

# So you want to lose weight... for good

A guide to losing weight for men and women



**British Heart  
Foundation**

The British Heart Foundation takes your health and your weight very seriously. We don't guarantee quick fixes or magical cures for weight loss. In fact we're dubious about anyone who does. We prefer a sensible and permanent approach to losing weight. All the research findings suggest that losing it steadily and gradually is the safest way and the weight is much more likely to stay off than if you lose it quickly.

We're not keen on the word 'diet' either. It sounds restrictive and very short term. We believe in a **weight loss plan for life**. That doesn't mean having to survive for ever on salads and crispbreads! Our plan includes plenty of tasty and filling options which you can prepare easily and enjoy at home or elsewhere.

# Contents

<b>The British Heart Foundation and weight</b>	<b>4</b>	Looking at labels	30
<b>Heart disease and weight</b>	<b>5</b>	Getting moving	32
What is heart disease?	5	<b>Changing Behaviour</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Weight gain</b>	<b>7</b>	Understanding patterns	34
<b>Motivated to lose weight?</b>	<b>7</b>	Real hunger?	34
<b>Eating or exercise - or both</b>	<b>11</b>	Feelings	34
Your weight loss plan	11	Triggers	34
<b>How much is too much?</b>	<b>13</b>	Events	34
But what's a portion?	15	Distractions	34
A word of caution	15	Don't be hard on yourself	35
Can I indulge?	16	<b>Your questions answered</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>How much is a portion?</b>	<b>17</b>	Food combining seems popular. Does it work?	36
An example of a day's eating plan	23	What about 'high protein, low carbohydrate' diets like the Atkins diet?	36
A word about fat	27	Would it help to become a vegetarian?	38
A special word about spreading fats	28	<b>Meal ideas</b>	<b>39</b>
A word about sugar	28	Support	39
A word about salt	29	Tracking progress	40
Alcohol	29	<b>Progress Chart</b>	<b>41</b>
Non-alcoholic drinks	30	Finally... Keeping at it	43
		More help?	43

# The British Heart Foundation and weight

If you're interested in losing weight for health benefits, we've produced this booklet for you. Whether you're male or female, in your twenties or in your sixties, whether you have any signs of heart disease or not, the advice which follows is written for you. In fact the whole family could benefit from our tips on healthy eating for life.

And your health isn't the only thing which stands to improve. Getting in shape can mean getting fitter and feeling more energetic. Many people notice a boost to their confidence too as they can wear different clothes, play more with children or grandchildren and generally get more out of life.

“The best thing about the front of the booklet is the BHF logo. You immediately know it’s going to be sensible.”

(35 - 44 yr old overweight woman)

## Heart disease and weight

If you’re very overweight you’re more likely to have a heart attack, especially if your extra weight is around your middle. The good news is that by losing weight you can cut your risk of heart disease considerably.

Research studies also suggest that many overweight people with angina, raised blood cholesterol and high blood pressure found that their conditions improved greatly, even after losing only some of their excess weight. Many of those who kept the weight off were able to reduce their medication or even stop it altogether.

### What is heart disease?

The most common form of heart disease among adults is called **coronary heart disease**. It occurs when the coronary arteries bringing oxygen-rich blood to your heart muscle get ‘furred up’ by fatty deposits (atheroma).

**Angina** occurs when your heart does not receive enough blood and oxygen. An attack can be brought on by physical activity or emotional stress.

A **heart attack** occurs if a coronary artery becomes completely blocked, which can happen, for example, when a blood clot forms on a pre-existing atheroma.

**High blood pressure** (the medical name is ‘hypertension’) increases your risk of heart disease, strokes and kidney disease. The cause of most high blood pressure is not clear but the following can all contribute: being overweight; excessive salt intake; drinking too much alcohol; physical inactivity.

**High blood cholesterol** increases your risk of coronary heart disease. The most common cause of high blood cholesterol is too much fat in the diet. Occasionally people have high levels due to an inherited condition.

Coronary heart disease is usually the result of several risk factors. These include:

- **high blood cholesterol**
- **smoking**
- **high blood pressure**
- **physical inactivity**
- **being overweight**
- **family history**
- **diabetes.**

**“When I became a teacher, my lifestyle changed but my diet didn’t. I’ve been sitting around much more, getting no time for exercise, and eating as much as ever, especially late at night. Since then I’ve been putting on about a stone a year.” (25-34 year old overweight man)**

## Weight gain

You may be one of those people who has always been big and battled with your weight on and off for years. Or, you may have been steadily gaining weight over the years as many people gain weight with age. Many people are less active as they get older because of family commitments, long working hours and other pressures.

Leisure time is often spent in front of the television or computer which doesn't help. Whichever is true you're not alone. Over half of all adults in the UK are now overweight and this is true for men and women. Remember that just preventing any further weight gain is a very valuable and worthwhile goal in itself.

## Motivated to lose weight?

Protecting yourself from heart disease is one very good reason to think about losing weight. Getting and keeping to a healthy weight also reduces your risk of other health problems like diabetes, some cancers and arthritis, too.

Most of us know if we're overweight by looking in a mirror or by the size or tightness of our clothes. You may like to check your weight on the chart below, which also takes account of your height. If your weight is within the overweight or obese section (fat or very fat), you are wise to be thinking about trying to lose some.

The 'healthy weight' section (OK) is your long term goal but in the short term you may wish to set yourself a more realistic target of perhaps losing 5 or 10lbs. Don't be too ambitious in your goal otherwise you are almost certain to be disappointed with the results. Remember that maintaining your current weight (ie not gaining more) is an achievement in itself.

