



Bristol Menopause
& Wellwoman Clinic



BRISTOL HEALTH HUB

PRIORITISING YOUR HEALTH & WELLBEING

A Balanced Guide to Health and Nutrition





Contents

Introduction to Nutrition	Page 5
The Importance of Balanced Eating	Page 6–7
Macronutrients: Proteins, Carbs, and Fats	Page 8–9
Micronutrients: Vitamins and Minerals	Page 10–11
Hydration: Why Water Matters	Page 12
Nutrition for Weight Management	Page 13–15
Tips for weight gain	Page 16–18
Building Muscle with Proper Nutrition	Page 19–20
Supporting Energy and Endurance	Page 21–22
Male & Female Nutritional needs	Page 23–27
Meal Planning Basics & Healthy Snacking Tips	Page 28–32
Reading Nutrition Labels	Page 33
Myths vs Truths	Page 34–36
Conclusion and Final Tips	Page 37–38



Introduction to Nutrition

Nutrition is the foundation of a healthy life. It affects how you feel, think, and perform each day. To simplify, the food you eat provides your body with the nutrients it needs to function, repair, and grow. Without proper nutrition, both physical and mental well-being can suffer, leading to fatigue, poor concentration, and an increased risk of chronic illnesses such as heart disease and diabetes.

Good nutrition isn't about restrictive dieting or cutting out entire food groups—it's about creating balance and making choices that nourish your body. It's also highly personal; your age, activity level, and health goals all influence your unique and individual nutritional needs. For example, athletes require more carbohydrates to fuel performance, while older adults may need extra calcium and vitamin D to maintain bone strength.

Every mouthful of food you eat directly contributes to your health. Nutrients such as carbohydrates, proteins, and fats provide energy, while vitamins, minerals, and water help regulate bodily processes. Together, they support vital functions like hormone balance, immune response, and mental clarity. Even small changes such as adding more colourful fruits and vegetables to your meals or drinking more water can significantly improve your overall well-being.

In today's fast-paced world, it's easy to rely on convenience foods. However, investing in your health through thoughtful food choices is one of the most powerful ways to promote long-term vitality. Nutrition doesn't just impact individuals; it also plays a role in community health and environmental sustainability. By making informed, balanced choices, you not only improve your quality of life but also contribute to a healthier, more sustainable world. Remember, nutrition is not a one-size-fits-all concept. The key is finding what works for you and your lifestyle. With the right guidance and a commitment to nourishing your body, you can achieve better energy, resilience, and longevity.

The Importance of Balanced Eating

Balanced eating means nourishing your body with a variety of foods that provide essential nutrients to support overall health and optimal wellbeing. By giving your body what it needs—vitamins, minerals, proteins, healthy fats, and carbohydrates—you can improve your energy levels, prevent chronic illnesses, and enhance your daily performance.

What Does a Balanced Diet Look Like?

Balanced eating is about variety and moderation. Here are the key components:

- Fruits and vegetables: Packed with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, they strengthen the immune system and reduce inflammation. Aim for a colourful variety to maximise nutrient intake.
- Lean proteins: Chicken, fish, tofu, soy, legumes and beans. Protein supports muscle repair, growth, and metabolism.
- Whole grains: Brown rice, oats, and wholemeal bread provide complex carbohydrates and fibre, offering sustained energy and supporting a healthy digestive system.
- Healthy fats: Avocados, nuts, seeds, and olive oil support brain function, hormone balance, and the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, and K).

The Importance of Balanced Eating

Why Balanced Eating Matters

A well-balanced diet can bring numerous long-term health benefits including:

- Reducing chronic disease risk: Eating nutrient-dense foods can lower the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and obesity.
- Supporting weight management: A balanced approach focuses on satisfying a healthy mindset and nutrient-rich foods that prevent overeating.
- Enhancing mental health: Nutrition plays a role in mood stability, concentration, and cognitive function. Healthy fats, protein, and micronutrients like B vitamins and magnesium are particularly important for brain health.

Practical Tips for Balanced Eating:

- Practice portion control: Pay attention to serving sizes to prevent overconsumption while still feeling satisfied.
- Eat mindfully: Slow down, savour your meals, and listen to your hunger and fullness cues. This encourages a healthier relationship with food.
- Plan your meals: Preparing meals in advance can help you maintain balance and reduce the temptation of quick, less nutritious options.
- Stay hydrated: Water supports digestion, mental clarity and overall contributes to your health energy and wellbeing.

Balanced eating isn't about perfection or restriction—it's about creating a lifestyle that supports your health and well-being.

Macronutrients: Proteins, Carbs, and Fats

Macronutrients—proteins, carbohydrates, and fats—are essential to fuel your body, support vital functions, and maintain overall health. Let's explore each and how to incorporate them into your daily routine.

Proteins: Build and Repair

Proteins are crucial for muscle repair, immune function, and overall growth. They come from both animal and plant sources like chicken, fish, tofu, soya and lentils.

