

## Health matters

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### Factsheet 10: **Healthy eating**

As a carer, eating a balanced diet is essential to provide your body with all the nutrients it needs. A balanced diet will keep your body strong and give you enough energy for yourself and to help you to provide the best care for the person you are caring for.

You should try to eat:

- **Plenty of starchy food**  
Bread, breakfast cereals, potatoes and pasta are a good source of energy. Always choose wholegrain varieties where you can.
- **Plenty of fruit and vegetables**  
Aim for five portions of fruit and vegetables per day to provide you with a good source of vitamins and minerals. 1 portion is equivalent to either: 1 apple, 1 medium banana, 7 strawberries, 1 handful of grapes, 150ml glass of unsweetened orange juice, dessert bowl of salad or 3 heaped tablespoons of mixed vegetables.
- **Some protein**  
Meat, fish, eggs, beans are a good source of protein.
- **Some milk and dairy foods**  
Cheese, yogurt or choose low-fat options if trying to reduce fat in your diet.
- **Limit the amount of foods high in fat or sugar**  
Crisps, chocolate and sweets fall in to this category but are often described as 'empty calories' as they hold little nutritional benefit and can contribute to weight gain quite quickly.

### **Tips for eating well on a budget**

If you are on a budget, there are simple and affordable ways to shop for a healthy, balanced diet:

- Use supermarket own brands as a cheaper alternative to branded products.
- Look out for offers on foods that keep, such as tins of pulses or tomatoes.

- Dried, frozen or canned fruit (in juice) and vegetables can sometimes be cheaper than fresh varieties – and just as healthy.
- When you buy fresh fruit and vegetables, it can be cheaper to buy them loose rather than pre-packaged. In addition, it is usually cheaper to buy fruit and vegetables when they are in season.
- Supermarkets often reduce prices on products that are close to their sell by date and this can be a great way to pick up a bargain. But be sure you can cook or eat everything you buy (or are able to freeze it) before it goes off.
- When making meals, prepare large quantities and freeze the extra portions. This can be a cost- and time-effective way of maintaining a balanced diet.

### **Improving nutritional intake**

If you are worried that someone you care for is struggling to eat enough food, try to give them meals and snacks high in energy and protein might help:

- Foods which provides protein and energy are meat, oily fish, eggs, nuts, full fat dairy, such as yoghurt or cheese
- Foods which are a great source of energy are pasta, potatoes, bread, rice, crackers or oatcakes.
- Nutritionally-balanced dietary supplement shakes and drinks are available from your pharmacist.

**Carers Trust Hillingdon has a range of services that might help you. For more information please contact us on:**

**Telephone:** 01895 811206

**Email:** [office@carerstrusthillingdon.org.uk](mailto:office@carerstrusthillingdon.org.uk)

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