Your shape, as much as your weight, could be affecting your health risk. The more apple-shaped you are, rather than pear-shaped, the more at risk of heart disease you are. You can assess this simply by measuring your

waist (or girth) at the narrowest part. If your girth is more than 32 ins (80 cm) for a woman or more than 37 ins (94 cm) for a man, your health is at risk. If the measurement is more than 35 ins (88 cm) for a woman or 40 ins (102 cm) for a man, your risk is much higher.

Other reasons for trying to lose weight may be as important to you as health. You might want to get fitter, get in-shape, look better, feel better or just be able to get into clothes which no longer fit.

Whatever your reasons, you've made an important step by getting hold of this booklet. Read on to find out more about losing weight - for good.

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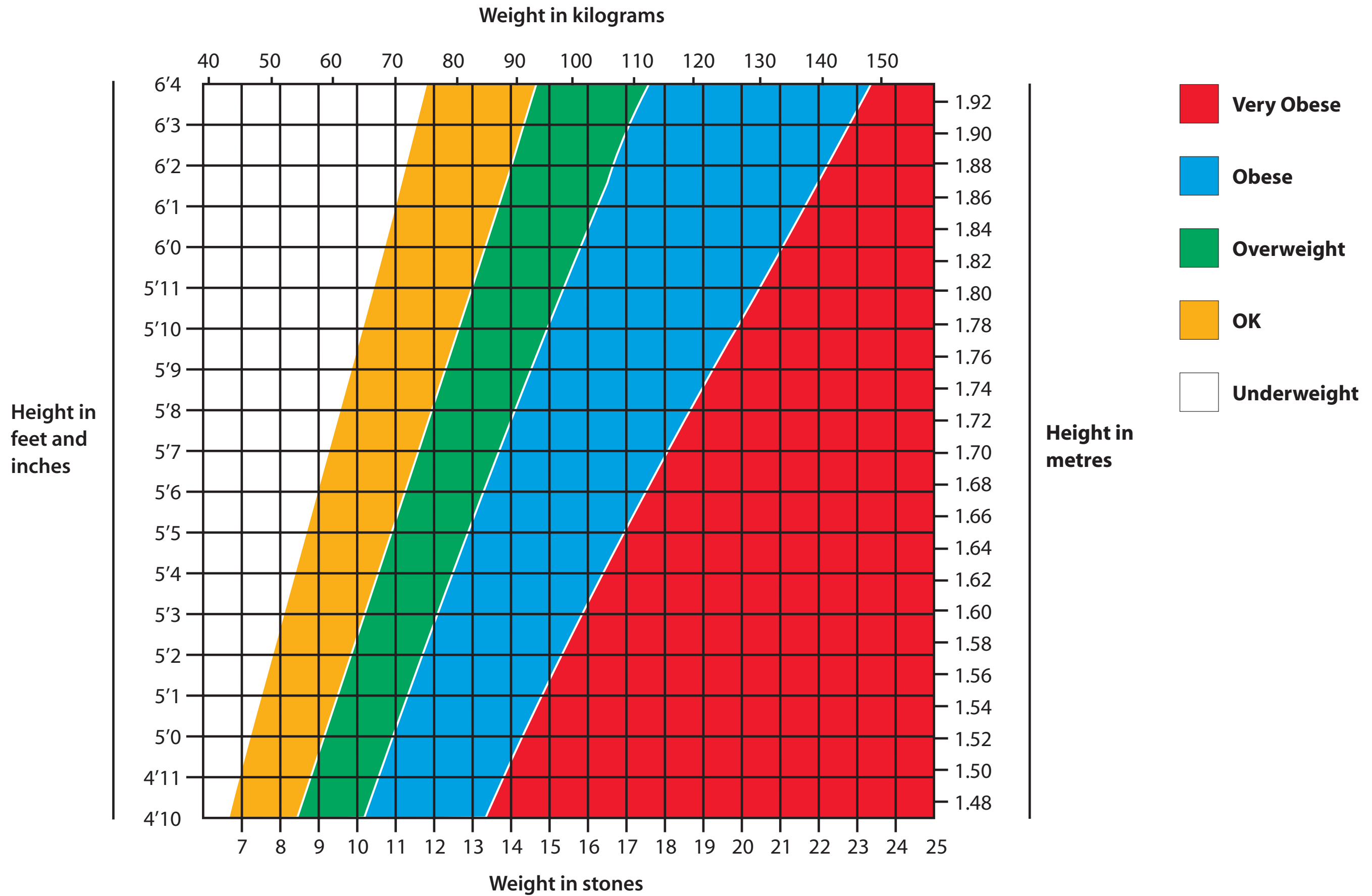
**Now please fold out the page opposite to see where you fall on our weight chart.**

### **How to use the chart**

The chart is divided into five sections which are shown by five different colours. They represent Underweight (the white section), OK (yellow), Overweight (green), Obese (blue) and finally Very Obese (shown in pink).

To find out which section you fall into, start by finding your height in feet and inches on the vertical scale on the left hand side of the chart, or by metres on the right. Now mark the horizontal line where your height falls with your finger, while you find your

weight on the scale at either the top or bottom of the chart. The top gives your weight in kilograms and the bottom in stones. Follow the vertical line corresponding to your weight until it crosses the horizontal line marked by your finger. The colour of the section where these two lines cross gives your weight on the key to the right of the chart.