Tips for Getting Enough Protein:

- Balance your sources of animal and plant proteins: Include a mix of lean meats and plant proteins.
- Meal prep: Cook batches of grilled chicken, turkey, or tofu to have on hand.
- Choose high-protein snacks: Try boiled eggs, Greek yogurt, or small handful of nuts.
- Boost meals: Add protein powder to smoothies, porridge or bake with protein-rich flours (such as almond flour).

Carbohydrates: Your Energy Source

Carbs fuel your muscles and brain. They're found in whole grains, fruits, and vegetables.

Tips for Healthier Carb Choices:

- Go for whole grains: Choose quinoa, brown rice, or whole wheat bread over refined grains.
- Eat the rainbow: Include a variety of colourful fruits and vegetables for antioxidants.
- Watch portions: Limit simple carbs like pasta and baked foods such as cake and pastries.

Macronutrients: Proteins, Carbs, and Fats

Fats: Brain and Hormone Support

Healthy fats are essential for brain function, hormones, and absorbing fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, K). Great sources include avocados, olive oil, nuts, seeds and oily fish.

Tips for Including Healthy Fats:

- Choose unsaturated fats: Prioritise olive oil, nuts, seeds and oily fish such as salmon.
- Moderate portions: Be mindful that food such as nuts are calories dense, so aim for small servings (e.g., a handful of nuts).
- Boost omega-3s: Add chia seeds, walnuts, or salmon to your diet.
- Cook smart: Use healthy oils such as coconut, olive or avocado oil as they are safer to use at higher temperatures.

By balancing these macronutrients, you can support your energy, health, and well-being every day.

Micronutrients

Micronutrients, although required in smaller amounts, play a powerful role in maintaining your overall health. These include vitamins and minerals, each contributing to essential bodily functions such as energy production, immune defence, and bone health. Even slight imbalances or deficiencies can lead to health concerns, which is why it's important to get a variety of these nutrients from your diet.

Vitamins: Your Body's Support System

Vitamins are organic compounds that help maintain everything from immunity to energy production and vision. They're found in foods and, in some cases, can also be synthesised (like Vitamin D through sunlight during the summer months).

Examples:

- **Vitamin C:** Boosts immunity and aids wound healing. Found in citrus fruits, berries and peppers.
- **Vitamin D:** Supports bone health and immune function. Obtained from sunlight and foods such as egg yolks, mushrooms and tinned fish as well as some fortified foods (milk).

Tips to Boost Vitamin Intake:

- **Eat a rainbow:** Include a variety of colourful fruits and vegetables to provide a wide range of vitamins minerals and antioxidants.
- **Eat whole foods:** Eat as nature intended and keep processed foods at a minimum.
- **Keep stimulants to a minimum:** Reduce the amount of stimulants such as caffeine, sugar and alcohol as they interfere with the absorption of vitamins.

Micronutrients

Minerals: The Body's Building Blocks

Minerals are essential for energy production, hormone production, the immune system, strong bones and many other processes. Unlike vitamins, they are naturally occurring compounds, absorbed by plants and animals. Common examples include calcium and iron.

Examples:

- **Calcium:** Critical for bone and teeth strength. Found in dairy, tinned fish, leafy greens, nuts and seeds.
- **Iron:** Necessary growth and development and red blood cell formation. Found in red meat, offal, watercress, spinach and legumes.

Tips to Improve Mineral Intake:

- **Get your calcium:** Increase intake of dairy, tinned fish, nuts and seeds.
- **Boost iron absorption:** Combine iron-rich foods (e.g. spinach, red meat) with Vitamin C (e.g. citrus fruit such as lemon juice).
- **Eat a variety:** A balanced diet ensures you get a balanced intake of both macro-minerals (e.g. calcium and magnesium) and trace minerals (e.g. zinc and selenium).

Micronutrients may be small, but they're essential for keeping your body running smoothly. By focusing on a varied, whole-food diet rich in both vitamins and minerals, you can support everything from stronger bones to a healthy immune system.

Hydration: Why Water Matters

Water is vital for temperature regulation, digestion, nutrient absorption, joint lubrication, and toxin removal. Staying hydrated boosts energy, mental clarity, and overall health.

How Much Water Should You Drink?

Aim for about 8 cups/glasses (1.5–2litres) daily, though needs vary based on:

Activity: More exercise increases water needs.

Climate: Hot, humid environments require extra hydration.

Diet: High-sodium or high-protein diets may demand more water.

Health: Illness, fever, and medications can increase fluid requirements.

Tips to Stay Hydrated:

Start with a glass: Rehydrate with water first thing in the morning.

Carry a bottle: Keep a reusable water bottle handy.

Set reminders: Use phone alarms or hydration apps.

Flavour your water: Add lemon, cucumber, or mint for taste.

Eat hydrating foods: Include fruits and veggies like watermelon and cucumber.

Drink before meals: A glass of water before eating supports digestion; avoiding drinking too much water at mealtimes as this dilutes digestive enzymes.

Watch for signs: Dark urine, dry mouth, and dizziness signal dehydration.

Balance beverages: Offset coffee or tea with extra water.

Hydrate for exercise: Drink before, during, and after workouts.

Keep water visible: Place water on your desk.

