



What should we be EATING NOW?

We are constantly bombarded with healthy eating advice. One minute something is good for us, the next it's not! With such changing information, it's often difficult to know what's true and what's fake news. So, we asked *GH* nutritionist Anita Bean to set the record straight

IS FIVE-A-DAY ENOUGH OR SHOULD I HAVE MORE?

The five-a-day recommendation from Public Health England is based on advice from the World Health Organisation, which recommends eating a minimum of 400g of fruit and vegetables a day to lower the risk of heart disease, certain cancers and stroke. But a growing body of research suggests that eating more may help you live longer. 'The guidelines were not based on the level that science suggested was optimal for health, but the minimum amount needed to enjoy a significant health benefit,' explains James Wong, botanist and author of *10-A-Day The Easy Way*. A study by Imperial College London, involving 2m participants, concluded that people who ate more than the five-a-day recommendation continued to benefit from every extra portion. Those eating 10-a-day enjoyed the best state of health, with a 33% decreased risk of stroke, 28% lower risk of heart disease and 14% lower risk of cancer.



TAKE ACTION: Don't worry if you can't get to 10 – just eat more! One portion is 80g of any fresh, frozen or canned fruit, vegetable (except potatoes) or pulses, or 30g of dried. This equates to one small apple or banana, one large clementine, about six strawberries, three broccoli florets or one carrot.

Buying local and what's in season is eco-friendly and economical. *GH's* Zesty Carrot and Lentil Soup (page 137), Cauliflower and Lentil Bolognese (page 138), and Chicken Meatball, Butter Bean and Spinach Soup (page 141) each provide three portions of vegetables in a single meal.

How many eggs can I have per week?

There is no recommended daily allowance or limit, and eggs can be enjoyed as part of a healthy, balanced diet. 'It's a myth that eggs are bad for your heart, but it can be a source of confusion because advice has changed over the years about how many we should eat,' explains Victoria Taylor, senior dietitian at the British Heart Foundation. 'Cholesterol in eggs is less likely to affect your blood cholesterol level than the amount of saturated fat you eat from foods like butter, fatty meat, cakes, biscuits and chocolate.' Current research shows that moderate egg consumption does not increase the risk of heart and circulatory diseases in most people. However, if you have familial hypercholesterolaemia (one in 500 in the UK are affected), the British Heart Foundation advises no more than three or four eggs a week. **TAKE ACTION:** The way you cook eggs, or the foods you serve alongside them, are more important than the eggs themselves. Poaching or boiling is healthier than frying in bacon fat or scrambling with butter. To help you explore just how versatile and delicious eggs can be, turn to page 130 for *GH's* Virtue Bowl, and page 145 for Lemon and Berry Meringue Roulade.



Research suggests eating more than five-a-day may help you live longer

IS RED WINE GOOD FOR MY HEART?

There is some evidence that a moderate intake of alcohol brings a small reduction in heart disease risk. But British Heart Foundation-funded research published in 2018, which looked at the effect of alcohol consumption on heart and circulatory diseases, concluded the risks outweigh the benefits, and drinking more than the recommended limits will have a negative effect on your health. 'Red wine is sometimes seen as a healthy choice, as we associate it with the Mediterranean diet, but it isn't an essential part and should be consumed in moderation,' explains Victoria Taylor. Red wine contains polyphenols, which may benefit our gut health, however, other foods (including grapes, blueberries and strawberries) provide polyphenols without the negative effects of alcohol.

TAKE ACTION: To keep health risks from alcohol to a low level, the chief medical officers' guidelines advise drinking no more than 14 units a week on a regular basis. This is equivalent to seven glasses (175ml) of wine (11.5% strength), 14 shots of spirits (40%) or six pints of beer (4%). But Public Health England says if you are aged between 45 and 65, it's best to have regular alcohol-free days (preferably two consecutively) to give your liver a rest and reduce health risks.



We are told to eat more plant-based foods, but is raw better?

If you want to reach the ultimate goal for your gut health, you need to be eating 30 different types of plant-based foods every week. But eating raw plants isn't necessarily better for us. 'Cooking certain plants, such as grains and pulses, makes them easier to digest and can also increase the nutrient content,' says Maeve Hanan, registered dietitian and author of *Your No-Nonsense Guide To Eating Well*. 'For example, cooked tomatoes contain higher levels of the antioxidant lycopene compared with raw tomatoes.' However, cooking can destroy some other nutrients, such as vitamin C, so the best strategy is to include a variety of both raw and cooked foods in your diet.



TAKE ACTION: Try going meat-free for just one day a week, or two meals a day, to reap some of the health benefits of a plant-based diet. *GH's* Grated Tofu 'Chorizo' Tacos (page 135) and Quinoa 'Paella' (page 126) are delicious examples of plant-based meals.