# Eating or exercise - or both

To lose weight you need to use up more energy (calories or joules) than your body takes in from food and drink. You can do this in three ways:

- **by eating and drinking fewer calories**
- **using more calories by getting more active**
- **a bit of both.**

Most people find that doing both achieves the best results. You may prefer to start off with changes to what you eat and think about exercise later. It's up to you. For exercise to greatly reduce the risk of heart disease you need to aim for 30 minutes of moderate activity at least five times a week which leaves you warm and breathing more heavily, but still able to hold a conversation with someone! If this sounds impossible for you just now, remember that doing anything more than you do now is a step in the right direction and will certainly help. But remember, however much you change your eating and exercise patterns, a weight loss of 1lb (half a kg) a week is all you should expect. Any more than that is a bonus! Losing weight too quickly may not be good for you (see page 38).

**To greatly reduce the risk of heart disease you need to aim for 30 minutes of moderate activity at least five times a week.**

## Your weight loss plan

Eating and drinking fewer calories doesn't mean that you have to count them. The British Heart Foundation is as interested in the quality of the foods you eat as the amount. The Balance of Good Health shows the best proportion of foods, from the five food groups, for healthy eating and for weight loss.

It goes like this:

- **plenty of fruit and vegetables**
- **plenty of bread, other cereals (like pasta or rice) and potatoes**
- **smaller amounts of milk and dairy foods, low fat where possible**
- **smaller amounts of meat, fish, beans and nuts, low fat where possible**
- **tiny amounts of fatty and sugary foods, and alcoholic drinks.**

In essence, this is healthy eating. Eating these types of foods in the proportions shown will make sure you get the right balance of vitamins (like vitamin C) and minerals (like iron and calcium). It also provides lots of starch and fibre - keeping the bowels healthy, while keeping fat and sugar down - to reduce the risk of heart disease, some cancers, weight gain and dental problems and keep the bowels healthy.

Healthy eating for weight loss means eating the right balance and a suitable amount of food. This plan helps you manage the quantities - see page 14. Many people think they are already eating very healthily and this may be true for you. However, we know from studies that many people still haven't quite got it right and their diet doesn't quite represent the proportions of foods shown in The Balance of Good Health in the next column.

## **The Balance of Good Health**

### **Bread, other cereals and potatoes**

**Base a third of your daily food intake on this group**

### **Fruit and vegetables**

**Aim to eat at least 5 portions a day – also around a third of your food intake**

### **Milk and dairy foods**

**Try to eat 2-3 servings per day – around one-sixth of your daily food intake**

### **Meat, fish and alternatives**

**Also around one-sixth of your daily food intake**

### **Fatty and sugary foods**

**Should form the smallest part of your daily food intake.**

**Following The Balance of Good Health will give you the best possible eating plan for good health.**

## How much is too much?

Following The Balance of Good Health will give you the best possible eating plan for good health. It's more about what you **can** eat than what you can't. In fact, nothing is banned. It gives you the flexibility to choose the foods you enjoy **and** to indulge in treats like chocolate, crisps and cakes now and then. Even the odd glass of wine or a beer is fine.

When watching your weight, you also have to plan the **amounts** of food you eat. It's not just the **quality** - the **quantity** matters too. Although

everyone is different, as a rule, most people will lose weight if they eat or drink between 1,500 and 1,800 calories a day. Women tend to need less than men, so if you're female, choose 1,500 calories. If you're male, choose 1,800 calories. The table on the next page shows how many portions you would eat from each food group, for 1,500 or 1,800 calories a day. You could write your own plan in the blank right hand column. If you would like individualised advice ask your GP to refer you to a dietitian or your practice nurse.

## Daily portions based on The Balance of Good Health

<b>Food Group</b>	<b>1,500 calories</b>	<b>1,800 calories</b>	<b>Your Plan</b>
Fruit and vegetables	7 or more	8 or more	
Bread, other cereals and potatoes	7	8	
Milk and dairy foods	2	3	
Meat, fish and alternatives	2	2	
Fatty and sugary foods			
Fats	2	2	
Occasional foods	1	1	
Alcohol (If you choose not to drink alcohol at all, you can have the points as fatty and sugary foods instead.)	up to 1	up to 2	

## But what's a portion?

With this weight loss plan, you won't have to count calories at all. And you won't have to weigh out your food. Instead the list of common foods from all the food groups on pages 17-23 show handy amounts - or portions - beside each food, for you to choose as you wish. But remember, portions are a funny thing. One person's idea of a normal portion is often quite different from someone else's! If you're having a larger amount than the list shows, it could be a double or triple portion so would count as two or three.

We don't want to be negative. In fact we recommend that you **must** eat plenty of many foods. Five portions a day from the fruit and vegetable group is a minimum and you can aim for 7, 8 or even more! They are low in calories and full of goodness. The antioxidants they contain, especially if they are green, yellow, orange or red, offer some protection against CHD and some cancers. Any vegetables are fine as are most fruits, but note the word of caution in the box.

### A word of caution:

**We encourage you to eat lots of foods from the fruit and vegetable group. However there are just a few exceptions:**

**Avocado pears are high in monounsaturated fats and high in calories. Have as a salad garnish only once a week at the most and half an avocado only occasionally as a special treat.**

**Fruit juice is nourishing but quite concentrated in calories. Keep to only one portion of unsweetened fruit juice - a small glass - a day. Avoid sugary squash or fruit juice drinks.**

**Dried fruits are quite concentrated in natural sugar so have only one portion of these daily.**

Also, make sure you eat enough foods from the 'Bread, other cereals and potatoes' group. These starchy foods were once thought to be 'stodgy'. In fact, they're not! They are filling but don't contain too many calories - unless you add fat to them. If you add fat, such as spread on bread, oil on pasta or butter on your baked potato, remember that these come from your portions in the 'Fatty foods' section. Enjoy them but keep to your limit.

