



Nutrition for Different Cultures

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Health inequalities in the United Kingdom	4
3. Measuring the risk of developing long term health problems	
• Body Mass Index (BMI).....	5 - 6
• Waist measurement.....	7
3. Delivering nutritional guidance to different cultures	
• Person-centred coaching.....	8
• Cultural competence.....	9
4. Cultural focus: African and Caribbean	
• Introduction.....	10
• Eatwell guide: African and Caribbean.....	11
• Eatwell guide food groups.....	12 - 16
• Healthier food and healthier cooking alternatives.....	17 - 19
• Healthy menu inspiration.....	20
5. Cultural focus: Middle East	
• Introduction.....	21
• Eatwell guide food groups.....	22 - 26
• Healthier food and healthier cooking alternatives.....	27 - 28
• Healthy menu inspiration.....	29
6. Cultural focus: South Asian	
• Introduction.....	30
• Eatwell guide: South Asian.....	31
• Eatwell guide food groups.....	32 - 36
• Healthier food and healthier cooking alternatives.....	37 - 38
• Healthy menu inspiration.....	39
7. Other Eatwell Guides	
• Vegetarian.....	40
• Vegan.....	41

"The ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society". (Lexico, 2022)

A person's culture can have a large impact on their everyday diet. It can impact the food choices they make, their eating patterns and the relationship and experiences they have with food.

Coaches must have an understanding of these cultural differences to deliver high-quality nutritional advice and guidance that is bespoke to the individual.

This booklet has been designed to help coaches tailor nutritional advice:

1. Health inequalities in the United Kingdom

- The current research

2. Measuring the risk of developing long-term health problems.

- Body mass index (BMI)
- Waist measurements

3. Delivering nutritional guidance to different cultures

- Person-centred coaching
- Cultural competence

4. Cultural focus: African and Caribbean

- African and Caribbean Eatwell guide and review of food groups
- Healthier food alternatives
- Healthier cooking methods

5. Cultural focus: Middle East

- Review of food groups
- Healthy food alternatives
- Healthier cooking methods

6. Cultural focus: South Asia

- South Asian Eatwell guide and review of food groups
- Healthier food alternatives
- Healthier cooking methods

7. Other Eatwell Guides

- Vegetarian
- Vegan

I. Health inequalities in the United Kingdom

Research shows that there are health inequalities between people from different cultures living in the United Kingdom (UK). With higher rates of long term health problems such as Cardiovascular Disease and Type 2 Diabetes, found in ethnic minority populations (Jones et al., 2020).

The negative health experiences and outcomes among people in the UK is in part, affected by dietary habits. Food practices of minority ethnic groups vary by ethnicity, generation, geographic origin, age and religion. There is a need to recognise the factors which sit alongside ethnicity, e.g., social, gender and economic factors, which influence awareness of healthy eating, food choice, the timing of meals and portion sizes.

The research findings drive the immediate need for high-quality nutritional advice and guidance which is tailored to meet the needs of different cultures

The current research shows:

Black populations:

People of Black African origin are approximately three times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes than White Europeans (Goff, 2019).

1.5 to 2.5 times greater risk of having a stroke than White Europeans (Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, 2021).

South Asian populations:

Two to four times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes (T2DM) than White Europeans (Narayan & Kanaya, 2020)

Type 2 diabetes is up to six times more common in people of South Asian descent. South Asians account for an estimated 8% of all diagnosed T2DM cases in the UK (Diabetes.co.uk, 2019).

40% higher death rate from coronary heart disease (CHD) than the general public (Jalal et al., 2019).

Estimates of disability-free life expectancy are approximately 10 years lower for Bangladeshi men and 12 years lower for Pakistani women which is the lowest in the UK (Raleigh & Holmes, 2021).

South Asians have a risk for stroke about 1.5 times greater than White Europeans (Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, 2021).

Arab populations:

More likely to develop type 2 diabetes at a lower BMI level when compared with White British people (Caleyachetty et al., 2021).

2. Measuring the risk of developing long term health problems

The two main measurement methods, (i) Body mass index (BMI) and (ii) Waist Measurement will be outlined, showing current research and usage.

(i) Body Mass Index

The Body Mass Index (BMI) is the most common and cost-effective measure used to calculate whether a person's weight against their height is considered healthy.

It is used to assess a person's risk of developing long term health conditions associated with their weight.

If the BMI is too high it indicates that there is a higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and cardiovascular problems.

If the BMI is too low it can indicate an increased risk of malnutrition, osteoporosis and anaemia.

The BMI calculation works by dividing an adult's weight in kilograms by their height in metres squared e.g., a BMI of 25 means 25kg/m². BMI guidance is then used to categorise into underweight, ideal, increased risk and high risk

The Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE, 2013) suggests that BMIs should be adjusted for ethnic minority groups to reduce the risk of overweight and obesity-related illnesses.

