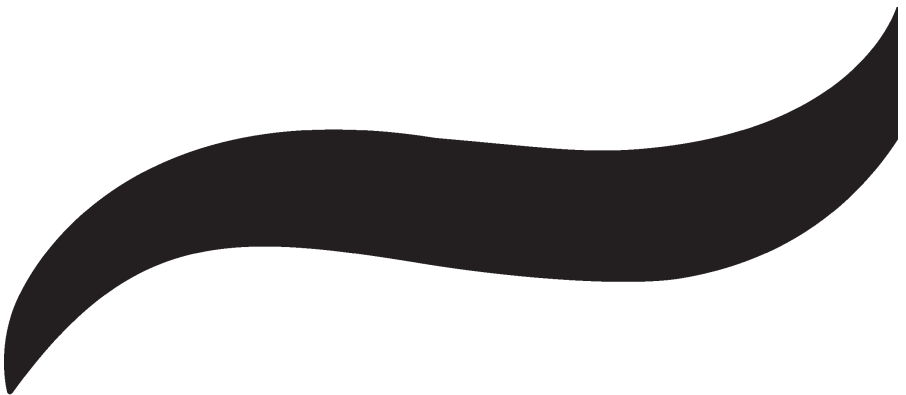




Eating well with dementia: hints and tips

Department of Nutrition and Dietetics



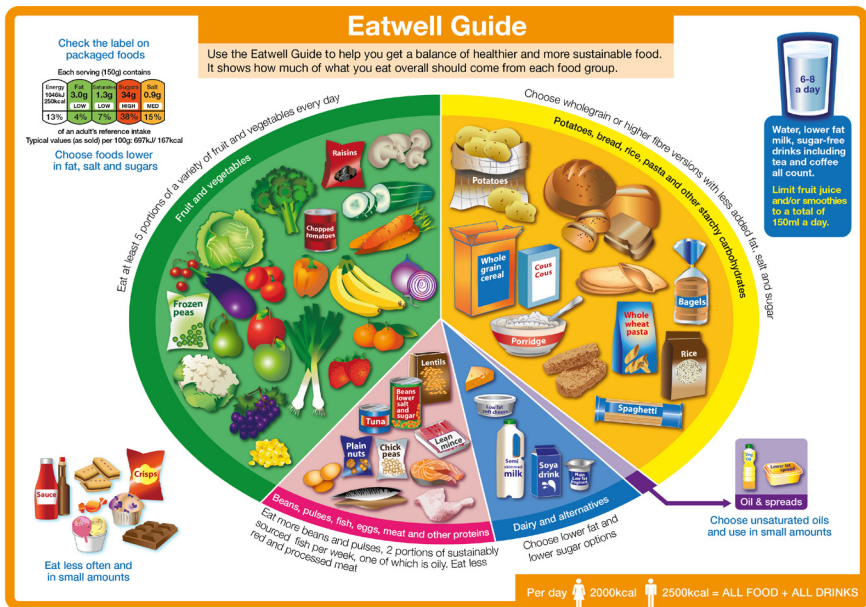
This guide has been produced as a support resource for people affected by dementia, or who have memory or cognitive issues. It gives general advice only and we recommend you discuss any specific concerns you may have with your GP or Health Professional.

Eating and drinking is a basic human need. What we choose to eat and drink also helps us to express our beliefs and who we are as individuals. Food and drinks are often involved when we socialise with friends and family. We use them to celebrate special occasions such as birthdays and weddings or other key events in our lives. Providing food and drink to others can also be a way of showing that we care.

SO HOW CAN MEMORY PROBLEMS OR DEMENTIA AFFECT WHAT YOU EAT AND DRINK?

Activities that had previously been second nature can become more challenging such as cooking and shopping and even eating itself. This can be frustrating and at times upsetting. However there are plenty of things you can do to make sure you keep getting the right nutrients your body need to keep you healthy and well.

- ❖ **The more variety you eat the better!** Try to include some meat, fish, poultry or beans/pulses at least twice a day. Have a starchy food such as cereals, bread, pasta, rice or potatoes at each meal. Have vegetables and/or fruit at each meal and include fruit as snacks. The eatwell guide below gives you an idea of how your meals should look.



Source: Public Health England in association with the Welsh government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

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- ❖ **Make sure you drink enough fluids** – poor hydration can make you feel tired, lack energy, make you more prone to constipation and can add to memory problems. Make sure you get at least 8-10 cups of fluid each day. This is particularly important during hot weather or if you are inside during the winter with the heating on high.
- ❖ **Get into good shopping habits** – make a list of items you need, ask someone to shop with you or try online shopping. That way you are less likely to forget items you may need. If you are not comfortable using new technology, some voluntary groups are providing sessions to let you try it out with support. Please contact:
 - ◆ **www.voluntaryactionnorthlanarkshire.org**
(North Lanarkshire) or
 - ◆ **www.vaslan.org.uk**
(South Lanarkshire) for further information.
- ❖ **Keep to regular mealtimes where possible** – if you sometimes forget to have meals try setting an alarm on your mobile phone to remind you or if you have a smartphone try an app that you can set reminders on. Eat somewhere you find relaxing which is well lit and comfortable. If possible eat with others as this can be more enjoyable.
- ❖ **Eat out** – why not arrange a regular lunch or a coffee date with friends or family. You may also discover events in your local area such as community cafes that you might like to get involved in. Ask local voluntary organisations, the library or check in local newspapers or community websites to see what is going on in your local area.

- ❖ **If preparing food is becoming a challenge** – enlist the help of friends and family. Cook in bulk and freeze portions away for another day. Label clear containers with the contents and when it was prepared. Use ready or part prepared foods, these can include fresh, dried, tinned or frozen foods to make things easier. Why not develop a check list or use recipes with clear instructions on each step.
- ❖ **If you notice you have been losing weight without trying, or you have not been eating well for more than a week, then please speak to your GP or health professional for further advice.**

TOP TIPS TO ENJOYABLE MEALTIMES

- ❖ Allow plenty of time for meals.
- ❖ Make sure the place where you will eat is well lit.
- ❖ During mealtimes free yourself from any distractions for example switching the television off, if you feel this would be helpful.
- ❖ Eating together with family and friends can encourage you to eat better.
- ❖ Avoid clutter on the table such as condiments or vases which can be distracting.
- ❖ Try to keep mealtimes as regular as possible – try moving the main meal to the middle of the day if a larger meal later in the evening becomes a challenge.
- ❖ If cutlery is difficult to use – wrap the handles making them easier to grip, cut down the amount of cutlery – if you are only using one piece of cutlery always place the fork or spoon in your dominant hand.
- ❖ If cutlery is a problem try using finger foods such as sandwiches, pieces of cut fruit and vegetables, cubes of cheese or bite sized cooked chicken pieces, quarter boiled eggs or scotch eggs, rolled pieces of cold meat.
- ❖ Try foods which you previously disliked – tastes can change. Add extra flavour by adding herbs, spices or sauces.
- ❖ Don't panic if your diet is not 'healthy'. You may find that you crave sweet foods instead of savoury foods. A balanced diet can still be achieved by using milk based desserts or adding dried or fresh fruit and including fruit juices or smoothies.

USEFUL NUTRITION WEBSITES

The British Dietetic Association

The BDA Food Fact Sheets are written by dietitians to help you learn the best ways to eat and drink to keep your body fit and healthy.

www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts

Alzheimer Scotland

www.alzscot.org/ahpresources

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www.nhsinform.co.uk
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