GoalTodo

Eat healthier: one small addition a week, starting with dinner

Eat healthier

8 weeks · Mon, Nov 30 → Sun, Jan 24

Week by week

Tick a box each time you do a session.

Nov 30–Dec 6
Week 1

One vegetable with dinner

Start small

- [ ] Buy two or three vegetables you already like. Frozen and tinned count, and keep for longer
- [ ] Add one vegetable to your dinner: frozen peas, a side salad, a tin of sweetcorn, a handful of spinach stirred into a sauce
  1 portion, about 3 heaped tablespoons

Done when: You've added a vegetable to dinner on five days this week

Sticking point: Thinking it has to be fresh, or fancy. Frozen, tinned and vegetables cooked into a soup, stew or pasta sauce all count.

Dec 7–13
Week 2

Half the plate, twice

Start small

- [ ] Keep adding a vegetable to dinner
  1 portion
- [ ] Cook a vegetable-first meal: fill half the plate with vegetables, then add a grain and a protein. A stir-fry, a traybake or a pasta with extra veg in the sauce all work

Done when: You've cooked two meals this week where vegetables filled half the plate

Sticking point: Running out of ideas. Pick one easy meal you already cook and double the vegetables in it. That's a vegetable-first meal.

Dec 14–20
Week 3

Fruit once a day

Add one thing

- [ ] Have one piece of fruit a day: an apple, a banana, two satsumas, a handful of berries on your breakfast
  1 portion
- [ ] Vegetable-first meal
- [ ] A vegetable with your other dinners

Done when: You've had fruit on five days and cooked two vegetable-first meals this week

Sticking point: Fruit going soft in the bowl. Buy a little at a time, or keep frozen berries in for breakfast.

Dec 21–27
Week 4

Water with every meal

Add one thing

- [ ] Put a glass of water on the table with each meal. Tea, coffee and lower-fat milk count towards your drinks too
  1 glass with each meal
- [ ] Vegetable-first meal
- [ ] Fruit once a day

Done when: You've had water with your meals on most days, and cooked two vegetable-first meals this week

Sticking point: Not liking plain water. Try sparkling water, or a slice of lemon, lime or orange in it.

Dec 28–Jan 3
Week 5

One wholegrain swap

Add one thing

- [ ] Choose one grain you eat often and try the wholegrain version: brown rice, wholewheat pasta, wholemeal bread or porridge oats
- [ ] Vegetable-first meal
- [ ] Fruit once a day

Done when: You've had your wholegrain swap three times, and cooked a vegetable-first meal twice a week for four weeks running

Sticking point: Not liking the taste at first. Try half white and half brown rice or pasta for a few weeks, or a seeded or granary bread.

Jan 4–10
Week 6

Beans, lentils and chickpeas

Add one thing

- [ ] Add a tin of beans, lentils or chickpeas to a meal: a chilli, a curry, a soup or a salad. Rinse tinned ones first
  3 heaped tablespoons each
- [ ] Vegetable-first meal, one of them with the beans in
- [ ] Fruit once a day

Done when: You've eaten beans, lentils or chickpeas in two meals this week

Sticking point: Not knowing what to do with them. Start with a dish you already eat, such as a chilli or a soup, and stir in a tin of beans.

Jan 11–17
Week 7

Try two new meals

Make it yours

- [ ] [ ] Cook two meals you haven't made before that are mostly plants, with vegetables filling about half the plate: add beans or wholegrains for the rest. Use a recipe from a site or book you trust
- [ ] Start a list of meals you like that are mostly plants. Add the ones you already cook
- [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Fruit once a day

Done when: You've cooked two new mostly-plant meals and your list has at least three meals on it

Sticking point: A new meal turning out badly. That's normal. Note what you'd change, or cross it off and try another. Only the ones you'd happily eat again go on the list.

Jan 18–24
Week 8

Your five meals

Make it yours

- [ ] [ ] Cook one or two more mostly-plant meals until your list has five you'd happily eat again
- [ ] [ ] [ ] Count your portions of fruit and vegetables on three days. Aim for at least five a day, and add one more where you're short
- [ ] Write down your plan for the months ahead: which of your five meals you'll cook each week, and what you'll eat on a busy day

Done when: You have five meals you like that are mostly plants, written down, and a plan for next week

Milestones

Sun, Dec 6	A vegetable with dinner, five days this week
Sun, Jan 3	Vegetable-first meals twice a week for a month
Sun, Jan 24	Five meals you like that are mostly plants
Fri, May 28	Most days for six months

How the plan works

This plan only adds. Nothing is banned, and counting portions is optional. Each week you add one small thing: a vegetable at dinner, a plate that's half vegetables, fruit, water, a wholegrain, beans or lentils. Then you collect five meals you like that are mostly plants, so eating well becomes what you normally cook.