Stay mindful of your body's hydration needs to maintain energy and health throughout the day.

Nutrition for Weight Management

Maintaining a healthy weight is essential for your overall well-being. Whether you want to lose, gain, or maintain weight, proper nutrition is key. It's not about quick fixes but creating sustainable habits that fuel your body, support your goals, and promote long-term health whilst maintaining a healthy and happy mindset.

Tips for Healthy Weight Loss

1. Focus on Portion Control

Managing portion sizes is one of the most effective ways to control calorie intake. You can still enjoy your favourite foods by eating smaller portions.

Tips to help with portion control:

- Use smaller plates and bowls to make portions look more filling.
- Practice mindful eating: chew slowly, savour each bite, and pay attention to your hunger and fullness cues.
- Avoid distractions like TV or phones during meals, which can lead to overeating.

Mindful portion control can help you feel satisfied without overeating or feeling deprived.

2. Eat whole, nutrient dense food

Whole foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, and legumes provide essential nutrients, fibre, vitamins, and minerals that help control hunger and boost overall health. Avoid processed food as much as possible.

Nutrition for Weight Management

How to incorporate whole foods:

- Fill half your plate with colourful vegetables for variety and nutrients.
- Choose whole grains like brown rice, oats, and quinoa instead of refined carbs.
- Swap sugary snacks for fruit, nuts, or yogurt to satisfy cravings and balancing blood sugars.

Eating nutrient-dense, whole foods keeps your energy steady and reduces the temptation to binge on less nutritious options.

3. Include Protein in Every Meal

Protein helps repair and build muscles while keeping you feeling full longer. This can reduce cravings and prevent overeating. Including a good protein source in each meal can also help preserve muscle mass as you lose fat, which is essential for maintaining a healthy metabolism.

Good protein options:

- Animal-based: Chicken, turkey, fish, eggs and dairy products.
- Plant-based: Beans, lentils, tofu, tempeh, soy and quinoa.

Aim for 20–30 grams of protein per meal to stay satisfied and energised throughout the day.

By combining these strategies—portion control, whole-food choices, and regular protein intake—you can build sustainable habits that support weight loss while improving your overall health.

Nutrition for Weight Management

Drink Plenty of Water

Staying hydrated is often overlooked when trying to manage weight, but it can significantly impact your success. Drinking water before meals can help you feel fuller and prevent overeating. Additionally, water helps maintain your body's natural functions, such as digestion, metabolism, and the elimination of waste. Opt for water over sugary drinks like soda or juice to avoid extra calories.

Avoid Emotional Eating

Emotional eating is when you turn to food to cope with stress, boredom, or other emotions. This can sabotage weight loss efforts and lead to overeating. Instead, try to find healthier ways to manage emotions, such as exercising, journaling, or talking to a friend. Identifying emotional triggers can help you develop better eating habits.



Tips for Weight Gain

For some people, gaining weight is just as challenging as losing it. Whether due to a fast metabolism, high activity levels, or certain health conditions, maintaining a healthy weight is crucial for energy, immune function, and overall well-being. Healthy weight gain should focus on increasing muscle mass by combining sound nutrition and regular exercise.

Eat More Frequent Meals

If you're trying to gain weight, spreading your calorie intake throughout the day can make it easier to eat more without feeling uncomfortably full. Instead of the traditional three meals, aim for five to six smaller meals that include both nutrient-dense foods and healthy snacks.

Tips for boosting calories throughout the day:

- Add snacks like protein bars, trail mix, or smoothies between meals.
- Include calorie-rich add-ons like peanut butter, hummus, or cheese with your meals.
- Plan meals and snacks in advance to stay consistent with your calorie intake.

Eating frequently helps your body get the extra calories it needs to support healthy weight gain.

Tips for Weight Gain

Focus on Calorie-Dense, Healthy Foods

To gain weight without sacrificing health, prioritize foods that are both high in calories and rich in nutrients. Healthy fats, in particular, are calorie-dense and packed with essential nutrients.

Examples of calorie-dense healthy foods:

- Healthy fats: Avocados, nuts, seeds, olive oil, and oily fish such as salmon.
- Whole grains: Quinoa, oats, brown rice, and whole wheat bread provide slow releasing energy, fibre and nutrition.
- Protein-rich foods: Chicken, eggs, tofu, soy and lentils help support muscle growth.

Incorporating calorie-dense foods allows you to increase your intake without having to eat excessively large portions.

Incorporate Strength Training

While increasing your calorie intake is crucial, it's equally important to engage in strength training exercises to ensure that the extra calories are used to build muscle rather than fat. Strength training stimulates muscle growth, boosts metabolism, and helps you maintain healthy weight gain.

Strength training tips:

- Focus on compound exercises like squats, deadlifts, and push-ups that work multiple muscle groups.
- Include both bodyweight and weightlifting exercises in your routine.
- Aim for strength training at least three times per week to promote muscle development.

Building muscle not only improves body composition but also supports long-term health and strength.