## Can I indulge?

Nothing is banned in this weight loss plan, but foods from the 'Fatty and sugary foods group' provide a lot of calories with little goodness. Think of these as treats or extras to be enjoyed occasionally, rather than everyday necessities. Your daily limit of fatty and sugary foods is just one portion, but you could save them up over the week if you prefer, so have none on one day and two or three on another. Many people find they eat differently at weekends or when eating out, so this way you can keep your indulgences 'up your sleeve' for those times you really need them!

**We believe in a weight loss plan for life. That doesn't mean having to survive for ever on salads and crispbreads!**

## How much is a portion?

<b>Fruit and vegetables (have 7 - 8 portions per day)</b>	
Vegetables eg. cauliflower, cabbage, peas, carrots, mushrooms, tomatoes, leeks, swede, courgettes, broccoli, french beans, peppers	2 large tablespoons
Salad - mixed green eg. lettuce, cucumber, onion, pepper	1 small bowl
Tomato	1 medium
Whole fresh fruit	eg. 1 apple, 1 pear, 1 orange, 1 banana, 1 peach
Tinned fruit in natural juice eg. peaches, pineapple, raspberries and pears	3 large tablespoons
Stewed fruit eg. apple, rhubarb, cherries	4 large tablespoons
Large fruits	1 slice melon or pineapple, half a grapefruit
Small fruits	12 grapes, 3 apricots, 2 plums, 2 kiwi fruits, 7 strawberries
Dried fruit eg. raisins	1 baby box - matchbox size
Fruit juice (maximum one per day)	1 small glass or small carton

**Bread, other cereals and potatoes (have 7 - 8 portions per day)**

Breakfast cereal eg. flakes or crispies	3 tablespoons
Muesli	2 tablespoons
Shredded wheat	1
Weetabix	1
Bread or toast	1 large slice (medium thick)
Bread bun or roll	half a large one
Pitta bread	1 mini or picnic size
Chapatti	1 small
Crackers	3
Crispbreads	4
Plain naan bread	1 small
Rice, plain boiled	2 heaped tablespoons
Pasta, plain, boiled	3 heaped tablespoons
Egg noodles, boiled	half packet
Potatoes	2 egg size
Bagel, plain or cinnamon & raisin	half
Crumpet/pikelet	1
Muffin	1
Malt loaf	1 small slice
Muesli bar	1

## Milk and dairy foods (have 2 - 3 portions per day)

Milk (preferably semi-skimmed or better still, skimmed)	1 medium glass, 200ml (third of a pint)
Yoghurt, plain or flavoured, low fat and low sugar	1 small pot, 150g (5oz)
Cheese - preferably low fat	1 matchbox size, 40g (one and a half ounces) (Brie, Camembert, Edam, reduced fat cheddar, Smoked Austrian are good). The mini portion size cheeses are handy.
Cream cheese - light	the size of 2 small matchboxes, 80g (3oz)
Cottage cheese	1 large pot, 200g (8oz)
Fromage frais - light	1 small pot 150g (5oz)

## Meat, fish and alternatives (have 2 -3 portions per day)

Lean meat like beef, pork, ham, lamb, chicken (without skin)	3 slices (an amount the size of a pack of playing cards)
Fish - white or oily	as meat
Fish fingers	3
Eggs	2
Baked beans in tomato sauce (low sugar and salt if possible)	5 tablespoons
Lentils	4 tablespoons cooked
Beans eg. red kidney beans, butter beans, chick peas	4 tablespoons cooked
Nuts or peanut butter	2 tablespoons

## Fatty and sugary foods (see amounts below)

Fats (have 2 portions per day)

### Spreading fats and oils

Butter or margarine spread	1 teaspoon
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Low fat spread	2 teaspoons
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Oil (any type)	1 teaspoon
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### Dressings and sauces

Mayonnaise	1 teaspoon
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Low calorie mayonnaise	2 teaspoons
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Blue cheese dressing	1 teaspoon
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Salad cream	1 tablespoon
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Low calorie salad cream	2 tablespoons
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Gravy or white sauce (roux)	1 tablespoon
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Gravy or white sauce (made with cornflour)	4 tablespoons
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<b>Occasional foods (have 1 portion per day or 7 per week)</b>	
Sugar	3 teaspoons
Jam or honey	1 heaped teaspoon
Crisps, preferably low fat	1 small packet
Cream	1 tablespoon
Ice cream	1 small scoop
Biscuits, plain	2
Slice of cake	half
Doughnut	half
Danish pastry	half
Chocolate	1 small bar or 2 mini bars
Sweets	1 small tube/bag
Pastry in savoury item eg. pork pie, sausage roll, quiche lorraine	half

Half a slice of cake or half a sausage roll may seem rather impractical. You may wish to save up your weekly 'ration' of cakes and pastries to have at weekends or a time when you know you would like to enjoy a special treat. For example, one doughnut would be 2 portions, so 2 day's 'rations'.

### Alcoholic drinks (max 1- 2 per day or 7 - 14 per week)

Ordinary strength beer or lager	1 small, 300 ml (half pint)
Wine	1 glass, 100ml (4 fl oz)
Spirits	1 tot (pub measure), 25 ml (1 fl oz)

### An example of a day's eating plan

The day's eating plan given on the fold out page opposite shows how someone having 1,500 calories a day might choose from The Balance of Good Health. Obviously no two days are ever the same, so this is just an example.