See the below table for the suggested adjustments.

Table 1 - BMI guidelines (Kg/M²), (NICE, 2013)

Ethnicity	Underweight	Ideal	Increased Risk	High Risk
All				
South Asian	< 18.5	18.5 - 22.9	23 - 27.4	≥ 27.5
Black	< 18.5	18.5 - 22.9	23 - 27.4	≥ 27.5
Chinese	< 18.5	18.5 - 22.9	23 - 27.4	≥ 27.5
Mixed	< 18.5	18.5 - 22.9	23 - 27.4	≥ 27.5
White British	<18.5	18.5 - 24.9	25 - 29.9	≥ 30
White Other	< 18.5	18.5 - 24.9	25 - 29.9	≥ 30
Other	<18.5	18.5 - 22.9	23 - 27.4	≥ 27.5

Is current NICE BMI guidance, too high?

A 2021 population-cohort study of nearly 1.5 million records suggests that the current NICE BMI guidelines are too high.

For the equivalent age and sex-adjusted incidence rate of type 2 diabetes at a BMI of 30 kg/m² in White populations the ethnic minority cut-offs were lower: South Asians 23.9 kg/m²; Chinese 27.0 kg/m², Black 28.2 kg/m²; and Arab 26.8 kg/m² (Caleyachetty et al., 2021).

This would suggest that there is an increased risk of also developing co-morbidities common for people with type 2 diabetes such as hypertension, hyperlipidaemia, kidney disease, and heart disease.

It is clear from the research that ethnic minority groups are at a higher risk of weight-related health issues at a lower BMI when compared with the White European population.

Although Asian, Mixed, and Other (including Arab) ethnicity populations are below the national average for overweight and obesity. The recent findings (Caleyachetty et al, 2021) suggest the risk for weight-related health issues may be significantly higher.

Data suggests that overweight and obesity is rising on average in the UK with the biggest rises seen in Asian, Mixed, and Other Ethnic populations.

We can see from the below table that rates of obesity are rising for South Asian, Mixed and White British groups.

Table 2 - the percentage of adults who were overweight or obese, by ethnicity over time (Gov.uk, 2021).

Ethnicity	2015/16 %	2016/17 %	2017/18 %	2018/19 %	2019/20 %
All	61.3	61.3	62.0	62.3	62.8
South Asian	57.9	56.3	57.0	56.2	59.7
Black	72.8	69.0	72.8	73.6	67.5
Chinese	36.0	31.5	34.5	35.3	32.2
Mixed	54.6	57.3	58.5	57.0	59.6
White British	62.0	62.3	62.9	63.3	63.7
White Other	57.0	57.6	57.8	58.1	58.0
Other	58.5	59.5	58.3	52.6	61.2

Other ethnic group includes Arab, and any other ethnic group.

(ii) Waist measurement

Ethnic minority groups can have a BMI within the normal range but still be at a high risk of weight-related health issues if their waist measurement is high. This is because the BMI guide does not show how fat is distributed around the body (Karimollah and Heidari, 2015).

Waist circumference is a good measure of fat around the midsection:

A larger waist usually means there is excess fat inside and around your organs.

Fat build-up around vital organs (visceral fat) is linked to high blood lipid levels, higher total and LDL cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes.

The higher the waist circumference the greater the risk of developing non-communicable diseases (Darsini et al., 2020).

BMI and overall weight measurements are a quick measure to understand the risk of developing health issues. However, a person may still be at risk of developing or progressing health issues if their waist measurement is high and their BMI and weight is within the healthy range.

Black African and Caribbean, South Asian, Chinese, and Japanese people tend to carry more fat centrally and viscerally at a lower weight when compared to White British people (Diabetes UK, 2021).

The risk of diabetes and heart and circulatory diseases starts to increase at a lower weight gain than for White British people (British Heart Foundation, 2021).

Table 3 - Waist circumference measurement (NICE, 2012)

Sex and Ethnicity	Low risk	High Risk	Very high risk
Men (White European)	< 94cm (37in)	94 – 102cm	> 102cm (40in)
Women (White European)	< 80cm (31.5in)	80 – 88cm	> 88cm (34.6in)
Men (ethnic minority)	< 90cm (35.4in)	-	>90cm (35.4in)
Women (ethnic minority)	< 80cm (31.5in)	-	> 80cm (31.5in)

3. Delivering nutritional guidance to different cultures

How to deliver effective coaching across different cultures?

(a) Person-Centred Coaching

One approach is to provide high quality, tailored, nutritional advice and guidance to people from all cultures and backgrounds.

To achieve this all coaches should base their delivery on Person-centred coaching and be aware of cultural competence.

