

# Working towards a healthy weight with kidney disease

## Information for patients

This information leaflet is for you if you have kidney disease and you have a body mass index (BMI) over 25 and you are trying to lose weight.

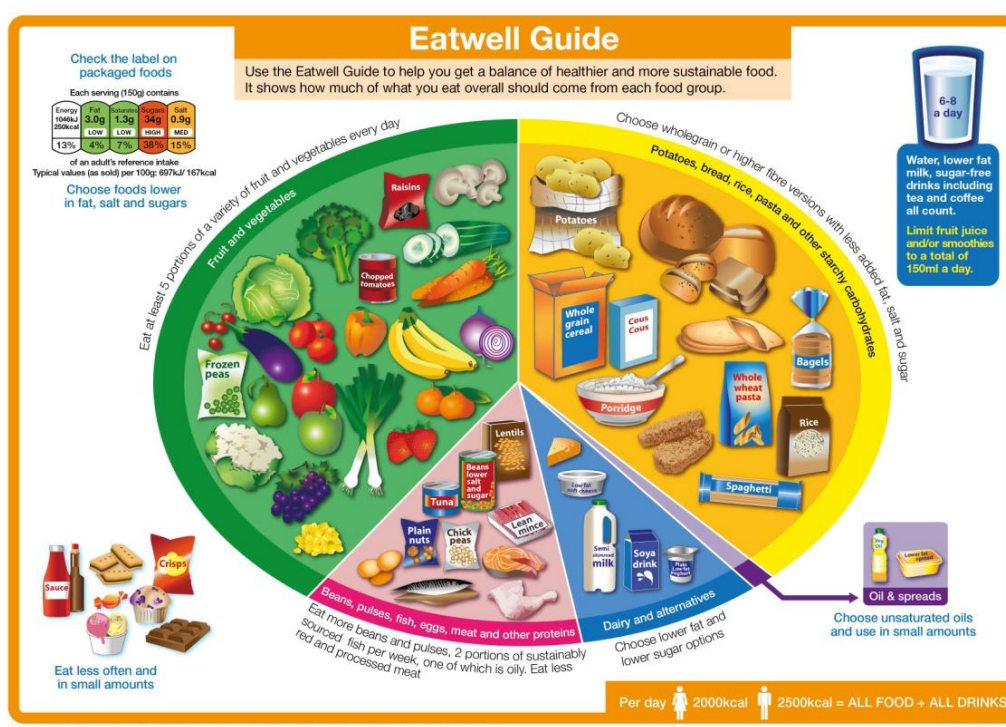
Following a healthy eating pattern alongside daily activity can help weight loss. Losing weight can also lead to other health benefits such as:

- ✓ Lower blood pressure
- ✓ Improve control of blood sugar levels if you have diabetes
- ✓ Reduce cholesterol
- ✓ Reduce the risk of damage to your kidneys. This may be recommended by your doctor if you are planning to have a transplant.

If you are trying to lose weight you may find it confusing when trying to choose suitable foods—particularly if you have a kidney condition. There may be foods that you should restrict or avoid in relation to your kidney condition, for example you may have been advised to reduce the amount of potassium or phosphate in your diet. Here is some general advice to help with your weight which should be safe for everyone to follow.

### A balanced diet

The Eat Well Guide (shown below) can be used to help show you what your daily intake should consist of and the proportion of each food group that you should consume. A well balanced diet ensures that we are getting all the nutrients we need. Losing weight at a slow and steady pace is better for long term success.



## Tips to lower your calorie intake

In order to lose weight we need to achieve a calorie deficit. This can be achieved through a combination of reduced dietary intake and increased physical activity. Try to follow these principles initially to help with this:



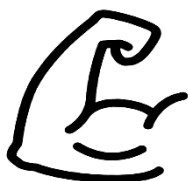
**Follow a regular meal pattern** - aim to have three meals a day. Missing meals (especially breakfast) can lead to heavy snacking later.



**Reduce your portion sizes** – try using a smaller plate. Think you haven't had enough? Wait for about 20 minutes before going for seconds. It can take a little while for you to feel full after you have eaten.



**Aim for 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day** - if you have been told to follow a low potassium diet ensure you choose low potassium fruit and vegetables (for example: blackberries, blueberries, apples, carrots (boiled), and peas (boiled)).



**Aim for 2-3 portions of protein per day** – choose lower fat options such as chicken, fish or low fat beef. Remove fat or skin where possible.



**Base meals on starchy carbohydrates** - such as bread, potatoes, pasta, rice and breakfast cereals (if you are following a low potassium diet ensure that potatoes are boiled)



**Choose foods with higher fibre** - Higher fibre varieties are better for gut health, blood sugar control and keep you feeling fuller for longer (e.g. wholegrain pasta /rice / bread or porridge/weetabix/bran flakes).



**Try to be more active** – try walking more steps or doing exercise you enjoy, aiming for 30 minutes of physical activity on 5 days per week.

