

## Choosing the Healthiest Type of Foods

How do you decide what food to buy and eat? Is it based on taste, smell, habit, what's on offer or if you like the colour of the wrapper? We all have different priorities when it comes to food buying and preparation choices. In addition, we are often influenced by what the media suggests we should eat to experience 'their' particular taste sensations or save the most money. If you are seeking a healthy diet, media and advertising messages can be contradictory and confusing. So how do you know what to believe? Especially as the professionals tend to disagree to some extent and change their minds constantly.

However, as a registered Nutritionist I can assure you that this is what we do know: **your** healthiest diet should be unique to you. For example, a triathlon runner is unlikely to need the same type and volume of foods as a toddler. That said, a healthy diet for everyone is rich in nutrients such as vitamins and minerals that are essential to nourish our body.

Here's a basic quick guide to choosing **nutrient rich foods** from the main food types:

### Protein

- **MEAT: lean** cuts of meat for example skinless chicken or poultry, or meat with the fat trimmed off.
- **FISH:** particularly **oily fish** twice a week, such as mackerel, salmon or sardines. Plus, avoid battered or breaded fish as cooking methods and processing may reduce vitamin and mineral content of the food.
- **BEANS:** /legumes, beans, peas, lentils or pulses examples are chickpeas, red lentils, broad beans, butter beans.
- **EGGS:** opt for free range if possible
- **UNPROCESSED:** limit your intake of processed meats such as sausages, bacon, chorizo, ham etc....

Good options are unprocessed lean meat, fish, legumes and pulses and eggs.

### Starchy Carbohydrates

- Choose **wholegrains**, which means brown not white. **Brown** bread, brown pasta, brown rice or oats.
- **Choose a variety** of root vegetables. For example, don't always select potatoes, try sweet potato, parsnip, swede or turnip as an alternative.

Good choices are a range of root vegetables and BROWN varieties of wholegrain foods.

## Vegetables & Fruit

- The majority of your diet should be vegetables with an emphasis on variety. Choosing a variety of types and colours. As they say “***eat the rainbow***” as this ensures you get the full spectrum of vitamins and minerals.
- Try to ***avoid processing*** vegetables too much. Processing such as extensive and high heat cooking can destroy vitamins and minerals. So try eating some vegetables raw if you can. If this is difficult you could try blending or juicing vegetables.
- They say eat 5 portions per day, but this is minimum. If you can aim for between **7 – 10 portions** per day. 1 portion is 80 g OR 1 large handful
- Although this section includes fruit, the mainstay of your 5 (or more) per day should be vegetables with only 1 – 2 being fruit based.

Any vegetables are good just so long as you consider cooking methods: deep fried anything is not great for you. When it comes to veggies ***the more the merrier!***

## Dairy

- Dairy has many nutrients in it, but has particularly good levels of calcium, phosphorus, B vitamins and fat soluble vitamins (D, E, K). You should opt for any dairy but be aware that some are higher in calories than others (full-fat milk, butter, cream, cheese). This does not mean you should entirely avoid full fat varieties as these are higher in fat soluble vitamins such as vitamin D, E and K, just take a smaller portion if you are watching your waistline.

Most foods contain some nutrients so there is space in everyone’s diet for ANY food in moderation. BUT ***the more nutrient dense, the better!***