Tips for Weight Gain

Drink High-Calorie Beverages

Drinking high-calorie smoothies, milkshakes, or protein shakes can help you consume more calories in liquid form without feeling overly stuffed. Adding ingredients like nut butter, Greek yogurt, oats, and fruits like bananas or berries can turn your drinks into calorie-packed snacks. Just be mindful to avoid sugary drinks that don't offer nutritional value, such as sodas.

Avoid Empty-Calorie Foods

While you may need to increase your calorie intake, it's still important to choose nutrient-dense foods. Avoid relying on sugary snacks, candies, or junk food to increase your calorie count, as they can lead to unhealthy weight gain. Instead, focus on whole foods that provide vitamins, minerals, and healthy fats to ensure you're gaining weight in a way that's beneficial for your health.

By following these tips tailored to your weight management goals—whether it's losing or gaining weight—you can make more informed and sustainable choices to maintain a balanced, healthy lifestyle.



Building Muscle with Proper Nutrition

For effective muscle building, prioritise protein intake to provide your body with the building blocks for muscle repair and growth. The ideal sources of protein include lean meats like chicken, turkey, and fish, as well as plant-based options such as legumes, tofu, tempeh, and quinoa. Protein shakes can be a convenient way to supplement your intake if you struggle to meet your daily protein goals through food alone.

Aiming for around 1.6 to 2.2 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight per day is a good target for muscle growth, but this can vary depending on individual factors.

Additionally, don't neglect healthy fats (such as those from avocados, nuts, seeds, and olive oil) and carbohydrates (from whole grains, fruits, and vegetables) to fuel workouts and aid in recovery. Carbohydrates help replenish glycogen stores in muscles, ensuring you have the energy for intense training sessions.

Combine your diet with a structured strength training programme, focusing on progressive overload (gradually increasing the weight or resistance you use) to challenge your muscles over time. Aim for at least 3 training sessions a week that target different muscle groups, allowing for recovery between sessions.



Tips & Advice:

Track Your Calories and Macros: Keeping an eye on your daily caloric intake and macronutrient breakdown can help ensure you're in a slight surplus without going overboard. Too much excess could lead to unwanted fat gain.

Stay Consistent: Muscle building is a long-term commitment. Stay consistent with your diet and training programme, even on days when progress feels slow.

Prioritise Recovery: Adequate sleep (7-9 hours per night) and rest days between training are just as crucial as the workout itself as muscles grow at rest, not during training.

Hydrate: Muscles are made up of mostly water, so staying hydrated is vital for muscle function and recovery. Aim for at least 2-3 litres of water daily, adjusting based on your activity levels.

Focus on Whole Foods: Aim to get the majority of your nutrition from whole, nutrient-dense foods to support overall health and muscle growth.

Don't Skip Warm-ups and Cool-downs: Starting each session with a proper warm-up helps prevent injuries, while cooling down aids muscle recovery and flexibility.

By following these nutrition and training guidelines, you'll be well on your way to building lean muscle effectively.

Supporting Energy and Endurance

Maintaining consistent energy levels throughout the day and during workouts is crucial for peak performance. To sustain your energy during physical activity and daily tasks, consider these strategies:

Complex Carbohydrates for Lasting Energy: Consume complex carbohydrates such as oats, brown rice, quinoa, and whole grain bread. These foods are slower to digest, providing a steady release of energy over a longer period. This helps avoid the energy crashes that can come from eating simple sugars.

Pre-Workout Fuel: Aim for a pre-workout meal that combines carbs and protein. A good example is a banana with peanut butter or a bowl of oatmeal with some protein powder mixed in. Consuming this about 30–60 minutes before exercise gives your body a quick but sustained source of energy.

Post-Workout Recovery: After your workout, it's vital to replenish glycogen stores and repair muscle tissue within 30–45 minutes. A balanced snack such protein shake or post-workout meal, such as a chicken breast with sweet potatoes will replenish energy stores and protein to support muscle repair.

Hydration: Staying hydrated is essential for optimal energy, performance and endurance. Dehydration can lead to fatigue and decreased performance. Drink water consistently throughout the day, and consider an electrolyte drink if your workout is particularly intense or prolonged.

Supporting Energy and Endurance

Incorporating Healthy Fats: Healthy fats such as avocados, nuts, seeds, and olive oil, are another important source of energy. While fats take longer to digest, they provide long-lasting fuel and help maintain steady energy levels throughout the day.

Timing is Key: Eating smaller, well-balanced meals throughout the day helps maintain energy levels without overwhelming your system. Avoid long periods without food, as it can lead to energy dips and fatigue.

Smart Snacking: Choose protein based snacks to sustain energy levels and keep you fuelled until your next meal.
Such as mixed nuts, yogurt, boiled eggs or whole-grain crackers with hummus.

Listen to Your Body: It's important to understand your own energy rhythms. If you feel sluggish during certain parts of the day, try adjusting your meals and snacks to see if you can better fuel your body when needed. Some people might benefit from a higher carb intake earlier in the day, while others may feel better with more protein or fat.

By balancing your nutrition and hydration before, during, and after workouts, you'll support not just your performance but also your overall endurance, energy, and recovery.