**Now please turn the booklet anti-clockwise and fold out the page to read the tables.**

<b>Meals</b>	<b>Food Group</b>	Fruit and veg	Bread, other cereals and potatoes	Milk and dairy	Meat, fish and alternatives	Fats	Fatty & sugary foods/ and alcohol
For 1,500 Calories	(portions)	7	7	2	2	2	1/1
<b>Breakfast</b>							
Bran flakes	6 tablespoons		2				
Semi-skimmed milk	200 ml (third of a pint)			1			
Small fruit juice		1					
Cups of tea, milk no sugar							
<b>Mid morning</b>							
Coffee, milk no sugar							
Apple		1					

<b>Meals</b>	<b>Food Group</b>	Fruit and veg	Bread, other cereals and potatoes	Milk and dairy	Meat, fish and alternatives	Fats	Fatty & sugary foods/ and alcohol
<b>Lunch</b>							
Chicken salad sandwich:							
2 slices bread			2				
low fat spread	1 teaspoon					1	
Sliced chicken					1		
Mixed salad filling		1					
Mineral water							
Small sliced Malt Loaf			1				
<b>Mid afternoon</b>							
Pot of tea, milk no sugar							
Large glass water							

<b>Meals</b>	<b>Food Group</b>	Fruit and veg	Bread, other cereals and potatoes	Milk and dairy	Meat, fish and alternatives	Fats	Fatty & sugary foods/ and alcohol
<b>Dinner</b>							
Pasta twirls (boiled)	6 large tablespoons		2				
Small lean pork steak					1		
Sauce made with olive oil (onions, tomato & mushrooms)		1				1	
Carrots		1					
Broccoli		1					
Peaches in natural juice		1					
Cream	1 tablespoon						1
Glass of wine							1
Milk in tea/coffee throughout day	200 ml (third of a pint)			1			
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1/1</b>

## A word about fat

Keeping the fat in your diet low is the best possible aid to weight loss and The Balance of Good Health is designed to do this. By choosing low fat options in all the food groups, you will be keeping your fat intake well within the recommended limit for good health. But remember fat is sometimes hidden in foods so may not be obvious. Watch out! And always count the fat portions up to ensure you don't go over your daily or weekly limit. Here are things to look out for in the different food groups:

### **Bread, cereal and potatoes**

Choose a vegetable/tomato based sauce for your pasta rather than a rich cream/cheese sauce. Do you really need to add margarine to the mashed potato? Greasy chips? Try low fat oven chips for flavour without fat. Experiment with different breads which are so tasty they don't need spread. Choose steamed or boiled rice rather than fried.

### **Fruit and vegetables**

Have your vegetables been stir-fried in oil or served with a daub of margarine? Count the fat! Has your salad been drowned in an oil rich dressing? Choose low calorie or fat free instead. Wouldn't your fresh fruit taste even better without the cream?

## **Milk and dairy foods**

Semi-skimmed milk is great, skimmed even better. Choose low fat but remember, with yoghurts that doesn't always mean low sugar or low calorie! Choose fromage frais and choose the very low fat type. Watch out for creme fraiche which sounds very low fat but isn't! Have tiny servings of strong tasty cheeses in sandwiches and cooking to make a little go a long way.

## **Meat, fish and alternatives**

Is your chicken breast coated in fried crumbs or basted in butter? Have red meat but keep it lean and make a little go a long way using vegetables to bulk out the dish (eg. casseroles, stir fry). Has your fish been battered and deep fried? Ask for it uncoated! Or have grilled fish fingers. Is your sausage or burger fried or grilled? Grilled is much healthier. Choose a vegetarian meal from time to time but watch out for pastry and lots of extra cheese. Have eggs! Not fried, but poached or boiled. Keep it to 3-4 eggs a week if you have high blood cholesterol levels. Vegetarian alternatives to meat and fish such as nuts and beans or lentils are very tasty and much cheaper. Try them.

## **Fatty and sugary foods**

### **Fats**

Use cornflour to thicken cooking sauces or gravies for meat or fish, so you won't need fat. Have mixed salads with low calorie salad dressings rather than mayonnaise and oily dressings. Oil is better than lard for cooking but is still calorie-rich so use as little as you can get away with, even olive or sunflower oil. What exactly are you spreading on your bread? (see column opposite).

### **Occasional foods**

Make or buy fruit pies with a top crust only to save half the fat and get more fruit. Have bread-based pizza or bagels with low fat cream cheese instead of fat-laden savoury pastries like sausage rolls and quiche. Choose low fat biscuits and cakes as these will contain a bit less fat than the traditional product. But beware they can still be quite high in fat. Those in wrappers may help you keep to a small portion. Compare the labels of different savoury snacks such as potato crisps, tortilla chips and maize-curls. Choose the brand with the lowest fat in the pack.

## **A special word about spreading fats**

It's hard to keep pace of the full range of new 'fat spreads' on the market which are intended as alternatives to butter. Remember that strictly, butter and margarine contain the same amount of fat and calories. A good rule of thumb is to avoid butter altogether if you can and use whichever type of alternative you prefer but spread it very thinly. Choose one which contains the best type of fat; 'high in unsaturated fat', which could be polyunsaturates or monounsaturates, both are recommended. Also choose one which is labelled 'reduced fat' or 'low fat' - the lower the better. If you really can't resist butter have it as a special treat once a week. Despite what you may have read in the papers, it really is bad news for the heart as well as the waistline.

## **A word about sugar**

Sugar can count for a lot of wasted calories especially if you have one or two spoons full in every drink. Three teaspoons is one portion from the 'Fatty and sugary foods' group so it quickly uses up your limit. Try to wean yourself off it or if you really need the sweet taste, try artificial sweeteners instead.