Teaching in healthcare, and health promotion should be designed around the client's needs, wants and perspective. There are five core elements to this approach to ensure interactions and interventions are effective for each individual:



1 Active Listening

Listen to the person and reflect back what they are saying to demonstrate understanding of their situation.

2 Express Empathy

Get to know the person and understand their thoughts and feelings.

3 Goal Setting

Support the person to develop their own SMART goals.

4 Open Questions

Using these types of questions will encourage the person to give more information about their experiences.

5 Individual Preferences

Find out what matters to the person.

(b) Cultural Competence

Cultural competence is the ability to understand and interact effectively with people of other cultures. To recognise and respond to individual needs and adapt sessions accordingly (Preemptive love, 2021).

The 5 steps to cultural competence:

1 Have an open attitude

- Be receptive to other ideas, values, and information.
- View all factors that contribute to problems without prejudice and bias.

2 Be self Aware

- Take time to reflect on your own thoughts, feelings, and actions, and understand what influences these.
- Acknowledge your own influence on others' behaviour.
- Explore and acknowledge your own unconscious bias.

3 Develop interpersonal Awareness

- Recognise that each individual is unique, with a different worldview, belief, and values.
- Respect that people will have other perspectives that may not match with your own.

4 Build Cultural Knowledge

- Build familiarity with different cultures including beliefs, history and values that surround a culture.

5 Use Cultural Skills

- Communicate effectively, work well and develop positive relationships with people from different cultures.



(Papadopoulos et al., model for developing cultural competence, 2015).

Cultural Focus: African and Caribbean

This section of the booklet outlines the African and Caribbean Eatwell guide and how it can be used to promote a healthy balanced diet.

African and Caribbean diets can be:

- Low in fruit and vegetables
- High in meat.
- High in salt.
- High in starchy carbohydrates.
- High in deep-fried foods.

The **African and Caribbean Eatwell Guide** has been adapted from the traditional Eatwell guide to be inclusive of African and Caribbean culture.

Eatwell Guide: African and Caribbean

African & Caribbean Eatwell Guide

Use this Eatwell Guide to help you understand some cultural foods and help get a better balance of healthier and more sustainable food. It shows how much of what you eat overall should come from each food group.

Check the label on packaged foods

Each serving (150g) contains			
Energy (kcal)	3.0g	3.0g	0.9g
Protein	LOW	LOW	LOW
Fat	4%	7%	38%
Salt	4%	7%	15%

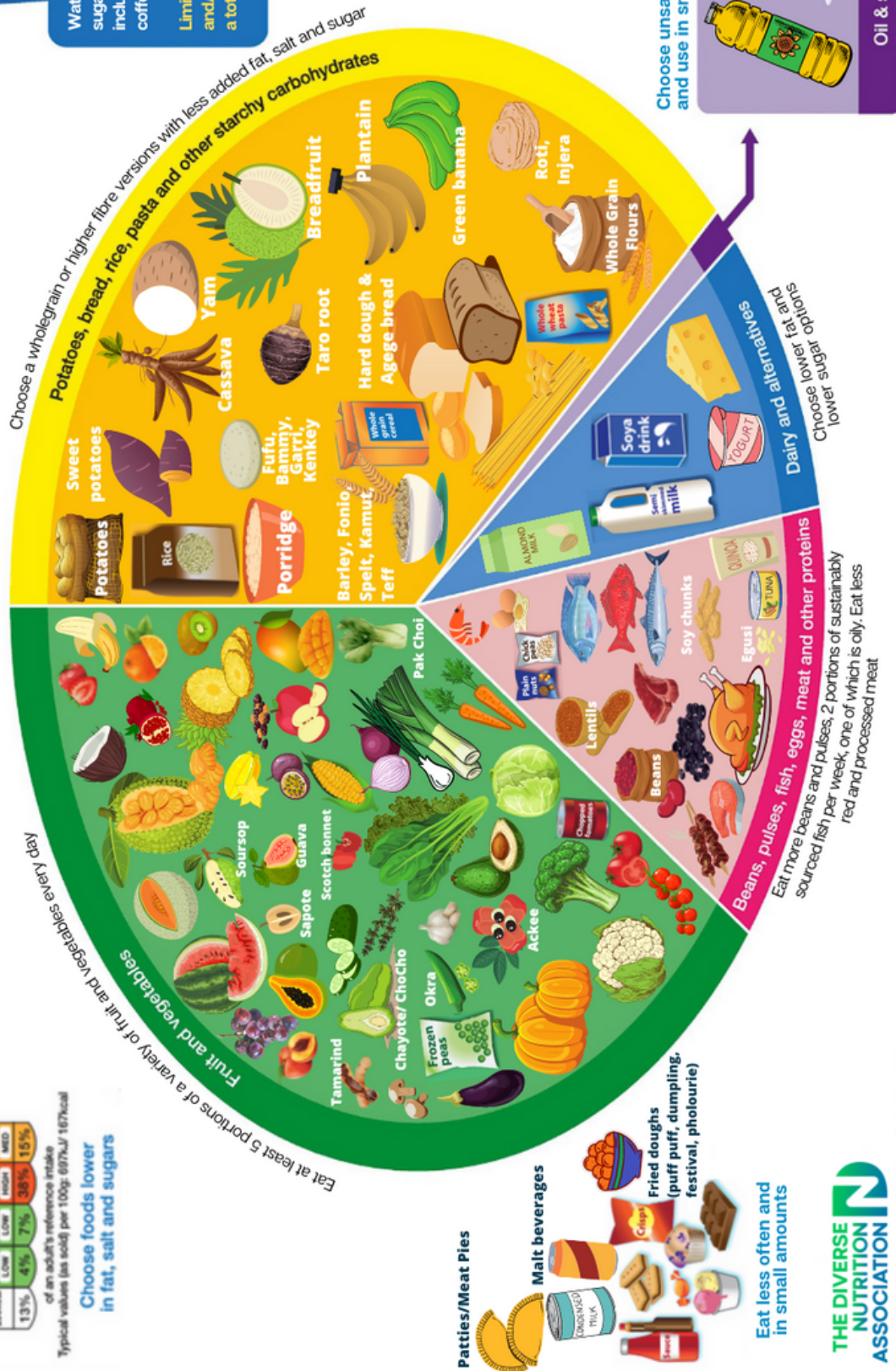
Typical values (as sold) per 100g: 697kJ/167kcal