Male & Female Nutritional needs

Nutritional needs for men and women differ in a number of ways due to physiological differences such as metabolism, genetics, reproductive health, and muscle mass. Over the next three pages we discuss both men's and woman's need in more detail....



Men's Nutritional Needs

Higher Calorie Requirements

Men generally have higher caloric needs than women, mainly because of a higher muscle mass and a faster metabolic rate. On average, men require about 2,000–3,000 calories per day depending on their activity level, age, and overall health.

Tip: Focus on consuming lean proteins (chicken, turkey, fish, eggs), healthy fats (avocados, olive oil, nuts), and complex carbohydrates (whole grains, sweet potatoes, brown rice) to meet your energy needs.

Increased Protein Intake for Muscle Mass Maintenance

Protein is essential for muscle repair, growth, and overall body function. Men, especially those who are active or engage in strength training, require higher protein intake. The general recommendation is about 1.2 to 2.0 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight, depending on activity levels.

Tip: Include protein-rich foods in every meal, such as lean meats, tofu, legumes, dairy, and protein-rich grains like quinoa. Greater Focus on Zinc and Magnesium

Zinc is crucial for immune function, protein synthesis, and testosterone production, while magnesium supports muscle and nerve function. Both nutrients are commonly deficient in men's diets.

Tip: Include zinc-rich foods such as oysters, beef, pumpkin seeds, and legumes. Magnesium can be found in foods like spinach, almonds, bananas, and avocados.

Recommended Vitamins for Men:

Vitamin D: Helps with bone health and supports immune function.

Vitamin B12: Supports energy production and red blood cell formation.

Men over the age of 50 may have a higher need for this vitamin, often through fortified foods or supplements.

Women's Nutritional Needs

Additional Iron Needs Due to Menstruation

Women typically need more iron than men due to blood loss during menstruation. Iron is critical for oxygen transport in the blood and energy metabolism. The recommended iron intake for women is around 18 mg per day (higher during pregnancy) versus 8 mg for men.

Tip: Incorporate iron-rich foods such as red meat, spinach, lentils, tofu, and fortified cereals. Combine with vitamin C (found in citrus fruits, bell peppers) to enhance iron absorption.

Higher Calcium Intake for Bone Health

Calcium is vital for bone strength, and women are more prone to osteoporosis as they age, particularly post-menopause. Women need approximately 1,000–1,300 mg of calcium per day depending on age.

Tip: Include calcium-rich foods such as dairy products, leafy greens (kale, collard greens), nuts and seeds.

Women's Nutritional Needs

Nutrient-Dense Foods During Pregnancy and Lactation

During pregnancy, women require additional nutrients for both their health and the baby's development. Folate (vitamin B9) is critical for preventing neural tube defects, and additional calories, protein, and iron are needed to support the growing fetus and maintain energy.

Tip: Focus on nutrient-dense foods such as leafy greens, lean proteins, whole grains, and fruits. Prenatal vitamins, which contain higher amounts of folic acid and iron, are also recommended for pregnant women.

Recommended Vitamins for Women:

Folate (Vitamin B9): Essential for cell division and fetal development, especially during early pregnancy.

Vitamin D: Regulates calcium absorption for bone health and immune function.

Recommended for women, especially those who are pregnant or post-menopausal.

Vitamin A: Vital for immune function, skin health, and eye health. Women need a balanced intake of vitamin A from both plant (carotenoids) and animal sources.

Additional Tips for Both Men and Women:

Stay Hydrated

Water is essential for overall health, energy levels, and digestion. Aim to drink at least 8 cups of water per day, and more if you're physically active or in a hot climate.

Focus on Whole Foods

Nutrient-dense, whole foods—such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats—are crucial for maintaining health at every stage of life. Limit processed foods and sugary snacks which can lead to nutrient deficiencies and chronic health issues.

Mind Your Fibre

Both men and women should aim to consume approximately 30 grams of fibre per day, depending on age and gender. Fibre helps maintain digestive health, regulate blood sugar levels and a healthy weight. Sources include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes.

Exercise for Optimal Nutrition

Regular physical activity, including strength training and aerobic exercise, can help both men and women increase muscle mass, and manage weight as well as boosting metabolism, improving digestion and mental health.

Summary of Nutritional Considerations:

Men: Higher calorie and protein needs, more focus on zinc and magnesium.

Women: Increased iron and calcium needs, more attention to folate during pregnancy.

Understanding your body's unique needs based on gender, genetics, activity level, and age is key to supporting long-term health. Both men and women benefit from a balanced diet rich in vitamins, minerals, protein, and healthy fats.

Meal Planning Basics

Meal planning can make a huge difference in maintaining a healthy lifestyle, saving time, and reducing food waste. When done effectively, it ensures you are consuming the right balance of nutrients, enjoying diverse meals, and making the best use of your resources.

Set Your Nutritional Goals:

Before you start planning, it's important to understand your specific nutritional needs. Are you aiming for weight loss, muscle gain, or general health? Your goals will guide you in choosing the right balance of macronutrients (proteins, fats, and carbohydrates) and micronutrients (vitamins and minerals). You may want to consult a healthcare professional to tailor your plan to your individual needs.

