

Health & energy wise : ask yourself the following questions... / produced by Bloomsbury Health Education in association with Westminster Age Concern.

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Bloomsbury (London, England). Health Education Department.
Westminster Age Concern.

Publication/Creation

[London] : Bloomsbury Health Education, [between 1980 and 1989?]

Persistent URL

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/bbt4yehg>

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HEALTH & ENERGY WISE

**EATING WELL FOR
WARMTH AND HEALTH**



ASK YOURSELVES THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

Do you skip meals sometimes?
Do you find it too much bother to
cook for yourself? Do you find it
difficult to vary your meals and
eat healthily on a low budget?

Do you want to keep warm this
winter?

If the answer to any of these
questions is 'Yes' then please
read this leaflet carefully.

Even if you feel that your diet is
good, you may like the tips and
suggestions we have made.

Many of us living in Britain would agree that our winters are too long and too cold. Older people know very well the hazards the cold weather can bring.

This leaflet is all about eating well and keeping warm and is one of a series giving advice on how to cope in the cold winter months.

A HEALTHY DIET

Eating a good healthy diet cannot guarantee freedom from illness, but it does give our bodies the best chance to fight infection and maintain good health. In addition eating well helps to keep our bodies warm, which is so important during the winter months.

Remember, hot drinks and hot meals may help you feel warmer, but the most important thing is to eat regularly.

Always try to have something to eat at hand - a sandwich or cheese and biscuits or at bed-time take a flask of hot soup, tea or cocoa with you.

Although you need slightly less energy (calories) as you get older your need for vitamins and minerals remains the same so try not to restrict your food intake or miss meals.

If you are worried about being overweight try cutting down on some of the fatty or sugary foods. Keep up your intake of other foods to ensure you are getting enough vitamins and minerals.



FILLING UP ON FIBRE

Feel good about eating more bread and cereals and fruits and vegetables. Not only will they provide you with vitamins and minerals, but also provide fibre. Fibre is the part of plant foods we do not digest; it acts like a sponge soaking up water in the gut and helping food pass quickly through the body. In this way fibre helps to prevent constipation, but remember you will need to take plenty of fluids, 6-8 cups a day.

FEWER FATS?

Cutting down on fat need only mean small changes. Choosing leaner meats and eating fewer fried and fatty foods will help.

If you are underweight, or have a poor appetite reducing fats is not so important, rather eat regularly to keep warm and healthy.

NOT SO SWEET

Sugar, sweets, cakes and biscuits provide few vitamins and minerals so these foods should only be chosen now and again. When you want something sweet choose a slice of wholemeal bread with a little jam instead of a chocolate biscuit or a piece of cake.

One good way to ensure your diet is healthy is to choose foods from each of the three main food groups at each meal. Include some dairy products too, if you eat them. Each food group provides a variety of nutrients as you can see.



BREAD AND CEREALS

These are the starchy foods which give us fibre and some B vitamins which release the energy locked in food.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Give vitamins A, C and folate. These help to keep our eyes, skin and blood healthy and help us to fight infection. Green leafy vegetables can provide some iron and calcium.

MEAT, FISH, NUTS, PULSES, DAIRY FOODS AND SEEDS

These foods provide protein and a variety of B vitamins.

Meat also provides iron for healthy blood.

Dairy foods give calcium for strong bones.

Nuts, pulses and seeds will provide iron and calcium, but in smaller amounts.

KEEPING COSTS LOW

Food costs a lot of money and takes up a large proportion of the pension, especially if you rely on the smaller food shops. Here are some suggestions for quick and less expensive snacks and meals.

1. Try smoked mackerel or tinned tuna, pilchards or sardines – eat them with salad or in a sandwich or with potato or rice to make a fish pie.
2. Toast can be a good snack if it is eaten either with cheese, baked beans, eggs or fish.
3. In stew, curries or other meat dishes replace some or all of the meat with pulses (peas and beans).
4. Mix pasta and vegetables together in a cheese sauce.
5. Try yoghurt for a snack or with fruit after a meal.
6. Breakfast cereals are often fortified with vitamins and make a good snack any time of day.
7. Try adding pulses or extra vegetables to soup and sprinkle a little cheese on top. Serve with a thick slice of wholemeal bread.
8. Casserole liver and vegetables – use a tin of tomatoes for the stock.

SHOPPING

Shopping can be difficult, making it harder to achieve a healthy diet. Here are some tips you may find useful.

Supermarkets are often cheaper than local shops, but are too busy. Find out when the supermarket is quiet, so that your shopping trip isn't too stressful.

Make a list to avoid unplanned purchases. Supermarkets often promote goods "on special", but they are only a bargain if you need the product.

READ LABELS – this helps you to compare similar products so you can judge what is good for health and good value for money.

Feel comfortable about asking an assistant to reach foods for you or to split fresh meat and produce into smaller quantities.

If other people do shop for you make sure they know which foods you like to eat. Having plenty of foods you don't like won't keep you healthy and warm.

Bad weather such as driving rain or snow, icy pavements or strong winds can make shopping hazardous. There are also periods of ill health and limited mobility which can make shopping impossible so it is always a good idea to maintain an up to date food store. Try not to store foods just because they keep well. They should also be enjoyed. Date the food products in your store and use them in rotation. Of course eating isn't just about keeping healthy. Buying and eating food are ways of meeting other people and getting out of the house or flat.



If you do have the facilities and ability to cook, but just don't feel like cooking for yourself, try organising a small group of friends or neighbours, taking it in turns to cook main meals on weekends or on days when your local luncheon club is closed.

Not everyone can cook and shop for themselves. If you are finding it difficult to prepare meals, you may want to receive Meals on Wheels or find out about luncheon clubs. Contact your local Social Services, GP, Health Visitor or nurse.

If you find shopping difficult or have to travel long distances, try checking with voluntary organisations listed in the insert and see if they can help.

By selling basic food provisions of good quality, a Food Co-op in the area can help make it easier for you to eat well and so look after yourself. It can also provide a personal and friendly service in unhurried surroundings. Such Co-ops are non-profit making and are usually started and run by local pensioners with help from local voluntary or statutory organisations.

Remember eating is just one part of protecting yourself against the cold. Getting your home draught-proofed, claiming all the benefits to which you are entitled and following hints on keeping warm is action you or anyone vulnerable to the cold can take.



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