

# MAINTAINING A HEALTHY MIND, BODY & SOUL



## THE IMPORTANCE OF HEALTHY EATING

A healthy and varied diet is crucial for maintaining our health, especially at a time when our immune system may be required to fight back. Following a healthy pattern of eating is linked with better stress management, improved sleep quality, increased concentration and better mental wellbeing in general.

As no one food gives us all of the nutrients we require, an individual's diet should be balanced across a variety of foods. Individual foods are not necessarily healthy or unhealthy, though healthy eating requires a balanced diet with a range of foods from each of the five main food groups. The NHS eatwell plate displays these food groups and the proportions in which they should be consumed. The foods in the smallest group (high in fat and/or sugar) are not required as part of a healthy diet.

Due to the current climate a lack of available fresh foods might make maintaining a balanced diet difficult and can also possibly result in more highly processed foods being eaten, which are often high in fats, sugars and salts. However, despite the challenges we face when it comes to ingredients, there are ways in which we can attempt to maintain a balanced diet and the World Health Organisation (WHO) has come up with the following top tips:

### The eatwell plate

Use the eatwell plate to help you get the balance right. It shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group.



- Make a plan – buy only what you need.
- Be strategic about the use of ingredients – prioritise fresh products.
- Prepare home-cooked meals where possible – many healthy and delicious recipes can be found online.
- Be aware of portion sizes – being at home can lead to overeating.
- Follow safe food handling practices – only safe food is healthy food.
- Limit your salt intake – recommended 5g per day or less.
- Limit your sugar intake – ideally less than 5% of total energy intake for adults should come from free sugars.
- Limit your fat intake – limiting total fat intake to less than 30% of total energy intake, of which no more than 10% should come from saturated fat.
- Consume enough fibre – fibre contributes to a healthy digestive system and offers a prolonged feeling of fullness.
- Stay hydrated – good hydration is crucial for optimal health and helps your sleep, whilst alcohol weakens the immune system.

Finally, one positive is that the current climate allows many of us to spend more time at home and therefore provides new opportunities to share meals together and to strengthening family relationships. This time is also a perfect chance to involve the whole family in helping to cook healthy foods, which can particularly help young people acquire important life skills that they can carry into adulthood.