Choose a Variety of Healthy Foods:

Eating a wide range of foods ensures that your body gets all the nutrients it needs. Include a balance of lean proteins (chicken, fish, tofu, legumes), healthy fats (avocados, nuts, olive oil), whole grains (brown rice, quinoa, oats), and plenty of vegetables and fruits. The more colourful your plate, the more variety in nutrients you're getting!

Prep Meals in Advance:

Prepping meals ahead of time is one of the best ways to stay on track with your meal plan. Consider batch cooking some of your meals or prepping ingredients like chopped vegetables, cooked grains, and proteins that can be quickly assembled during the week. This helps save time and reduces the temptation to grab unhealthy fast food options.

Include Snacks and Beverages:

Don't forget about snacks and drinks! Plan for healthy snack options like fresh fruits, nuts, yogurt, or hummus and veggies. Hydration is key too—plan out your water intake and consider adding herbal teas or other low-calorie beverages to your day.

Healthy Snacking Tips

Opt for Protein based snacks:

Nutrient-dense snacks support energy levels such as a handful of almonds or walnuts eaten with a piece of fresh fruit, or a small bowl of Greek yogurt are great choices that will keep you satisfied whilst keeping you on track.

Prepare Portion-Controlled Servings:

It's easy to overeat when snacks are left in large bags or containers. Portion out your snacks in advance so you're not tempted to eat more than you planned. Use small containers or snack-sized bags to control portions and prevent mindless eating.

Avoid Sugary, Processed Snacks:

It's easy to reach for chips, candy, or pastries, but these can be full of added sugars, unhealthy fats, and empty calories. These snacks offer little nutritional value and can cause energy crashes. Instead, try making your own snacks, like baked veggie chips or protein bars with minimal ingredients.

Combine Protein with Fibre:

For a more filling snack, combine protein with fibre. For example, pair apple slices with peanut butter or a handful of mixed nuts with carrot sticks. This combination can help stabilise blood sugar levels and keep you feeling full for longer.

By following these tips, you'll find meal planning becomes easier, more efficient, and more enjoyable. Not only will you be able to stay on track with your health goals, but you'll also avoid the stress of last-minute meal decisions and reduce your reliance on take-out or unhealthy convenience foods.

Serving Size

What it tells you: The serving size is the standard amount used to measure nutritional information. Everything listed on the label is based on this size, so it's important to compare it to how much you're actually eating.

Why it matters: If you're eating more than the serving size listed, you need to adjust the nutritional values accordingly. For instance, if a serving size is 1 cup but you eat 2 cups, you're consuming double the calories, fat, sugar, etc.

Tip: Always check the serving size and be mindful of how much you're consuming, especially if you're eating packaged snacks, frozen meals, or anything with multiple servings.

Calories

What it tells you: This shows how much energy you get from one serving. It's important for managing weight, as consuming more calories than you burn leads to weight gain.

Why it matters: Pay attention to the calorie content in relation to the serving size. Even foods that seem "healthy" may contain high calories per serving.

Tip: Choose foods that provide more nutrients for fewer calories (like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins) to feel fuller without the extra calories.

Amount of Added Sugars

What it tells you: The label indicates how much sugar has been added to the food during processing, as opposed to the natural sugars found in ingredients like fruit and dairy.

Why it matters: High added sugar intake is linked to various health problems, such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease.

Tip: Look for foods with low or no added sugars. Be cautious of "sugar-free" products, which might still contain sugar alcohols or other sweeteners that can affect your health.

Fat Content

What it tells you: This section breaks down the total fat in the product, including:

Saturated fats: These fats are typically solid at room temperature and are associated with an increased risk of heart disease. Found in animal products, butter, and processed foods.

Trans fats: These are artificially created fats that are 'damaged' and should be avoided as they raise cholesterol levels and damage blood vessel walls.

Unsaturated fats: Found in plant-based oils, nuts, and fish, these fats are good for health in particular heart health.

Why it matters: Not all fats are created equal, and understanding the type and amount can help you make better heart-healthy decisions.

