

# Meal Ideas and Inspiration

**FOOD  
ACTIVE**

Eating a healthy balanced diet can help us to feel our best, keep us in good health, stay strong, prevent some types of diseases and helps our teeth stay clean and healthy. It can also help us to feel good, manage our stress and anxiety, and reduce the chances of feeling low – so it is really important that we try to choose the right types of food and drinks most of the time. Below are some top tips to help you make the best choices:



## TOP TIPS FOR HEALTHY EATING:

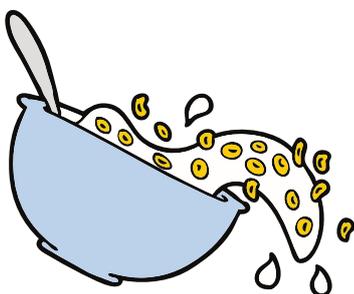
- Eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day – fresh, tinned, frozen or dried!
- Base your meals on higher fibre starchy foods like potatoes, wholegrain bread, rice or pasta.
- Have some dairy such as milk, cheese and yogurt (or dairy alternatives) each day.
- Add some beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other protein into your meals.
- Choose healthier oils and fats (unsaturated oils and spreads) for cooking or spreading on sandwiches or toast and eat them in small amounts.
- Drink plenty of fluids (at least 6 to 8 glasses a day) – water is the best choice.
- Avoid eating too many processed foods that are high in fat, sugar and/or salt. These foods are okay if they are consumed in small amounts and not very often. Watch your portion sizes!
- Plan meals around your budget, this helps you to know what you need to buy at the shops and stop you from overspending or running out!
- Keep a selection of healthy snacks in the cupboard or fridge – this is a good way to keep you going until mealtimes and avoid getting 'hangry'! See the overleaf for some ideas on healthy snacks.
- Takeaway food can be an easy option when you don't want to cook, but can often be an unhealthy choice, not to mention more expensive than home cooked meals. Why not try some of the ideas below and get cooking up some healthy, balanced, easy to make and low cost meals.

## Breakfast

v: vegetarian / ve: vegan / tsp: teaspoon / tbsp: tablespoon

*Breakfast is a very important meal, so don't be tempted to skip if you wake up late or don't fancy making anything. Not only does it provide us with energy throughout the day but also helps us to stay a healthy weight by stopping us snacking on unhealthy foods. Below are some healthy, easy and low-cost breakfast ideas to try:*

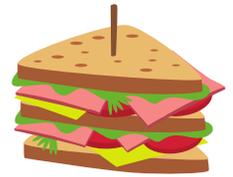
- Wholegrain cereal (Weetabix and Shredded Wheat are low sugar choices) OR Porridge (made in microwave or on the hob) served/made with semi-skimmed milk and topped with sliced banana, a handful of raisins or frozen berries (v).
- Eggs on brown toast. Boiled, scrambled or poached – whatever you prefer! Serve with half a tin of plum tomatoes, grilled mushrooms or a portion of baked beans (v).
- Grilled or microwaved mushrooms and/or tomatoes (fresh or tinned) on brown toast (ve). Top with eggs of your choice and/or two rashers of unsmoked bacon (with the fatty rind removed), if you like.
- Eggy bread (made with two eggs and brown bread) and small glass of orange juice (150ml) (v)
- Half a tin of baked beans on brown toast (ve) with a sprinkle of grated cheese (v).
- Remember to have something to drink at breakfast time. Unsweetened tea, coffee, milk or water are great choices. Fruit juice is also a good choice but is high in sugar, so stick to a 150ml portion.



**TOP TIP:** Wholemeal and wholegrain options are the best choice as they release their energy slowly. Mix it up with wholemeal pitta breads, bagels or English muffins – as well as wholemeal pasta, rice and noodles for evening meals.

