14)
- floor mat and food models

Activity 1: What did you eat yesterday? / Dietary Recall

- Participants should complete a food diary of the foods they ate the previous day. It is important to note that most people have no 'best day'.
- List everything you ate and drank yesterday
- Include breakfast, lunch, dinner any snacks and drinks.
- Match each food into a blank 'eatwell plate' by writing each item into the food group that you think it goes.
- Discuss with the group, what their completed plates look like. Are they balanced..?

Activity 2: Ready- Steady- Go!

- Place the boxes of food models either next to the mat or at a distance away and time the participants to empty the boxes of food models.
- With younger age groups you may wish to emphasise the timing aspect e.g. use 'ready, steady, go' or count down the last 10 seconds.
- Competitors can work individually, in pairs or in small groups.
- The game host then has to add up participant scores.
- 1 point is awarded for each correctly placed item and 1 point deducted for a misplaced item.

Activity 3: What's in a Recipe?

Use the eatwell plate to look at the ingredients in a recipe, and discuss food groups, balanced diets and cooking methods (frying, poaching etc).

Use the script on pages 6 to 10 for discussion points.

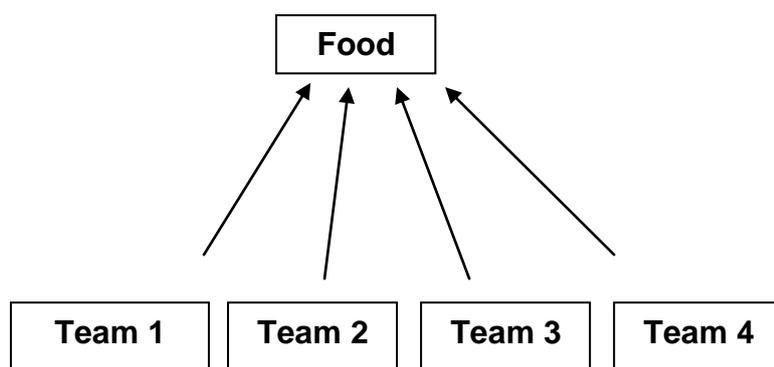
Activity 4: Big Food Beetle Drive

You will need:

- Food models from each of the food groups
N.B: Make sure there are enough food models supplied to make up two teams.
- A large dice for each team
- Eatwell Plate activity mat for each team.

Dice Number	Food group	How many servings?
1	Fruit & Vegetable	5 or more
2	Bread, cereals and Potatoes	5 or more
3	Milk and Dairy products	3
4	Meat, fish and alternatives	2
5	Drinks	5 or more
6	Foods containing fats & sugars	1

- Place the mat beside each team.
- Place all foods opposite, run or walk to collect the appropriate food and place on the appropriate section of the mat.



Instructions:

- Throw the dice and collect 1 food model according to the number on the dice e.g. if you throw a number 3 then you should choose an item from the milk and dairy products. (*Refer to previous food group table*).
- Take the food model and place it on the mat in the correct section.
- The first team finished may not be the winner. Count up the scores and take off points where the foods have been misplaced
- 1 point for each correctly placed item and 1 point deducted for each misplaced model.

Useful Resources



'Your guide to the eatwell plate' leaflet – Available to order from HIRS (see above) – Code NUT 07/L



The eatwell plate flier – Available to order from HIRS (see above) – Code NUT 79/L

There is also a *South Asian eatwell plate* flier - Available to order from HIRS (see above) – Code NUT 73/L



There is also a '*South Asian Eatwell Plate Display*' which is available to borrow from HIRS (see above) – Code NUT 100/K – This display contains an eatwell floor mat and plastic food models, typical to the South Asian diet.

Useful Websites

NHS Forth Valley, Nutrition and Dietetics:

www.nhsforthvalley.com/healthpromotion

Click 'Nutrition' - For nutrition information, resources and links to useful nutrition websites.

NHS Choices:

www.nhs.uk

Click 'Live Well' – 'Healthy Eating'

Food Standards Agency (Scotland):

www.eatwellscotland.org

This site has more information on healthy eating.

British Dietetic Association:

www.bda.uk.com

Click 'Food Facts' for downloadable fact sheets

Health Improvement Resource Service (HIRS):

www.nhsforthvalley.com/healthpromotion

Click 'Health Improvement Resources Service' – For details on our Health Promotion Library where you can order leaflets, posters and other displays. Or call 01786 433 867.

Eatwell Everyday:

www.eatwelleveryday.org

Eatwell everyday shows you what a healthy balanced diet looks like and supports you to take steps towards healthier eating.

