



### Starchy foods

Starchy foods should make up just over one third of everything we eat. This means we should base our meals on these foods. Potatoes with the skins on are a great source of fibre and vitamins so when having boiled potatoes or a jacket potato, eat the skin too.

Try to choose wholegrain or whole-meal varieties of starchy foods, such as brown rice, whole wheat pasta and brown, whole-meal or higher fibre white bread. They contain more fibre and usually more vitamins and minerals than white varieties.

### Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins

These foods are all good sources of protein, which is essential for the body to grow and repair itself. They are also good sources of a range of vitamins and minerals.

If you eat meat, this is a good source of protein, vitamins and minerals, including iron, zinc and B vitamins. It is also one of the main

sources of vitamin B12 (e.g. beans, seeds, nuts, fish, meat).

Fish is another important source of protein, and contains many vitamins and minerals. Oily fish is particularly rich in omega-3 fatty acids.

If you are vegetarian or vegan, your diet should reflect good sources of vitamins, minerals and protein. Calcium is also important for health; sources of calcium include milk, yogurt and cheese.

### So can my GP prescribe health supplements?

It is not recommended for health professionals to prescribe health supplements unless this is for a diagnosed medical condition. This means that your doctor will only prescribe health supplements if medically indicated.

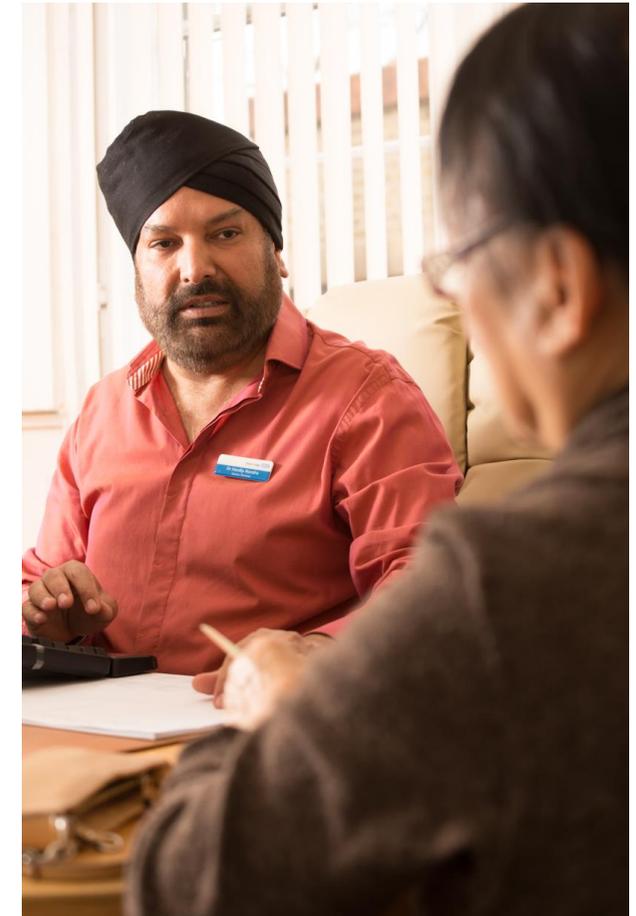
Your local NHS has spent thousands of pounds on unnecessary health supplements, which could help finance drugs for long term medical conditions, like diabetes and cancer. As our NHS strives to secure best value for money it is important we follow the recommended prescribing practices.

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## Health supplements what you need to know.



## What are health supplements?

Health supplements (also known as multivitamins) contain a mixture of vitamins or individual supplements, which are essential to help our bodies grow, develop, and function properly. Most people who eat a balanced diet get all the vitamins they need from the food they eat.

Many people choose to take supplements, but taking too many or taking them for too long could be harmful. In fact health supplements should only be prescribed in circumstances where a specific medical condition has been diagnosed by your doctor.

## Do you need a health supplement?

Only patients with a diagnosed medical condition can be prescribed health supplements on the NHS. If you choose to supplement your diet a variety of health supplements can be bought from pharmacies and health shops at affordable prices.

## Can health supplements cause problems?

Most preparations contain vitamins A and D. It is known that taking large amounts of these vitamins can lead to problems, so it's important that you do not take more than the recommended dose. You are also advised not to take different health supplements containing the same vitamins at the same time. Recommended doses of preparations are unlikely to cause unwanted effects.



## Before taking health supplements

Before you start taking health supplements it is important that you speak with a pharmacist:

- If you are pregnant or breast-feeding - this is because you are not advised to take any preparations while you are expecting or feeding a baby unless they have been recommended by a doctor
- If you are taking any other medicines.

## Eating a balanced diet

Eating a healthy, balanced diet is an important part of maintaining good health, and can help you feel your best. This means eating a wide variety of foods and drinking water in the right proportions to achieve and maintain a healthy body weight. Health supplementation should not replace healthy eating.

## Good food groups in your diet

- Eat five a day (fruit or vegetables)
- Base your meals on starchy foods like potatoes, bread, rice or pasta, including

- wholegrain versions
- Have some dairy or dairy alternatives (such as soya drinks, yogurts)
- Eat some beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other protein
- Choose unsaturated oils and spreads and eat in small amounts
- Drink plenty of water
- Reduce amounts of foods and drinks that are high in fat, salt and sugar such as biscuits, crisps, cakes.

## How can I eat the right amount?

### Fruit and vegetables

Fruit and vegetables are a vital source of vitamins and minerals and should make up just over a third of the food we eat each day.

There's evidence that people who eat at least five portions a day have a lower risk of heart disease, stroke and some cancers. Eating five portions is not as hard as it sounds. Just one apple, banana, pear or similar-sized fruit is one portion (80g, a palm full of your hand). A slice of pineapple or melon is one portion. Three heaped tablespoons of vegetables is another portion.

Having a sliced banana with your morning cereal is a quick way to get one portion. Swap your mid-morning biscuit for a tangerine, and add a side salad to your lunch. Have a portion of vegetables with dinner, and snack on fresh fruit with natural plain yoghurt in the evening to reach your five a day.