Choose foods lower in fat, salt and sugars



Water, lower fat milk, sugar-free drinks including tea and coffee all count.

Limit fruit juice and/or smoothies to a total of 150ml a day.



THE DIVERSE NUTRITION ASSOCIATION

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Source: Public Health England in association with the Welsh Government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

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Fruit and Vegetables

Fruit

Ackee: A traditional West African fruit but is more known for being the national fruit of Jamaica. Ackee is a relative of lychee and has a soft, scrambled egg-like texture. Therefore, is usually consumed as a main dish accompanied by rice, yams, green bananas. Ackee is a good source of vitamins B, C and Zinc.

Chayote/Chocho: A vegetable pear (fruit), which tastes like cucumber and is usually consumed raw or cooked. It is usually cooked as a part of soup where it absorbs all the flavours and takes on the texture of cooked pumpkin. Chocho is high in Vitamin C and low in calories.

Okra: A long, slim shape vegetable with soft, white, edible seeds. Okra is popular across the Caribbean and usually cooked in stews, curries and soups. Okra is a good source of vitamin K and folate.

Sapote: Is an edible fruit, commonly eaten fresh, or mixed in with smoothies.

Tamarind: Is a seed like sweet and sour fruit. Tamarind is used to flavour chutneys, stews and curries.

Scotch bonnet chilli: This is one of the hottest chilli peppers in the world. These chillies are part of famous Jamaican jerk seasoning or part of pepper sauce.



Soursop: This is a fruit from the rainforests of Africa, and it is commonly used in juices or smoothies.

Vegetables

Callaloo: A green leafy vegetable used mainly in Caribbean cuisine. Callaloo is like spinach. This vegetable is a good source of plant-based calcium and iron.

Top Tips ...

1. **Count the portions** you have each day
2. **Eat a rainbow of colours** such as pumpkin, chocho, papaya, and callaloo.
3. **Add a handful of vegetables** to your favourite rice dishes, soups and stews.
4. Have a piece of fruit as a **healthier snack option**.
5. **Steam vegetables** instead of boiling or frying.

Carbohydrates

Breadfruit: This has a white soft texture like freshly baked bread. Usually, a similar size to a melon, with inedible rough green skin. Roasting, stewing, frying or boiling are the most common methods of cooking breadfruit

Dasheen (Taro): Is a starchy tuber. Dasheen can be roasted, cooked and mashed or fried as a snack. Dasheen is a good source of fibre, vitamin E, B6 and manganese.

Yam: This is a starchy tuber, which edible parts can be boiled, mashed, roasted or fried. Yams are a good source of fibre, potassium, manganese, and vitamin A.

Green banana (Matooke): This looks like a banana but the texture is similar to a tuber. Unlike the common banana, green bananas will not turn yellow. Green bananas are usually cooked and mashed in porridge or boiled and served with stews. Green banana is high in fibre and potassium.

Plantain: This looks like a banana but it is larger and the texture is harder. Plantains are high in carbohydrates. The most popular way of cooking is frying, but plantain can be enjoyed boiled, steamed or baked.