## A word about salt

Too much salt is linked with high blood pressure, heart disease and strokes. Although salt doesn't contain any calories, if you're concerned about health, you should avoid eating too much salt. Avoid adding salt in cooking or at the table and use herbs, spices and ground pepper for flavour instead. The majority of the salt we eat is hidden within pre-cooked or pre-prepared meals which, although convenient, are sometimes very salty. Monosodium glutamate is worth avoiding where possible. Sodium is the chemical word for salt.

**The majority of the salt we eat is hidden within pre-cooked or pre-prepared meals.**

## Alcohol

Most people enjoy a drink or two and there's no reason why you shouldn't have an occasional drink when you're trying to lose weight. Remember though, that alcoholic drinks are low on nourishment and high on calories. So the more you drink the more extra calories you'll be taking in. Less is definitely better. Also, because alcohol is an appetite stimulant some people notice they tend to eat more

when they drink alcohol. High calorie nibbles like nuts, crisps and cheese are especially damaging or worse still, a late night take-away meal!

So, if you drink, count up the extra portions on your weight loss plan and keep within your weekly limit. Avoid the strong ales and sugary mixers and choose 'diet', 'lite' or sugar free drinks where possible.

The following amounts count as one portion (or one UNIT) of alcohol:

**1 small bitter, lager or cider, 300 ml (a half pint)**

**1 small glass of white or red wine, 100ml (4 fl oz)**

**1 pub measure of spirits, 25 ml (1 fl oz)**

**1 small glass of sherry, 50 ml (2 fl oz)**

Of course the message which applies to everyone, whether trying to lose weight or not is about alcohol and safety. Safety for your own health and others. Keep within the safe limits of NO MORE THAN 14 units of alcohol per week for women and 21 units per week for men. The maximum that men should drink each day is four units, the maximum per day for women is three units

## Non-alcoholic drinks

If you're keeping off the alcohol, or just don't like drinking alcohol, choose alternative drinks carefully. Alcohol free does not mean calorie free! If in doubt, read the label.

### The best choices:

- Tap water with ice and a slice of lemon
- Plain spring water or mineral water, sparkling or still
- Sugar free or 'diet' fizzy drinks (coca-cola, lemonade) and mixers (tonic, dry ginger, bitter lemon)
- Flavoured waters with a hint of fruit (may contain a small amount of sugar)
- Your own diluted fruit juice (1 part juice to 8 water)
- Tea or coffee, without sugar

### Things to beware of:

- Low alcohol or 'lite' beers or lagers
- Sugary fizzy drinks like lemonade or coca-cola
- Fruit juice
- Cream liqueurs
- Cocktails
- Alcopops

## Looking at labels

The BHF has a separate booklet 'Guide to Food Labelling' which may be of interest. Checking food labels isn't necessary for your weight loss plan but it does help identify hidden fats and hidden salts in processed foods and may identify the types of fats in food. You won't have time while shopping to read everything. Here are some things you can check at a glance.

Choose foods making general claims such as:

- diet, reduced calorie, low calorie
- reduced fat, low fat, virtually fat free
- healthy eating.

Although these don't guarantee that the product is perfect for your needs, they suggest the product was made with the health-conscious person in mind. Remember that sugar free doesn't mean low calorie or low fat. Such foods may be high in both. But, beware of 0% cholesterol - as such foods may still have plenty of fat and calories!

Look at the nutritional information, especially energy (calories), fat and saturated fat, per 100g or per serving. Compare similar products and choose the brand with the lowest. The fat content is probably the most helpful

piece of information and the amount you can eat in a day depends on the total daily calorie level you are aiming for.

**To achieve 1,500 kcals**

57 grams total fat per day

15 grams saturated fat per day

**To achieve 1,800 kcals**

68 grams total fat per day

18 grams saturated fat per day

## Getting moving

Exercise and activity can make a real difference to your weight loss, as well as your state of mind. Being more active will help use up more calories as well as keeping your mind off food! It doesn't have to mean going to classes or taking up jogging. It's more about finding something which suits you - which is safe and enjoyable. Aim to increase your activity levels gradually up to half an hour a day of moderate activity on at least five days of the week.

You can build this into your everyday life with a bit of thought and determination. Walking is particularly good because it doesn't cost anything and you don't need a gym or any special kit other than sensible shoes for it! People have found that taking the stairs instead of the lift (up as well as down), walking to the shops, cycling to work, digging the garden or playing outdoors with the children can make quite a difference.

If more structured exercise appeals to you, such as swimming, the gym or exercise classes, find out if your local leisure centre runs sessions for people like you at a time which suits you. Remember that for weight loss and heart health you need to get

slightly breathless (but still able to talk) and a little hot and sweaty for the exercise to be worthwhile. If you have any health problems, check with your doctor before starting an exercise programme.

## Changing behaviour

As you know, changing your diet or getting more active both need a lot of careful thought and effort. That's not to say it's an uphill battle, but there are some ways you can help to make it a bit easier for yourself. Many of these things involve a little planning ahead or thinking about things differently. They all help you feel more in control of what you are trying to achieve. For a lot of people these 'behaviour modifications' are the key to successful and permanent weight loss.