For a vegetable-first meal, aim for a plate that's about half vegetables, with wholegrains and a protein such as beans, fish, eggs or meat making up the rest. The Harvard Healthy Eating Plate gives half the plate to vegetables and fruit. The UK's NHS Eatwell Guide puts fruit and vegetables at just over a third of what you eat across the day. Over time you're working up to at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day.

It doesn't have to happen at every meal. The NHS says to get the balance right over a day or even a week. A takeaway or a slice of cake now and then is fine.

The milestones count from the first day of week 1: five days of a vegetable with dinner is day 7, a month of vegetable-first meals is day 35, your five meals land around day 56, and then you keep it going most days to six months.

Which level to pick

▪ I rarely eat vegetables: most days you have no fruit or vegetables at all, or you seldom cook. You have 8 weeks, adding one thing at a time.

▪ I eat some vegetables already: you have some fruit or vegetables most days and cook a few times a week, but your plate is rarely half vegetables. You have 6 weeks.

If you're not sure, pick the first level. The early weeks are short and easy, and it's simple to move on if they feel too light.

Before you start

Adding fruit, vegetables, wholegrains, beans and water is safe for most people. But talk to your GP or doctor first if:

▪ you have a medical condition that affects what you eat, such as diabetes, kidney disease, a food allergy or intolerance, or a bowel condition, or you take medicine that interacts with food. They can refer you to a registered dietitian who can adapt the plate to you.

▪ you're pregnant or trying for a baby. Most foods are safe in pregnancy, but some need care or are best avoided, so follow the advice of your midwife or GP.

If food or eating has been a source of worry or distress for you, now or in the past, a plan like this one may not be the right place to start, and that's OK. Please talk to your GP. Getting support early makes a real difference. In the UK, the eating disorder charity Beat (https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/get-information-and-support/get-help-for-myself/) offers free, friendly, non-judgemental helpline support. In other countries, your doctor can point you to a local service.

If counting portions starts to feel stressful rather than helpful, stop counting. The plan works without it.

What counts

These portions follow the UK's NHS 5 A Day guidance.

▪ A portion of fresh, frozen or tinned fruit or vegetables is 80g: roughly 3 heaped tablespoons of cooked vegetables, a medium tomato, an apple or a banana, or two small fruits like satsumas. Vegetables cooked into a soup, stew or pasta sauce count too. For tinned, pick ones in water or natural juice with no added salt or sugar.

▪ Dried fruit counts, but a portion is 30g, about a heaped tablespoon of raisins. Have it with a meal rather than as a snack, to protect your teeth.

▪ Beans, lentils and chickpeas count, 3 heaped tablespoons is a portion, but only once a day however many you eat.

▪ Fruit juice and smoothies count once a day, up to a small glass (150ml) in total. Have them with a meal, to protect your teeth.

▪ Potatoes don't count as a vegetable. They're a good starchy food, so they sit with the grains on your plate. Sweet potatoes, parsnips and turnips do count.

▪ Drinks: the UK government's guide is 6 to 8 cups or glasses of fluid a day. Water, tea, coffee and lower-fat milk all count. Enough is when your pee is a pale, clear yellow. If your doctor has told you to limit fluids, follow their advice.

What you need

▪ A few vegetables that keep: frozen peas, spinach and mixed veg, tinned tomatoes and sweetcorn, carrots, onions. They're cheap and there when you need them.

▪ A couple of tins of beans, lentils or chickpeas.

▪ One wholegrain staple you'll actually eat: brown rice, wholewheat pasta, wholemeal bread or oats.

▪ A list on your phone or the fridge for meals you like that are mostly plants.

▪ A picture of the plate. The NHS Eatwell Guide (https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/the-eatwell-guide/) and the Harvard Healthy Eating Plate (https://nutritionsource.hsph.harvard.edu/healthy-eating-plate/) both have one you can print.

Common mistakes

▪ Changing everything at once. A big overhaul in week 1 is hard to keep. One addition a week sticks.

▪ Thinking healthy food has to be fresh or expensive. Frozen and tinned vegetables, beans and oats are cheap and count just as much.

▪ Calling days good or bad. A day with no vegetables isn't a failure. Add one at the next meal.

▪ Banning foods you enjoy. You don't need to. Treats now and then are fine. The plan works by adding more of the good stuff.

▪ Eating the same two vegetables forever. Aim for colour and variety; different ones bring different nutrients.

▪ Sticking with a recipe you don't like. Only meals you'd happily eat again go on your list.

Keeping it up to six months

After the last week there are no new tasks. Keep three things going, most days:

▪ A vegetable with dinner, and a vegetable-first meal at least twice a week.

▪ Your five meals. Cook from your list each week, and swap in a new one when you're bored.

▪ A busy-day fallback. A tin of soup with extra frozen veg, beans on wholemeal toast, an omelette with spinach. It still counts.

Once a month, count your portions on a normal day. If you're short of five, add one more fruit or vegetable to a meal you already eat.