Cassava: A starchy root, which has white or yellow edible flesh. The texture of cooked cassava is like potatoes and is a good source of fibre and vitamin C.

Grains and pseudo-grains: Porridge, barley, fonio (similar to quinoa or millet), teff, spelt, Kamut (type of wheat).

Bread and wraps: roti, injera (Ethiopian flatbread made from teff), agege bread (Nigerian bread made from yeast flour, sugar, salt and egg, sometimes butter), hard dough bread (Caribbean bread).



Dough like foods:

Fufu is a fermented cassava dough ball, which originates from Ghana.

Bammy is a thick flatbread or pancake made out of freshly grated cassava and soaked in milk or coconut milk.

Garri is creamy porridge or dough from West Africa. Garri is made of granular flour obtained by processing the starchy tuberous roots of freshly harvested cassava.

Kenkey is a sourdough maize dumpling from Ghana but eaten in Caribbean countries.

Top Tips ...

1. **Base your meals** around starchy carbohydrate foods.
2. **Start the day with a wholegrain** porridge or cereals, choose one lower in salt and sugars.
3. **Buy high fibre versions** of bread (50/50 bread), or mix wholegrain versions with white versions.
4. **Leave the skin** on yams and sweet potatoes when cooking and eat these.

Dairy and dairy alternatives

Lactose intolerance is more common in people of African-Caribbean descent in the UK. Most cases of lactose intolerance in adults tends to be inherited (NHS inform, 2021). As such people of African-Caribbean descent may not consume much, if any milk or dairy products, and may opt for alternatives such as almond and soy milk. Almond milk is high in vitamin E. Milk alternatives are often fortified with calcium to match dairy milk.



Top Tips ...

1. **Choose lower fat** and **lower or no sugar** products.
2. **Choose dairy alternatives** that are non-sweetened and fortified with Calcium, Vitamin D, Vitamin B12, and Iodine.
3. **Reduce the portion size** of cheese.

Oils and spreads

Coconut and palm oil is often used in African and Caribbean cooking. Although both coconut and palm oils are plant-based, they are primarily saturated fat. Coconut oil was shown to increase LDL cholesterol which is linked to heart disease. Although limited in evidence, it is recommended to change coconut oil when cooking for olive oil, avocado oil, or peanut oil. Coconut can be used in smaller amounts for flavour (Sacks, 2020; Neelakantan et al., 2020).



Top Tips ...

1. **Choose whole foods sources** like nuts, seeds and avocados as your primary source of fat.
2. **Be sensible** of portion sizes.
3. **Use healthier oils** instead of butter, lard, coconut and palm oil.

Less often and in small amounts

Chin Chin: is a fried doughnut-like snack in West Africa. Chin Chin is often high in total fat, saturated fat and cholesterol.

Fried dumplings/bakes: this is a Caribbean traditional snack made of fried dough. The main ingredients are flour, salt, vegetable oil and water (yeast, butter or sugar are optional). Fried dumplings/bakes are high in carbohydrates and low in fibre.

Patties: are small flat pasties of minced or finely chopped food, especially meat. These can be high in carbohydrates, low in fibre, and high in fat and salt.

Pholourie: is an Indo-Caribbean snack. It consists of fried, spiced spilt pea and flour dough balls that are served with a chutney.

Puff puff: is a Nigerian traditional snack made of fried dough. The main ingredients are flour, sugar, vegetable oil, water, yeast and butter and eggs are optional.

Vetkoek (fatcake): is a traditional South African fried dough bread stuffed with a sweet or savoury filling. Is high in refined carbohydrates, total fat and saturated fat.



Malt beverages: Supermalt is a non-alcohol drink that is very high in sugar which adds to its high-calorie content. However, Supermalt is rich in B vitamins.

Top Tips ...

- 1..If you consume these foods and drinks often, **try to limit their consumption** so you have them less often and in smaller amounts
2. **Be sensible** of portion sizes.
3. **Check the label** and avoid foods that are high in fat, salt and sugar!

Healthier food alternatives

Instead of:

Have:

Main Food Group: Carbohydrates

Fried plantain chips



Steamed or roasted plantain chips

Slice of agege bread



Slice of wholegrain bread

Garri mixed with sugar and/or evaporated milk



Smaller portion of garri with skimmed milk or semi-skimmed milk, and mixed berries

Doolsho and other types of sweet cakes



Smaller portion of oat-based cakes

Puff puff (deep fried)



Reduce amount of added sugar and air fry

Main Food Group: Protein

Fried chicken wings



Roasted or oven baked crispy coated chicken wings, remove skin

Akara (deep fried)



Air fry or bake akara

Beef suya



Beef suya with visible fats removed; use half of beef and half of red lentils

African egg roll



Boiled egg with crispy vegetables

Caribbean beef patties



Use wholemeal flour and mix beef with pulses to increase fibre

Healthier food alternatives

Instead of:

Have:

Main Food Group: Fruits and vegetables

Fried fruit fritters



Boiled or grilled fresh fruit.

