

What is a Healthy Diet and how do you achieve it when in quarantine?

In these uncertain times it is essential to take time to maximise your health; not only for yourself, but also to reduce dependence on NHS services. For some that may mean avoiding risky pursuits like sky diving or deep sea diving but for all of us it also means taking time to nourish yourself properly and take in some exercise. The opportunity to do this is yours right now as we're all stuck at home.... unless you have somewhere else you need to be?

There are 3 main lifestyle components that make a huge impact on health:

- Nutrition (what you eat)
- Exercise (how much you move)
- Stress (how much pressure you put on yourself)

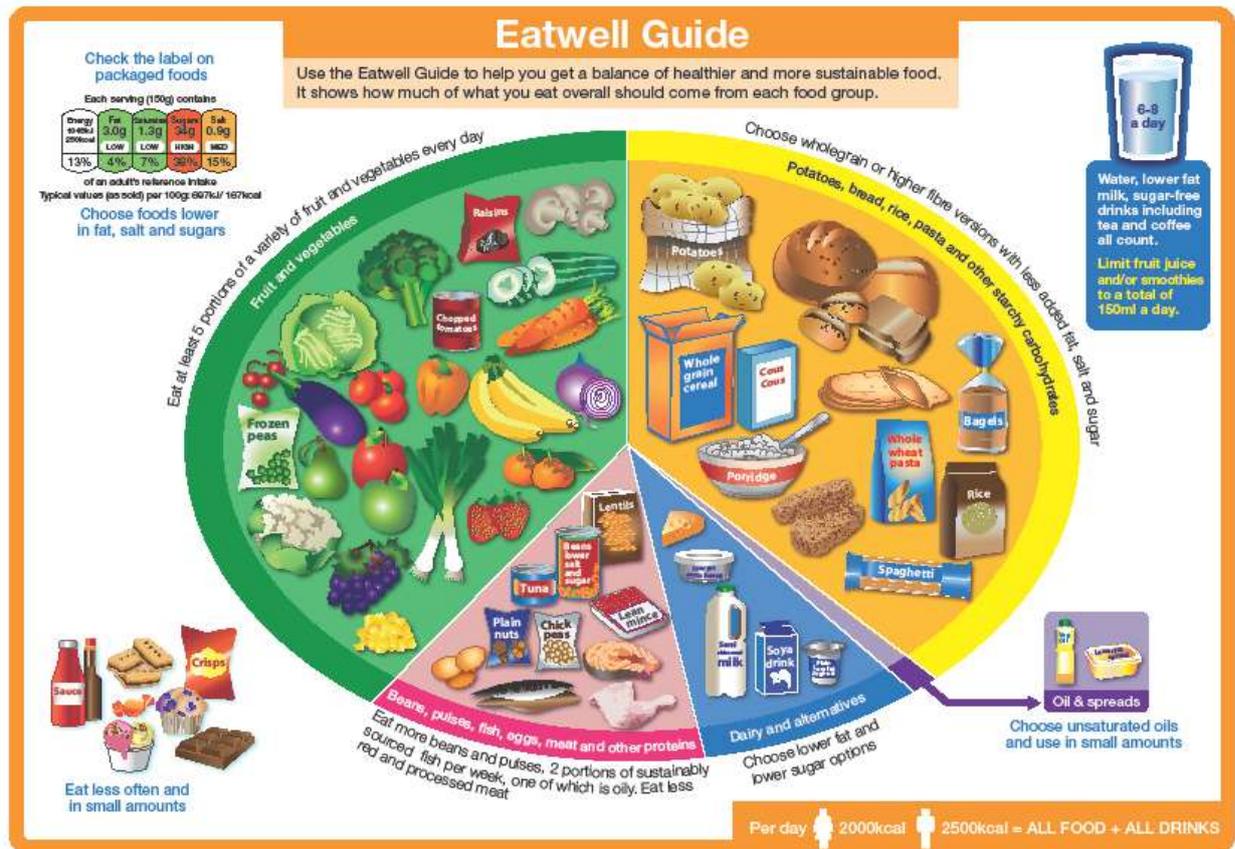
During this Coronavirus outbreak all 3 of these are likely to be affected. Obviously, this unknown global health pandemic is likely to be scary and cause us all some degree of anxiety and stress. Isolation in homes with limited space for exercise and without the companionship of exercise buddies means our motivation for exercise may reduce. Particularly if the weather is bad, I can see us all isolating ourselves to the couch to binge watch box sets or movies. Then there is nutrition. Let's be honest it would be a miracle if you have managed to avoid the headlines of 'panic buyers', 'empty shelves' and 'endless queues'. There has been huge concern over how we can feed ourselves and our family. In reality, although some shelves have been hit by panic buyers, there has always been plenty of food in stores albeit not necessarily what we'd usually choose. This is where we have a choice:

- a) Stress out! "argggghh! There's nothing to eat..." then spend 3 days trawling shops, supermarkets and farms, locally and online, scouring shelves looking for the product you "NEED".

OR

- b) Decide to recalibrate "NEED". Take a bit of time to consider what you really need for a healthy balanced diet and use this as an opportunity to try new foods and recipes. You never know you might find a new favourite.

Even if the shelves have been emptied of bread or pasta, we can still create a healthy diet from other foods. **Healthy diet is one that incorporates a balance and range of food types.** The Department of Health guidelines suggest following the Eatwell Guide plate (below). This shows that your dietary intake consists of vegetables, starchy carbohydrates, protein and dairy (or alternative).



Therefore, if foods are lacking on the shelves we have options:

- 1) Can we create food ourselves – for example if there is no bread on the shelf, can you make your own? Or if you don't have much time maybe create your own flat bread - https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/recipes/quick_flatbreads_43123 or soda bread - <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/simple-soda-bread>. You could also make your own pasta, even if you don't have a pasta making machine- <https://www.biggerbolderbaking.com/homemade-pasta-2-ingredient/>

- 2) You can use the Eatwell Guide to choose alternatives that ensure you still get a balanced diet. For example, if bread is unavailable swap your regular sandwich or toast for Spanish omelette, jacket potato, rice, cous cous or pasta salad. If you are looking for something more adventurous why not try quinoa salad <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/collection/quinoa-salad>. This is a good resource for recipes to try <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes>. However, if you are not an internet surfer and prefer using a recipe book then why not try substituting ingredients with different ones. Easy swaps are:
 - a. Rice ⇔ buckwheat, cous cous or quinoa
 - b. Bread ⇔ Homemade flat bread, bread
 - c. Pasta ⇔ root vegetable (sweet potato, parsnip, swede, carrot) strips (either spiralised or thinly sliced)

A healthy balanced diet is achieved by eating a **balance** of food groups in the Eatwell Guide plate and trying to incorporate as much **variety** as possible. Embrace variety by experimenting with new ingredients and new recipes!

TIP: Try a new recipe and new food every week