AREN'T NUTS AND SEEDS FATTENING?

Although nuts are high in fat, it's mainly the healthier unsaturated kind, which can help reduce cholesterol. Data from the Nurses' Health Study in the US showed those who ate nuts regularly were 30% less likely to have heart attacks. Another study found almonds curb hunger and prevent overeating.

TAKE ACTION: Heart UK recommends eating 30g nuts a day to lower cholesterol levels. But avoid salted and honey roasted varieties, as they have extra salt and sugar.



Should I ditch full-fat dairy?

Contrary to popular belief, full-fat milk, cheese and yogurt do not increase blood cholesterol or your risk of heart disease. The reason? The fat in milk, cheese and yogurt (but not butter) is encased in the milk fat globule membrane, which prevents it raising cholesterol. Also, the calcium content of dairy may stop some of the saturated fat from being absorbed. In other words, the potential harm associated with consuming saturated fat may be cancelled out when it is eaten as part of complex food models such as dairy products.

TAKE ACTION: Whether you choose full or low-fat dairy is down to personal preference. Low-fat versions are lower in calories and may be helpful if you're trying to manage your weight (as long as they don't have added sugar to replace the fat). Find inspiration in *GH's* Easy Courgette and Leek Lasagne (page 134) and Tropical 'Mousse' Pots (page 144).



WHAT'S THE LIMIT FOR RED MEAT?

According to the World Cancer Research Fund, there is strong evidence that red and processed meats are causes of colorectal cancer. The organisation recommends we limit our intake of red meat to roughly three portions per week (350-500g cooked weight), with little, if any, processed meat (ham, bacon, beef jerky, corned beef, salami, pepperoni and hot dogs). The NHS recommends that those who consume more than 90g

(cooked weight) of red and processed meat a day should reduce this to 70g, equivalent to two rashers of thick bacon or one-and-a-half sausages.

TAKE ACTION: If you eat more red or processed meat on one particular day, eat less in the following days, so that the average amounts to less than 70g. Aim for at least one meat-free day per week, choosing beans, lentils, chickpeas, hummus, tofu or Quorn instead.



TAKE ACTION: Instead of counting every calorie you eat, opt instead for fresh whole foods when you are shopping: a variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains and pulses, some nuts and seeds, plus protein

from good-quality sources such as fish, lean meats, dairy or tofu. These foods are naturally high in fibre, filling and satisfying, so you automatically eat fewer calories.

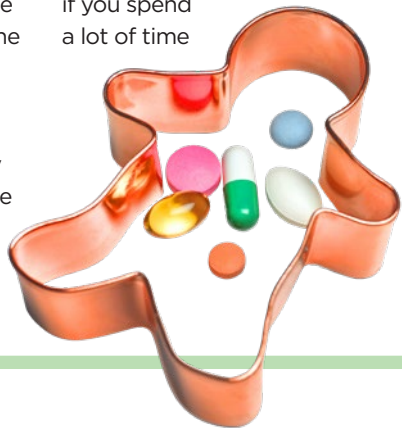
Which supplements should I take?

Eating a balanced, varied diet is the best way of getting your vitamins and minerals. Having said that, certain nutrients are sometimes in short supply, so you may wish to consider taking the following supplements:

● **MULTIVITAMINS** Multivitamins that provide approximately 100% of the nutrient reference value (NRV) for most vitamins and minerals are unlikely to do any harm, and may be a convenient insurance against deficient intakes, as long as you stick to the recommended dose. However, there

is no evidence that taking high doses improves health.

● **VITAMIN D** Public Health England recommends taking a 10mcg vitamin D supplement between October and March to maintain good immunity and safeguard against deficiency. However, if you spend a lot of time



indoors and don't get much exposure to the sun, you may benefit from taking a supplement all year round.

● **OMEGA-3s** Omega-3 fatty acids (EPA and DHA) play an important role in brain, eye and heart health. If you don't eat oily fish such as salmon and mackerel regularly, consider taking a 1,000mg fish oil supplement, or a vegan omega-3 supplement made from algae oil.

● **IRON** Low levels of iron are common, and can cause persistent tiredness, lack of energy and shortness of breath. If you are

experiencing these symptoms, discuss this with your doctor, who can carry out a simple blood test and will prescribe supplements if you need them. However, taking iron supplements unnecessarily could harm your health.

● **VITAMIN B12** As vitamin B12 is not found in plant foods, vegans will need to get their daily quota from B12-fortified foods (eg, yeast extract and non-dairy milks) or supplements. The Vegan Society recommends taking either a 10mcg supplement daily, or 2,000mcg weekly. □