Fried Okra



Roasted or steamed spiced okra

Fried sweet potato



Air fried or baked sweet potatoes

Main Food Group: Healthy fats

Salted, coated or flavoured nuts



30g unsalted nuts

Main Food Group: Liquids / hydration

Punch drinks



Mixed fruit in the smoothie rather than juice; do not add alcohol and reduce the portion size

Healthier cooking

Fried foods or foods with added oils/creams can be really tasty and part of traditional dishes. However, too much fat in our diet is not healthy for our bodies.

If the foods are fried, they soak up the oils which are high in energy, this can lead to weight gain and other health problems if consumed in excess.

Where possible steam, poach, grill, bake or boil instead of frying.

Consider air-frying food – this method uses dry heat to fry food instead of oil.

Skim off any fat that has settled on top of soups curries and stews.

If you occasionally fry food:

Use kitchen roll to remove excess oil.

Do not free pour oil and use home measurement methods to control the portions e.g., teaspoon or tablespoon.

Healthy cooking looks like:

Fried Cassava



Boiled cassava with chili and lemon

Fried meats with skin



Cut off fat from meat and roast with herbs and spices

Fried egg



Boiled egg or poached egg

Fried salt fish



Baked oily fish with herbs and spices

Butter, creams, coconut or palm oils



Rapeseed oils, olive oils

Healthy menu inspiration

Breakfast suggestions

Poached eggs with 1-2 slices of wholemeal bread, grilled tomatoes and spinach.

Ogi or pap with a small amount of sugar and small amounts of milk with chopped fruits.

Overnight oats with berries and a small handful of unsalted nuts.

Lunch suggestions

Mackerel with mashed peas, potatoes and corn.

Chickpeas, avocado and roasted chicken salad.

Black bean soup

Dinner suggestions

Baked or grilled jerk chicken with rice and kidney beans and a side salad.

Beef, plantain and okra stew

Jollof rice with grilled chicken and tomato salad.

Snack suggestions

Boiled egg with spinach.

A small portion of garri with skimmed milk.

Oatcakes.

Cultural Focus: Middle East

This section of the booklet outlines how to promote a healthy diet for the cultures relating to the Middle East Region. This region refers to the lands around the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea (Britannica, 2022).

Areas within the Middle East:

- North-East Africa
- Western Asia

Middle Eastern diets can be:

- High in sugar.
- High in salt.
- Contain deep-fried food.
- Low in a variety of fruit and vegetables.
- High in processed meat.

The **healthy eating guidance below** helps to understand some of the cultural foods and how much should come from each food group.

Fruit and Vegetables

Fruit

Fig: a soft pear-shaped fruit with sweet dark flesh and many small seeds, eaten fresh or dried. A good source of fibre.

Pomegranate: A spherical fruit with a tough golden-orange outer skin and sweet red gelatinous flesh containing many seeds.

Dates: is a fruit native to the Middle East. It is a small sweet fruit. This is often eaten by Muslims to break their fast during Ramadan.

Muskmelon: is a small melon with a green and white rind, and orange flesh. This melon is native to Iran (Persia).

Quinces: is a yellow fruit that resembles a pear. This is native to the Middle East. Quinces are a good source of vitamin C and fibre.

Other fruits: many other fruits are eaten in Middle Eastern culture, such as citrus fruits, tamarinds, and persimmons.

Vegetables

Okra: A long, slim shaped vegetable with soft, white, edible seeds. Okra is usually cooked in stews, curries and soups. Okra is a good source of vitamin K and folate.

Squash: a family of vegetables including butternut, red Kuri and pumpkin. Butternut squash is often roasted or made into a tagine.

Eggplant (aubergine): is a long purple vegetable. Eggplant is often roasted or grilled before being used for salads, wraps, rice dishes, or dressed with yoghurt, and garlic. Eggplant is the main ingredient when making baba ghanoush.



Other vegetables: that are often eaten in Middle Eastern culture include onions, garlic, carrots, turnips, cabbage, spinach and chard.

Dishes

Mulukhiya: A green soup made from Jute mallow leaves. A good source of iron.

Fattouch: A salad made from toasted Arabic flatbread combined with mixed greens and other vegetables.

Tabbouleh: A bulgur wheat-based salad made mostly from finely chopped vegetables such as parsley, tomatoes and onions.

Iron deficiency can be a common micronutrient deficiency

Tip to increase iron intake ...

1. **Eat more dark leafy green vegetables** such as spinach or mulukhiya and include a source of Vitamin C (e.g., Orange juice) to help with iron absorption.

