

Eat well, keep well

and reduce your risk of cancer



Health
Promotion
Agency

Your food - your best protection

What we eat affects our health. With just a few small changes to what we eat every day, we can help to protect against major illnesses, including some cancers. These changes can also give our health an extra boost.

Cancer is a big issue in Northern Ireland. It is:

- the second major cause of death after heart disease;
- responsible for about 3,500 deaths each year;
- estimated that over 1,000 of these cancer deaths are linked to diet.

One of the most important changes we can make to help reduce our risk of cancer is to eat more fruit, vegetables and fibre.

Research has shown that:

- fruit and veg contain vitamins and other substances which help protect against many cancers (vitamin supplements don't give this protection);
- by eating a total of 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day, we can significantly reduce our risk of getting the disease (by as much as one fifth);
- by eating more fibre, from starchy foods like potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and cereals, we can reduce our risk even more.

Opposite are some examples of the foods to choose to help give the best protection.



Portions for extra health

A total of 5 portions a day is recommended by health experts. In Northern Ireland we eat on average 3 portions of fruit and veg each day - so most of us need to eat more! And remember that frozen, canned and dried fruit and veg count as well as fresh.

As a guide, 1 portion is:

1 piece of medium sized fruit, eg a pear or a banana;

or

2 small fruits, eg kiwis, mandarins or plums;

or

1 cup of very small fruit, eg grapes or strawberries;

or

1 glass (150ml) of fruit juice or fruit smoothie (fruit juice or fruit smoothie can only be counted as 1 portion of the 5 each day);

or

3 heaped tablespoons of vegetables;

or

1 dessert bowl of salad.

We usually think of potatoes as vegetables, but they are starchy foods, like rice and bread. They're not counted in our 5 portions, but we should still eat them for the fibre they contain (see *Why fibre is fabulous* overleaf).



Portion by portion

By eating one extra portion of fruit or vegetables every day, it's easy to build up to the recommended amount. Below are some easy ways to eat more:

Breakfast

- drink a glass of chilled fruit juice or fruit smoothie;
- add fruit to cereal - try sliced banana, grapes, chopped apple or dried apricots or raisins;
- mash a banana on toast;
- chop a favourite fruit into low fat yogurt;
- have a piece of fruit.

Lunch

- include salad or fruit in sandwiches;
- make home-made soup - pack in the vegetables;
- have a small tin of fruit in its own juice;
- try fruit salad - instead of sugary syrup, use diet lemonade which has lost its fizz or unsweetened fruit juice;
- finish off with a piece of fruit.

Evening meal

- pack main dishes with extra vegetables, eg canned tomatoes, carrots, turnips and mushrooms;
- add pulses such as peas, beans or lentils to stews, soups and casseroles;
- liven up rice or pasta by adding frozen peas, canned sweetcorn or kidney beans;
- serve a couple of different vegetables with a main course for extra variety.



Why fibre is fabulous

Fibre is also important in helping to protect against cancers. It is found in bread, potatoes, rice, pasta and breakfast cereals as well as in fruit and veg. One way to get the recommended amount of fibre each day is:

- 1 bowl of wholegrain cereal
- and
- 2 slices of wholemeal bread
- and
- 2 medium baked potatoes, with skin.

Fibre at your fingertips

It's easy to find fibre in foods. Below are some ideas on how to eat more:

- try wholegrain cereals like Weetabix, Shredded Wheat, Bran Flakes;
- use more wholemeal, wheaten or multi-grain breads instead of white or brown;
- for even more fibre from fruit and vegetables and potatoes, try to eat the skin when possible, but always wash thoroughly;
- cook brown rice and pasta instead of white.

Drink up!

When we eat more fibre, we need to drink more - about 8-10 cups of plain fluid every day, eg water, tea, coffee, sugar-free drinks. Milk doesn't count as a plain fluid because it is full of other nutrients.

Why it's worth the change

Eating a total of 5 portions of fruit and veg each day and eating more fibre can significantly reduce the risk of many cancers.



Spicy Chicken

Serves 4 • Preparation time: 12 minutes • Cooking time: 30-45 minutes

Ingredients

2 medium chicken portions	415g (15oz) can of beans - drained and rinsed, eg haricot or kidney beans
1dsp vegetable oil	100g (4oz) canned or frozen sweetcorn
1 onion - finely chopped	1 green pepper - deseeded and chopped (optional)
1tsp curry powder	salt and pepper to taste
1tsp mixed herbs	
1 clove garlic - crushed (optional)	
1dsp plain flour	
120mls (4fl oz) chicken stock	
397g (14oz) can tomatoes - chopped	



Method

1. Cut chicken into strips.
2. Heat the oil in a large saucepan. Add the chicken, onion, curry powder, mixed herbs and garlic. Cook for 5 minutes, stirring all the time.
3. Add the flour and cook, stirring for a further 2 minutes.
4. Add chicken stock, chopped tomatoes with their juice, beans, sweetcorn, green pepper, salt and pepper to taste.
5. Bring to the boil, stirring. Cover, reduce heat and simmer for 25-30 minutes (or until the chicken is tender).

Serve with jacket potatoes, boiled rice or pasta.

Note: This dish can also be cooked in the oven - you will not need any stock. After point 3 in the method, transfer to an ovenproof dish, add the remaining ingredients, stir, cover and cook in a preheated oven at 200°C/400°F/Gas Mark 6 for 30-35 minutes until the chicken is tender.