**Walking is particularly good because it doesn't cost anything and you don't need a gym or any special kit other than sensible shoes for it!**

The list below shows some simple actions which people have found helpful. Place a tick (✓) in the box (or boxes) next to those which you do:

- Do nothing else while eating**  
(Don't waste the calories - taste and enjoy them)

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- Eat at regular times**

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- Eat sitting down**

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- Pause during meals and put your knife and fork down between mouthfuls**

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- Aim to be the last to finish**

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- Shop on a full stomach**

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- Write a shopping list and stick to it**

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- Keep healthy snacks easily to hand (eg fresh fruit in a bowl, chopped salad/vegetables in the fridge)**

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- Clean your teeth after a meal or when you get the urge to overeat**

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- Plate up your meal and remove serving dishes from the table so you're less tempted to eat too much**

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- Wait at least five minutes after finishing your meal before deciding whether to have second helpings**

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- Practice refusing offers to overeat. Learn to say 'no thank you', politely but firmly and convincingly.**

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As well as things you can do differently, there are also ways you can teach yourself to think differently. To understand more about your eating habits, you may find it helpful to keep a food diary, recording what you eat each day. You could also note when you ate, where and how you were feeling at the time. You will probably find you glean a lot of useful information from your food diary. Use that information to plan your coping strategies. Along with your food diary, using the suggestions below can help you get your 'mind over matter' and feel more in control of your weight loss plans.

### **Understanding patterns**

Plan for the times of day when you know you are more likely to want to eat. For example, save some bread or cereal to have at 10pm if you know evenings are a danger time for you.

### **Real hunger?**

Before you eat, check that you're really hungry (in your stomach) rather than just eating at a certain time or occasion out of habit.

### **Feelings**

Be aware of how your feelings affect what you want to eat. For example do you eat more when you're feeling angry, upset, lonely or bored?

Noticing a pattern can help you plan how to cope.

### **Triggers**

Be aware of triggers which are likely to lead you to overeat. For example, being at home alone, watching a cookery programme on TV, driving past a fast food restaurant, preparing a snack for your children or grandchildren. Planning ahead may help you cope.

### **Events**

Plan ahead for special occasions when you know you'll be tempted. For example, eat a little less during the week when you're going to a party at the weekend, so you can indulge in a special dessert.

### **Distractions**

Use distractions to help control your eating. For example, go for a walk, phone a friend, buy a magazine, flip through your photo albums.

## **Don't be hard on yourself**

A lapse is not a collapse. If you break your plan for a few hours or days, it's not the end of the world! Try not to see your goals as 'all or nothing'.

Try to learn from what went wrong and get back on track as soon as you feel ready.

**A lapse is not a collapse. If you break your plan for a few hours or days, it's not the end of the world!**

**Gradual weight loss really is the safest and most effective way.**

## Your questions answered

### **Food combining seems popular. Does it work?**

At the end of the day, people who successfully lose weight on this diet seem to have done so simply because their calorie intake is restricted.

Food combining involves eating foods containing protein, fat and carbohydrate in very strict combinations and sequences. Some people say it has worked for them and it certainly involves eating plenty of fruit and vegetables. But it does have drawbacks as it means careful planning. For example, a sandwich (carbohydrate) cannot include a protein filling like chicken, tuna or egg - only salad or fruit such as mashed banana. At other times meals must exclude carbohydrate, which means a roast dinner without potatoes or an Italian meal without the pasta or bread. This sort of food combining bans high calorie foods containing a combination of fat and carbohydrate which rules out all 'fatty

and sugary foods' like chocolate, cakes, crisps, puddings and pastries. It is quite restrictive so difficult to keep up especially when eating out or at someone else's house.

### **What about 'high protein, low carbohydrate' diets like the Atkins diet?**

It is not recommended. The Atkins diet is the best-selling diet book in popular bookshops and has been widely promoted by celebrities for whom it seems to have worked - at least in the short term. It is based on high intakes of protein foods like meat, cheese and eggs and high fat foods like cream and butter. It severely restricts carbohydrate foods - not only chocolate, cakes and puddings but also bread, potatoes, pasta, rice and cereals. It even restricts many fruits and some vegetables because of their carbohydrate content.

Although people seem to lose weight very quickly in the short term on this type of diet, it does not fit with the requirements for a balanced diet as set out in The Balance of Good Health. It has not been tested for long-term safety and there is no guarantee that it does not cause damage to health, especially if people follow it long term. A quick fix is not a permanent solution to weight control.

<b>Features of the Atkins diet</b>	<b>What it means</b>	<b>Why it can be a problem</b>
High in protein	The kidneys have to work extra hard to break down protein in the body.	This protein burden may damage the kidneys especially in people who, unknowingly, have kidneys not working as well as they could. There may also be a risk of kidney stones.
Low in carbohydrate, high in fat	Restricting the very foods we should eat 'plenty of'.  Butter and cream can be eaten freely possibly affecting blood cholesterol levels, especially in the weight maintenance phase.	Restricting foods such as fruit and vegetables and wholegrain cereals - which we know have been associated with preventing coronary heart disease and diabetes is cause for concern.  Low intakes of cereal and fibre can also cause constipation and other bowel problems.

## Would it help to become a vegetarian?

A diet based heavily on vegetables, fruit and cereals/grains is a very healthy way to eat. But a vegetarian diet is not automatically a weight loss plan. It can be quite high in calories because butter, oil, cheese and pastries tend to be popular with vegetarians. Fried vegetable dishes such as vegetable samosa, spring rolls and cheese and onion pasties are all high in calories.

If you don't eat meat, make sure you choose some healthy alternatives from the 'Meat, fish and alternatives' food group, such as eggs, nuts, beans, peas and lentils. These foods are essential for the iron they provide which in turn helps carry oxygen around the body. Interestingly, research suggests that fish eaters (who just avoid meat and poultry) and vegans (who avoid milk and dairy foods as well as meat and fish) have less coronary heart disease than meat eaters or vegetarians. Vegans, however, have to be especially careful not to become 'deficient' in important minerals and vitamins such as calcium, iron and vitamin B12.