Carbohydrates

Aish Baladi: This means 'bread of life' in Egyptian culture; resembles pita, but is made with whole wheat flour.

Bulgur: Cracked whole-grain kernels of wheat that are parboiled and dried. This is one of the main ingredients in tabbouleh.

Freekeh: A green grain made from young durum wheat which is roasted or smoked then polished to remove the shells.

Ka'ak (purse bread): This is a flatbread shaped like a purse which is often sold by street vendors in Beirut as the shape allows the bread to be hung for storage and transport.

Markouk bread: A paper-thin Middle Eastern flatbread made with a combination of different flours, salt, and water.

Tannour bread: A type of flatbread that is traditionally eaten in Iraq and Syria.

Pita bread: This is a round, flat, wheat flour bread that often has a hollow interior. This is a staple in Middle Eastern cuisine.

Rice: A staple in Middle Eastern cuisine. Some of the more popular choices include jasmine, basmati and long grain.



Dishes:

Burghul bi banadoura: Bulgar cooked with tomatoes.

Kamhiyeh: Wheat-based dessert usually topped with nuts or dried fruit.

Smeed: Semolina cracker bread made from flour, burghul (parboiled and cracked wheat), sesame seeds, and olive oil.

Top Tips ...

1. **Opt for higher fibre products** such as markouk bread, tannour bread, freekeh, brown rice, aish baladi. Grain-based snacks such as kamhiyeh or smeed.
2. **Eat bulgur with hot dishes** such as vegetables stuffed with rice and meat (e.g. stuffed eggplant, dolma [stuffed grape leaves]).

Protein

Animal-based

Lamb and mutton: widely eaten in Middle Eastern culture due to lambs and sheep being of great significance to Islam and Judaism. Also, lamb and sheep were easier to raise than cattle and have a higher meat yield than chicken, adding to their popularity.

Fish

Popular within Middle Eastern culture due to large farming and fishing on the Mediterranean and Red seas.

Sardines, mackerel and tuna: widely eaten in Middle Eastern culture as they are all farmed/fished in the Mediterranean sea. Sardines and mackerel are oily fish, consumption of these has been shown to improve heart health and reduce the risk of heart disease.

Barracuda: is a large fish that can be found in the Mediterranean and Red Seas. Smaller species are edible but larger species are often avoided due to the high mercury content and ciguatera poisoning.

Nile perch: a small fish found in the Nile river, has almost boneless white flesh makes it a good source of food.

Tilapia: native to the Jordan river is a white flesh fish that is a good source of protein, selenium and vitamin B12.

Plant-based

Middle Eastern vegetarianism and veganism is rising within this culture, some examples of plant-based proteins include:

Lentils, chickpeas and quinoa: used in many dishes in the Middle East such as curries, soups, and dips, or used as an ingredient in rice dishes.



Falafel: is a deep-fried ball or patty-shaped fritter made from ground chickpeas, broad beans, or both.

High Protein dishes:

Quzi: slow-cooked lamb served with rice, vegetables, spices, and nuts

Mudardara: a vegetarian dish consisting of lentils and rice.

Foul mudammas: Stew of cooked fava beans served with olive oil and ground cumin.

Hommos balila: chickpeas that have been boiled along with lemon juice, garlic, and various spices

Top Tips ...

1. **Cut down on processed meats** such as makanik and sujuk.
2. **Choose extra-lean meat** when cooking dishes such as mansaf or quzi, or remove excess fat.
3. **Top rice dishes** with a small number of toasted pine nuts and cashew nuts.

Dairy and dairy alternatives

Baladi cheese: white brine cheese with soft to semi-hard texture.

Danao: Fresh juice and milk.

Jameed: hard dry laban made from ewe or goats milk.

Laban: fermented milk similar to kefir.

Labneh: concentrated or strained yoghurt

Zabadi: traditional yoghurt, similar tzatziki.



Top Tips ...

1. **Choose lower fat** and **lower or no sugar** products such as **Labneh**.
2. **Choose dairy alternatives** that are non-sweetened and fortified with Calcium, Vitamin D, B12, and iodine.
3. **Reduce the portion size** of cheese.

Oils and spreads

Olive oil: essential to Middle Eastern cooking, this is one of the most used oils.

Nut oil (walnut, pistachio, almond): often used cold in dressings or for making baked goods such as pastries.

Ghee: Popular in cooking, this is very high in saturated fat and therefore high consumption may increase the risk of heart disease.



Top Tips ...

1. **Choose whole foods sources** like nuts and seeds as your primary source of fat.
2. **Be sensible** with portion sizes.
3. **Use vegetable oils** instead of ghee, lard or samna .