## Eat less sugary foods and drinks

High amounts of sugar in your diet can lead to weight gain and raise blood glucose levels if you are diabetic. Try to replace sugary foods with lower sugar alternatives:

<b>Limit</b>	<b>Choose</b>
Fizzy drinks	Diet, low calorie or low sugar drinks and squashes
Sweets, chocolate, cakes	Low-calorie hot chocolate drink, fruit, plain scone, low sugar rice pudding
Biscuits	Plain biscuits such as rich teas, crackers, rice cakes
Puddings	Yoghurts labelled no-added sugar / light
Jam	Reduced sugar jam / marmalade
Sugar	Sweeteners such as Candarel, Splenda, Sweetex, Hermasetas. These can be used instead of sugar for your tea, coffee or cereal.

## Eat less fatty foods and snacks to reduce your calorie intake

Avoid adding too much high fat food (such as butter, spreads, cheese, etc.) to meals and avoid high fat snack foods (such as crisps, pastries, pies and chocolate). In particular, try to reduce your intake of saturated fats.

<b>Saturated fats</b>	<b>Poly-unsaturated &amp; Mono-unsaturated fats</b>
<p>These come from animal products such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Butter and lard</li> <li>• Cheese, cream or creamy sauces</li> <li>• Pastry and pies</li> <li>• Fatty meat and sausages.</li> </ul> <p>✗ These foods have a clear association with weight gain and heart disease. Try to avoid these or only have on occasion.</p>	<p>These come from vegetable based foods such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Olive oil and sunflower spreads</li> <li>• Plain nuts</li> <li>• Avocados</li> <li>• Fish oils.</li> </ul> <p>✓ These types of fat are better for your health, yet shouldn't be eaten to excess as they contain a similar amount of calories.</p>

- ✓ **When cooking try and bake/grill/steam** - instead of frying or roasting.
- ✓ **Choose lean meats** - such as fish or chicken, removing fat and skin where possible.
- ✓ **Use low-fat dairy products** - such as skimmed or semi-skimmed milk, low fat spreads, smaller amounts of reduced fat cheeses and yoghurts.

## Alcohol

Alcohol is high in calories and contributes to weight gain – if possible try to reduce intake to a minimum or none.

- Try and stick to the recommended set limits for men and women of 14 units per week (A unit is a half pint of lager/25ml pub measure of spirit)
- Try to limit alcohol intake and have 2 or 3 alcohol free days a week
- Try low calorie mixers with drinks to make them last longer

## Exercise

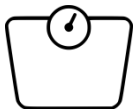
Exercise can help you lose weight as it helps to create a calorie deficit. There are lots of ways you can incorporate physical activity into your week. Aim for the following:

- ✓ 150 minutes of moderate activity per week or 30 minutes 5 days of the week
- ✓ This can be divided into small manageable sessions depending on your level of fitness
- ✓ Try activities such as walking, cycling or climbing the stairs
- ✓ Reduce time sitting or lying down
- ✓ Find an activity that you enjoy and suits your fitness level.



## Measuring Your Weight Loss

Take note of your current measurements so you can review your progress later. Here are two ways you can measure yourself:



**Weight (scales):** We recommend you weigh yourself no more than once a week. The average weight loss an adult can expect is 1 to 2lbs (0.5-1kg) per week.



**Waist Circumference (tape measure):** You should try to lose weight if your waist is 94cm (37in) or more for men, and 80cm (31.5in) or more for women. To measure your waist:

1. Find the bottom of your ribs and top of your hips
2. Wrap a tape measure around your waist, midway between these points
3. Breathe out naturally before taking the measurement.

Monitoring weight loss when you have a kidney condition may be difficult due to retaining fluid and therefore it is important not to focus solely on weight. Looking for signs of progress such as waist circumference and if your clothes are feeling looser can also be helpful ways to monitor your progress.

## Further Support

If you have tried the above and still need more support you can ask for a referral to the weight management service in NHS Lothian or contact your local service. The weight management service has a menu of options to suit each individual need. Your referral will be triaged to identify the best service for you. This includes referring to local community leisure facilities with discounted use of facilities, group sessions and psychological support if needed.

## Resources

**EdRen** - Provides information and educational resources for patients with kidney disease:  
<https://edren.org/>

**NHS 12 Week Weight Management Programme** – a 12 week step by step programme which covers various topics each week. Topics include eating in and out, managing hunger, exercise and mood in relation to food.

Online: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/12-week-weight-management-programme>

Also available as an app: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/start-the-nhs-weight-loss-plan/>

**Kidney Beam** – Kidney Beam offers you a way to improve your physical activity in your own home, which is especially important right now when many of you might be shielding and unable to attend a gym or other class. You will be able to choose from a range of live or recorded classes led by NHS kidney health professionals. Membership is free until November 2021.

<https://beamfeelgood.com/kidney-disease>

### Exercise

NHS Sitting exercises

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/sitting-exercises/>

NHS Strength and Flex

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/strength-and-flex-exercise-plan/>

Couch to 5km

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/get-running-with-couch-to-5k/>