## Quick weight loss - isn't it more rewarding?

Many people want to lose weight quickly in just a few weeks ready for a special event or a holiday.

Unfortunately our body rebels against this kind of crash dieting in a number of ways. Firstly, eating so little means feeling hungry, listless and sometimes faint so it is difficult to sustain for long. It also means the body is unlikely to be adequately nourished as such a small food intake can't provide enough vitamins and minerals for good health. Secondly, losing weight quickly involves losing essential water and muscle as well as fat. So, although the scales may read less, your body has not lost much fat! Thirdly, your metabolic rate slows down and it becomes even harder to lose weight. Gradual weight loss really is the safest and most effective way.

## Meal ideas

Of course, your weight loss plan will mean making changes, but that doesn't mean you have to stop eating your favourite meals. Neither does it mean you have to spend hours in the kitchen preparing special foods. In fact many meals are easy to prepare. What could be quicker than baking fish dishes, boiling some pasta or stir-frying a mixture of chopped vegetables with thin strips of meat for flavour?

Cost and convenience may also matter to you. Choose wisely and you'll find that foods like fish fingers (grilled), low-fat ready-made cooking sauces, and 'ready meals' can all be included in your weight loss plan. If you have a microwave oven use it to speed up cooking time as well as cutting out the fat. Cut your shopping bill by buying smaller amounts of lean meat and chicken and bulk it out with fillers like baked beans, chick peas or red kidney beans.

### Support

Many people like the idea of support with their weight loss plan, from someone they know well, like a friend, relative or colleague or by going to a group. If you know someone else who is wanting to lose weight you

could ask them to be your 'buddy'. You can then help keep track on each others progress and offer support when things aren't going so well. At the British Heart Foundation we believe this could really make a difference to your chances of success.

### Here are a few ideas:

Baked beans on toast

Baked potato with a chicken portion, barbecue sauce, peas and sweetcorn

Smoked mackerel risotto with a large green salad

Fish fingers with mashed potato and mixed frozen vegetables

Sliced ham with lettuce, beetroot, tomato, grated carrot and warm crusty bread

Potato and bean curry on a bed of rice, with sliced banana and grated cucumber

Strips of cooked chicken with red kidney beans and sweetcorn on a large bed of mixed salad. Serve with granary bread roll.

Beef and vegetable casserole with boiled potatoes, mashed swede and carrot

Pasta quills with tomato and mushroom sauce.

When watching your weight, you also have to plan the amounts of food you eat. It's not just the quality - the quantity matters too.

## Tracking progress

You may find it useful to fill in a record chart to keep track of your weight loss. Weigh yourself on the same scales and at the same time of day, without clothes if possible. Don't be tempted to weigh yourself more than once a week. The chart on page 41 is to help you do this and to monitor your progress in other ways. Set your own goals and try to be realistic! For example, there may be a favourite item of clothing you could aim to fit into or an activity you would like to be able to do such as a 10 minute walk. Or your goals may be about your feelings of self-confidence. Very specific goals such as 'eating 3 pieces of fruit each day' or 'stop eating chocolate' are

helpful, as they are easy to measure and you will definitely know whether you have achieved them or not. We think rewards are also a good idea, to keep you going when it gets tough, and to give yourself a pat on the back when you get there. Rewards should be non-food based and you can earn them for reaching 'behaviour' goals not just weight goals. Buying a new book or going to see a film are ideas. The best rewards are those which really would be a treat for **you**. Decide in advance what your **GOALS** and **REWARDS** will be and fill in these columns at the start. Record your **ACHIEVEMENTS** after each week or month, whichever you prefer.

The chart is only for 12 weeks (3 months) but you can draw out another one for your new goals over the next 12 weeks on a separate sheet of paper if you wish.

## Progress Chart

		Goals	
Week	Date	Weight	Behaviour / activities
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			

		Achievements	
Week	Rewards	Weight	Behaviour / activities
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			

## Finally... Keeping at it

Some people say losing weight is not too difficult. It's keeping it off that's the hard bit. If you have a tendency to gain weight, it's true that you'll always have to keep an eye on your weight. Remember, we said at the start, this is a **weight loss plan for life**.

To keep your weight healthy, or to prevent weight gain, keep following the rules of 'The Balance of Good Health' as we've described throughout this booklet. You may find that it becomes easier over time and that filling up on foods from the main four food groups leaves you with less space for the calorific 'Fatty and sugary foods'. Think of yourself as someone who isn't a big eater and practice saying 'no' when people offer you bigger portions or second helpings. Remind yourself how good it feels to have reached some of your goals. If your weight goes up a bit, don't despair. We're all human. You may well be able to learn something from your lapse. By reassessing things, making a few small changes, and getting support, you will start to lose a few pounds again.

## More help?

If you would like help from someone who can talk through your weight loss plan personally, ask your doctor to refer you to a dietitian or the practice nurse.

You may also like to think about getting support from others. Look in the yellow pages for local leisure centres and health clubs or ask at your local library who may know of 'weight watching' or 'slimming' groups or classes in the area.

If you would like further information on healthy eating, contact the:

**British Heart Foundation,  
14 Fitzhardinge Street,  
London  
W1H 6DH.**

**Phone: 020 7935 0185**

**Website: [bhf.org.uk](http://bhf.org.uk)**

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**Have your say**

We would welcome your comments to help us produce the best information for you. Why not let us know what you think? Contact us via our website [bhf.org.uk/your say](http://bhf.org.uk/your say)



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