Most days is the goal, not every day. Holidays, birthdays and takeaways are part of life. Pick it up again at the next meal.

If you fall behind

Missed 1 week: Missed a week? Repeat it. Don't try to catch up by doing two weeks at once. Keep the vegetable with dinner going if you can, since that's the base for everything else.

Missed 2 weeks: Go back to the week before the one you stopped on, and keep everything you'd already added that still feels easy.

Missed 3 weeks: Go back to week 2, half the plate twice a week, and build up again from there. Look at what got in the way, such as shopping, time or cooking, and change one thing first, like keeping more frozen vegetables in.

Missed 4 or more weeks: Start again at week 1 of "I rarely eat vegetables", with one vegetable at dinner. If you stopped because thinking about food was making you anxious or upset, please talk to your GP before you start again.

Sources

NHS
https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/the-eatwell-guide/
“You do not need to achieve this balance with every meal, but try to get the balance right over a day or even a week.”

NHS
https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/the-eatwell-guide/
“Choose higher fibre or wholegrain varieties, such as wholewheat pasta and brown rice, or simply leave the skins on potatoes.”

NHS
https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/the-eatwell-guide/
“As a guide, the government recommends 6 to 8 cups or glasses a day.”

NHS
https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/5-a-day/5-a-day-what-counts/
“80g of fresh, canned or frozen fruit and vegetables counts as 1 portion of your 5 A Day (but not potatoes and some other starchy foods).”

NHS
https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/5-a-day/5-a-day-what-counts/
“Fruit and vegetables don't have to be fresh to count as a portion.”

NHS
https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/5-a-day/5-a-day-what-counts/
“Nor do they have to be eaten on their own: they also count if they're part of a meal or dish.”

NHS
https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/5-a-day/portion-sizes/
“Everyone should have at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day.”

NHS
https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/5-a-day/portion-sizes/
“A portion is 3 heaped tablespoons of baked beans, haricot beans, kidney beans, cannellini beans, butter beans or chickpeas.”

NHS
https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/5-a-day/portion-sizes/
“Remember, however much of these you eat, beans and pulses can only count as a maximum of 1 portion of your 5 A Day.”

The Nutrition Source, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
https://nutritionsource.hsph.harvard.edu/healthy-eating-plate/
“Make most of your meal vegetables and fruits – ½ of your plate.”

The Nutrition Source, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
https://nutritionsource.hsph.harvard.edu/healthy-eating-plate/
“Aim for color and variety, and remember that potatoes don’t count as vegetables on the Healthy Eating Plate because of their negative impact on blood sugar.”

The Nutrition Source, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
https://nutritionsource.hsph.harvard.edu/healthy-eating-plate/
“You should seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.”

Better Health Channel, Victoria State Government
https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/healthy-eating-tips
“Water is the healthiest drink – try adding a slice of lemon, lime or orange for flavour.”

Better Health Channel, Victoria State Government
https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/healthy-eating-tips
“It's okay to have some of these foods now and then as an extra treat.”

Better Health Channel, Victoria State Government
https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/healthy-eating-tips
“It is also important to choose a variety of foods from within each food group.”

NHS
https://www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/keeping-well/foods-to-avoid/
“Most foods and drinks are safe to have during pregnancy.”

NHS
https://www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/keeping-well/foods-to-avoid/
“But there are some you should be careful with or avoid.”

Beat
https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/get-information-and-support/get-help-for-myself/
“It’s very important to access treatment as early as possible, as earlier treatment means a greater chance of fully recovering from your eating disorder.”

Beat
https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/get-information-and-support/get-help-for-myself/
“Your first point of contact is likely to be your GP.”

Beat
https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/get-information-and-support/get-help-for-myself/
“Get free telephone support now for friendly, non-judgmental support regarding an eating disorder.”

NHS
https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/the-eatwell-guide/
“They should make up just over a third of the food we eat each day.”

NHS
https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/5-a-day/5-a-day-what-counts/
“30g of dried fruit (this is equivalent to around 80g of fresh fruit) counts as 1 portion of your 5 A Day.”

NHS
https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/5-a-day/5-a-day-what-counts/
“Dried fruit should be eaten at mealtimes, not as a between-meal snack, to reduce the risk of tooth decay.”

NHS
https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/the-eatwell-guide/
“Most people should aim to drink enough during the day so their pee is a clear pale yellow colour.”

NHS
https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/5-a-day/portion-sizes/
“This is about 1 heaped tablespoon of raisins, currants or sultanas, 1 tablespoon of mixed fruit, 2 figs, 3 prunes or 1 handful of dried banana chips.”

This plan online	`https://goaltodo.com/eat-healthier`
Reach it with others on Welang	`https://welang.com/goals/eat-healthier`
Reach it on your own in HourLife	`https://www.hourlife.com`

This plan is a guide, not medical advice. See a doctor before starting if you have a health condition, are pregnant, or haven't exercised in a long time.