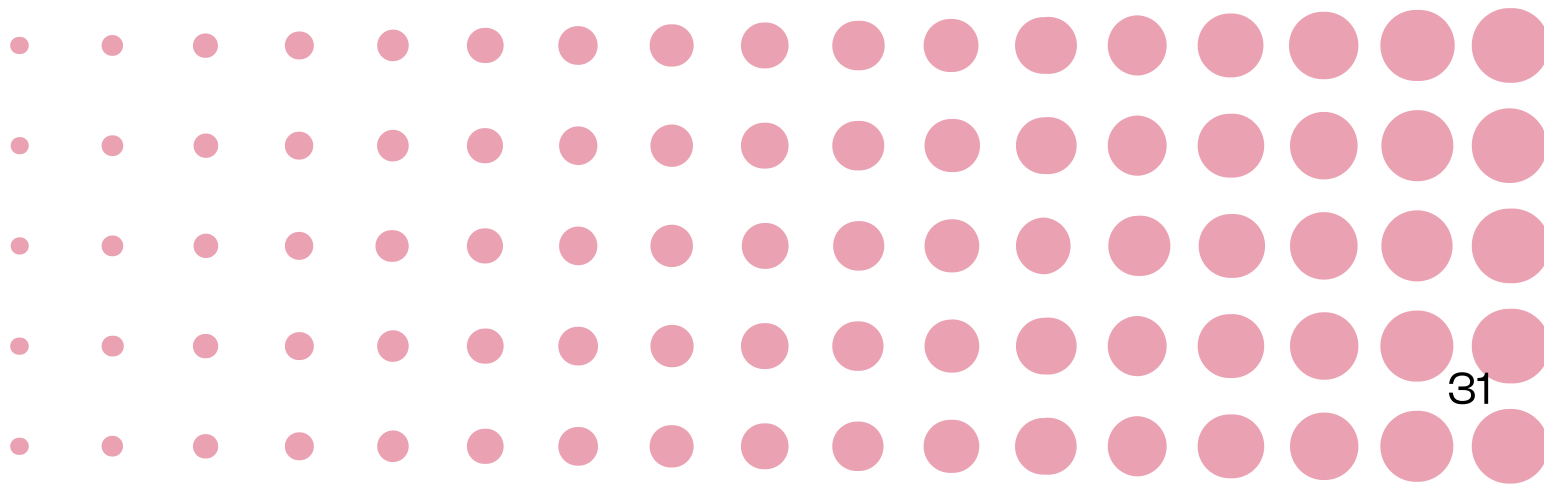
Tip: Avoid foods containing trans fats and choose healthy unsaturated fats instead.

Sodium Content

What it tells you: Sodium (salt) is primarily used to preserve food, but a high salt intake is linked to high blood pressure and an increased risk of heart disease and strokes.

Why it matters: Most people consume too much sodium without realising as processed and packaged foods are often high in salt.

Tip: Aim for less than 2,300 mg of sodium per day. For those with high blood pressure or heart disease, aim for even less (about 1,500 mg). Check labels on prepared and canned foods for hidden sodium.



Fibre Content

What it tells you: Dietary fibre helps support digestive health and regulate blood sugar levels. It also keeps you feeling fuller longer.

Why it matters: Most people don't get enough fibre, which is important for maintaining healthy digestion and stabilizing blood sugar.

Tip: Choose foods with at least 3 grams of fibre per serving, and focus on whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and legumes to boost fibre intake.

Vitamins and Minerals

What it tells you: The label shows the percentages of important vitamins and minerals in the product, such as Vitamin D, calcium, iron, and potassium.

Why it matters: These nutrients are vital for maintaining strong bones, supporting the immune system, and ensuring proper function of your organs.

Tip: Aim to get a variety of vitamins and minerals from whole foods, like leafy greens, nuts, seeds, and fruits, rather than relying solely on supplements or fortified foods.

Percent Daily Values (%DV)

What it tells you: The %DV helps you understand how much a serving of the food contributes to your overall daily nutrition needs, based on a 2,000-calorie diet.

Why it matters: A quick glance at the %DV can help you gauge if a food item is high or low in specific nutrients. For example, 5% DV or less is considered low, and 20% DV or more is considered high.

Tip: Use the %DV to guide your choices—aim for low %DV of unhealthy nutrients (like saturated fat, sodium) and high %DV for healthy nutrients (like fiber, vitamins).

General Tips for Healthy Label Reading

Look for whole foods: When possible, choose foods that are minimally processed, with fewer ingredients. Whole foods like fruits, vegetables, and unprocessed grains are your best options.

Limit processed foods: They often contain high amounts of salt, sugar and unhealthy fats such as trans fat.

Beware of "health halo" labels: Just because a food says it's "organic," "gluten-free," or "low-fat," it doesn't automatically mean it's healthy. Always check the nutrition facts.

Practice moderation: Don't eliminate foods you enjoy, but be mindful of portion sizes, frequency, and the nutritional content of those foods.

By paying attention to the serving size, fats, sugars, sodium, and other nutrients, you can make smarter, healthier choices and better manage your overall health.



Myths vs Truths

Myth: Carbs are bad for you.

Truth: Complex carbohydrates are essential for energy and overall health. Carbohydrates are your body's main source of fuel, particularly for your brain and muscles. Not all carbs are created equal, though. Simple carbs, found in sugary foods and processed snacks, can lead to energy spikes and crashes, whereas complex carbs from whole grains, legumes, and vegetables provide sustained energy and fibre, which is good for digestion and can help maintain a healthy weight.

Tip: Focus on consuming whole foods that are rich in complex carbohydrates. Foods like oats, quinoa, brown rice, sweet potatoes, and lentils not only offer energy but also provide fibre, vitamins, and minerals that keep your body working optimally.

Myth: Eating fat makes you fat.

Truth: Healthy fats are important for brain and heart health.

Fat has been demonised in the past, but it's actually a necessary nutrient. Your body needs healthy fats for many functions, including hormone production, brain function, and the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, and K). It's important to distinguish between healthy fats (like those in avocados, nuts, seeds, and olive oil) and unhealthy fats (trans fats or highly processed oils).