## Lunch

Eating a healthy lunch is important to avoid an afternoon slump in energy. What you eat for lunch may depend on how active you are going to be in the afternoon and what time you plan to have dinner. Some easy, low cost and healthy lunchtime meals to try include:



- Sandwich filling ideas – use brown bread, pitta breads, wraps or rolls!  
**Cheese savoury:** Grated cheese topped with tomato, salad and/or cucumber sandwich on brown bread with spread or 1 tbsp of low-fat mayo (v). Sliced ham, chicken or turkey would also work well.  
**Tuna crunch:** Mix a tin of tuna with 2 tbsp of mayonnaise, black pepper (to taste) and a pinch of salt with any of the following (or a combination!): half a tin of sweetcorn, diced red onion, spring onions, red or yellow pepper or cucumber. Save the other half for tomorrow in a sealed container and store in the fridge.  
**Mashed egg:** Two hard boiled eggs mashed with 1 tbsp of low-fat and black pepper (to taste), topped with sliced tomato, salad or cucumber (v).
- Tin of soup or half a tub of fresh soup with slices of brown bread (ve depending on soup). If you're feeling extra hungry, replace the bread and spread with one of the tasty sandwiches above.
- Omelette made with two eggs, grated cheese and a couple of handfuls of any vegetables you may have – diced tomato, mushrooms, red onion, spinach would all work well (v).

## Dinner

What you have for your evening meal will often depend on what you had for lunch. If you have only had a sandwich try to have a proper cooked (preferably homemade) meal. Try not to over eat in the evening as if you are relaxing at night time the energy may not all be used up and this can result in weight gain. Tasty ideas include:

**TOP TIP:** Leftovers from your dinner the night before can make a very tasty lunch and it prevents food waste - just make sure they are stored in a sealed container in the fridge, reheated until piping hot and consumed no more than 2 day after cooking (1 day if the dish contains rice).

- **Jacket potato:** (cooked in microwave or oven) with cheese and beans (v), mashed egg and tomato (v), tuna crunch or tinned sardines/mackerel, sliced tomato and cheese. Serve with salad or boiled vegetables.
- **Easy veggie burritos:** Mix a tin of mixed beans with a tin of sweetcorn, black pepper, a pinch of salt, diced tomatoes and ½ tsp of chilli flakes. Spoon into two brown wraps and fold into parcels. Place in a dish and top with grated cheese. Bake in oven (~200C) for 15 mins – serve with salad (v – ve without cheese). No oven? Turn into quesadillas! Place one wrap in a dry pan, spread the bean mix all over and grated cheese, then top with a second wrap. Cook on a low heat for 10 mins, flip and cook for another 10 mins then serve.
- **Pitta pizzas:** Put two brown pitta breads on a baking tray. Preheat oven to ~200C. Spread 1 tbsp of tomato puree on each pitta, then top with your favourite pizza toppings! Peppers, onions, tomato, sweetcorn, chicken or tuna are tasty options. Top with grated cheese, bake for 10 mins and serve with fresh salad.
- **Chicken fajita pasta:** Fry 2 diced chicken breasts, 2 diced peppers (any colour), 1 diced red onion in 1 tbsp oil for 15 mins on a high heat. Add 2 diced garlic cloves and 2 tsp of fajita, taco or cajun seasoning. Combine and cook for 5 more mins. Add a tin of chopped tomatoes, lots of black pepper and simmer on a low heat for 20 mins. Add cooked brown pasta, mix and serve with a sprinkle of cheddar cheese and salad.
- **Egg fried rice:** Mix cooked brown rice with around 200g of cooked veg (i.e. red onion, carrots, peppers, cabbage, sweetcorn or spring onions) and 2 diced garlic cloves in a frying pan with 1 tbsp oil. Cook on a high heat for 5 mins. Season with black pepper, create a hole in the pan and then add two eggs. Allow to cook for 30 seconds, and then start to mix everything together until all the egg is cooked and incorporated (v). A splash of soy sauce will make it taste just like a takeaway version!

### FEELING PECKISH?

Try a low sugar yogurt pot, fruit (fresh or tinned), a handful of nuts, a glass of semi skimmed milk, a slice of brown toast with spread, 2-3 slices of cheese or a boiled egg to keep you going until your next meal.

### LOOKING FOR MORE IDEAS?

- Search '**NHS Change4Life recipes**' in your internet browser.
- Search '**Change4Life Smart Recipes**' in your App store.