Tip: Include more sources of healthy fats in your diet, such as omega-3-rich foods like salmon, chia seeds, and walnuts. These fats promote heart health, reduce inflammation, and improve brain function. Just be mindful of portion sizes, as fats are calorie-dense. Eating healthy fat (in the correct amounts) can support weight loss.

Myths VS Truths

Myth: Skipping meals helps with weight loss.

Truth: Depending on the individual, skipping meals can slow metabolism and lead to overeating later.

While it may seem logical that skipping meals could reduce calorie intake, it can have the opposite effect. When you skip meals, your body goes into "starvation mode," which slows down your metabolism to conserve energy. This can lead to overeating later in the day, especially when you finally get hungry. Consistent, balanced meals can help regulate blood sugar, prevent overeating, and maintain steady energy levels.

Tip: Aim for smaller, balanced meals throughout the day to maintain stable blood sugar levels and avoid overeating. Incorporate protein, healthy fats, and fibre into each meal to keep you feeling fuller for longer. If you're not hungry at meal times choose for smaller nutrient dense snacks instead.

Myth: Eating late at night causes weight gain.

Truth: It's not about when you eat, but what and how much you eat.

Weight gain occurs when you consume more calories than your body needs, regardless of the time of day. Late-night eating can be an issue if it leads to overeating or choosing high-calorie, low-nutrient foods. However, having a light, healthy snack before bed such as Greek yogurt, nuts combined with a piece of fruit can actually help stabilise blood sugar levels overnight.

Tip: If you're hungry late at night, go for a nutrient-dense, portion-controlled snack. Avoid sugary snacks or large portions of processed foods, which can disrupt sleep and contribute to weight gain over time.

Myths VS Truths

Myth: All calories are the same.

Truth: Quality of calories matters just as much as quantity.

A calorie from a sugary drink is not the same as a calorie from a vegetable or lean protein. Whole foods are packed with nutrients—vitamins, minerals, fiber, and antioxidants—that support overall health. Processed foods, on the other hand, often contain added sugars and unhealthy fats, which can contribute to inflammation, weight gain, and chronic disease.

Tip: Focus on the quality of the calories you consume. Choose whole foods—fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains—rather than processed or highly refined options. This ensures that your body gets the nutrients it needs, without excess empty calories.

Myth: You need supplements to be healthy.

Truth: Whole foods should be your primary source of nutrients.

While supplements can be helpful for addressing specific nutrient deficiencies, most people can get the vitamins and minerals they need through a balanced diet rich in whole foods. Supplements are not a replacement for healthy eating. In fact, excessive reliance on supplements can sometimes lead to nutrient imbalances or toxicity.

Tip: Prioritise getting your nutrients from food. Eating a colourful variety of fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains will provide the nutrients your body needs for optimal health. If you think you have a deficiency, consult with a healthcare provider before taking any supplements.

By understanding these common myths and focusing on balanced, nutrient-rich foods, you can make informed decisions that support both your health and wellness goals.

Conclusion

Balanced nutrition is not just a goal to be achieved, but a lifestyle. It's about finding a healthy, sustainable way of eating that works for you and not about perfection or restrictive diets. Choose whole, nutrient-dense foods and listen to the signals your body sends. Over time, any small, consistent changes that you make will become part of your lifestyle, contributing to your overall well-being and longevity.

Remember, every step you take toward better nutrition, no matter how small, is progress. Don't be too hard on yourself if you encounter setbacks or make mistakes along the way. They're all part of the process. What matters is that you keep moving forward, learning from those experiences, and staying committed to the vision of a healthier version of yourself.



Final Tips

Practice Patience – True change takes time. Don't expect overnight results. Celebrate the small wins and trust that consistency will pay off in the long run.

Prioritise Whole Foods – Fresh, minimally processed foods provide the nutrients your body needs. Fill your plate with colourful fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains for a nourishing, balanced diet.

Stay Hydrated – The body is 70% water. Hydrate throughout the day remembering your needs may increase with activity levels or weather conditions.

Listen to Your Body – The body is a clever machine. Listen to how it feels after eating and adjust your choices accordingly. Notice the difference in your energy, mood, and digestion when you make food choices.

Don't Fear Flexibility – Life changes and your nutritional needs might shift from time to time. Be open to adjusting your habits when necessary. Flexibility is key to maintaining long-term success.

Build Supportive Habits – Surround yourself with a supportive community or resources that align with your health goals. Whether it's a workout buddy, a nutritionist, or a motivational group, having a team helps you stay focused and encouraged.

Trust the Process – Trust that every step, no matter how small, is bringing you closer to your health goals. Don't rush the journey—embrace it.


Finally, be kind to yourself. You're doing something incredible for your health, and every day is a new opportunity to show up for yourself. Keep moving forward with one step and a time. You've got this!

My Notes



 www.bristolmenopause.com

 Hello@bristolmenopause.com

 0117 452 5747

 www.bristolhealthhub.com

 Hello@bristolhealthhub.com

 0117 452 5580

 Low Barn, Sheepway, Portbury, Bristol, BS20 7TF