Less often and in small amounts

Jellab, tamr hindi, amar il deen:
Sweetened fruit drinks

Barazek: A type of sesame cookie

Hadji badah: A type of cardamom cookie

Knafeh: Traditional Middle Eastern dessert made with a spun pastry called kataifi, soaked in sweet, sugar-based syrup, and typically layered with cheese, or with other ingredients such as clotted cream, or pistachio nuts

Kashta: Cheese that is heavy in cream. Can be used in cooking, or had on its own with honey.

Qatayef: Made from pancakes stuffed with nuts, then fried and dunked in syrup.

Malban: Resembles fruit jelly, except it is traditionally made with grape molasses, thickened with starch and flavoured with rosewater, mastic or orange blossom and stuffed with pistachios.

Ma'mounia: Roasted semolina dish that is cooked in simple syrup and garnished with nuts and cinnamon. A Syrian semolina pudding that is warm, creamy and sweet.



Umm Ali: Traditional bread pudding with pastry, sugar, milk, nuts, and raisins.

Baklava: One of the most well-known desserts of Middle Eastern cuisine. It is made by layering nuts, such as walnuts, pistachios, and hazelnuts, depending on the region, between thin phyllo dough.

Basbousa: sweet, syrup-soaked semolina cake flavoured with orange flower water, rose water or syrup.

Top Tips ...

1. If you consume these foods and drinks often, **try to limit their consumption** so you have them less often and in smaller amounts.
2. **Be sensible** of portion sizes.
3. **Check the label** and avoid foods that are high in fat, salt and sugar.

Healthier food alternatives

Instead of:

Enjoy:

Food Group: Carbohydrates

Aish shami



Ka'ak or pitta bread made of whole grains such as aish baladi

Long grain rice (low fibre content)



Wild rice (high fibre content)

Food Group: Protein

Makanek and other processed meats such as sujuk and salami



Lean unprocessed meat such as chicken, or plant-based such as chickpeas

Food Group: Dairy and alternatives

Small piece of kashkaval (Full fat cheese)



Vegetables with labneh cheese dip

Food Group: Oils and spreads

Ghee



Olive oil, rapeseed oil, nut oil

Cakes, biscuits, cookies

Knafeh



Cereal/grain based snacks e.g. kamhiyeh, smeed

Baklava



Small portion of Kdaameh (sugar coated chickpeas)

Sweetened drinks

Jellab, tamir hindi or sweetened lemonade



Banana and date smoothie with cooked quinoa, or mint tea.

Healthy cooking

Fried foods or foods with added oils/creams can be really tasty and part of traditional dishes. However, too much fat in our diet is not healthy for our bodies.

If the foods are fried, they soak up the oils which are high in energy, this can lead to weight gain and other health problems if consumed in excess.

Where possible steam, poach, grill, bake or boil instead of frying.

Consider air-frying food – this method uses dry heat to fry food instead of oil.

Skim off any fat that has settled on top of soups curries and stews.

If you occasionally fry food:

Use kitchen roll to remove excess oil.

Do not free pour oil, use home measurement methods to control the portions e.g., teaspoon or tablespoon.

Healthy cooking looks like:

Ta'miyya (fried falafel)



Limit amount of oil and bake instead of fry

Fried meats with skin



Cut off fat from meat and remove skin (Skin is usually high in fat)

Fried bread in fattouch-like salads



Use grilled bread instead

Fried fish



Bake oily fish with herbs and spices

Animal fats, creamy sauces , coconut oil, ghee or sumna



Rapeseed or olive oil

Healthier menu inspiration

Breakfast suggestions

Porridge with berries, nuts and seeds

Shakshouka (tomato and egg-based dish) with khubz tannour (bread)

Ful medames (fava bean stew) with raw tomatoes and wholemeal ka'ak bread

Lunch suggestions

Baked ta'miyya (falafel) with tabbouleh (salad) and labneh (cheese).

Mezze (mixture of dishes e.g. greens such as rocca, dandelion and chard, hoummous, beans e.g. fasolia, mutabbal and meat).

Couscous salad with red onion, peppers, dried fruit and cashew nuts mixed with chopped mint and coriander leaves, topped with pomegranate.

Dinner suggestions

Mujaddara (lentil-based dish) with molokhiya (spinach soup) and markouk (bread).

Grilled skewer kebabs with wild rice, salad and hoummous and watermelon chunks.

Margoog: This is a dish full of fibre and essential vitamins. It's usually prepared with courgette, carrots, eggplant, tomatoes, potatoes, and tenderised meat.

Snack suggestions

Ka'ak with hoummous balila (bread with hummus).

Unsalted nuts and seeds e.g. Loz akhdar (green almonds).

Dried fruit e.g., medjool dates.

Cultural Focus: South Asian

This section of the booklet outlines how to promote a healthy diet for the cultures relating to the South Asian region.

Areas within South Asia that are focused on in this booklet:

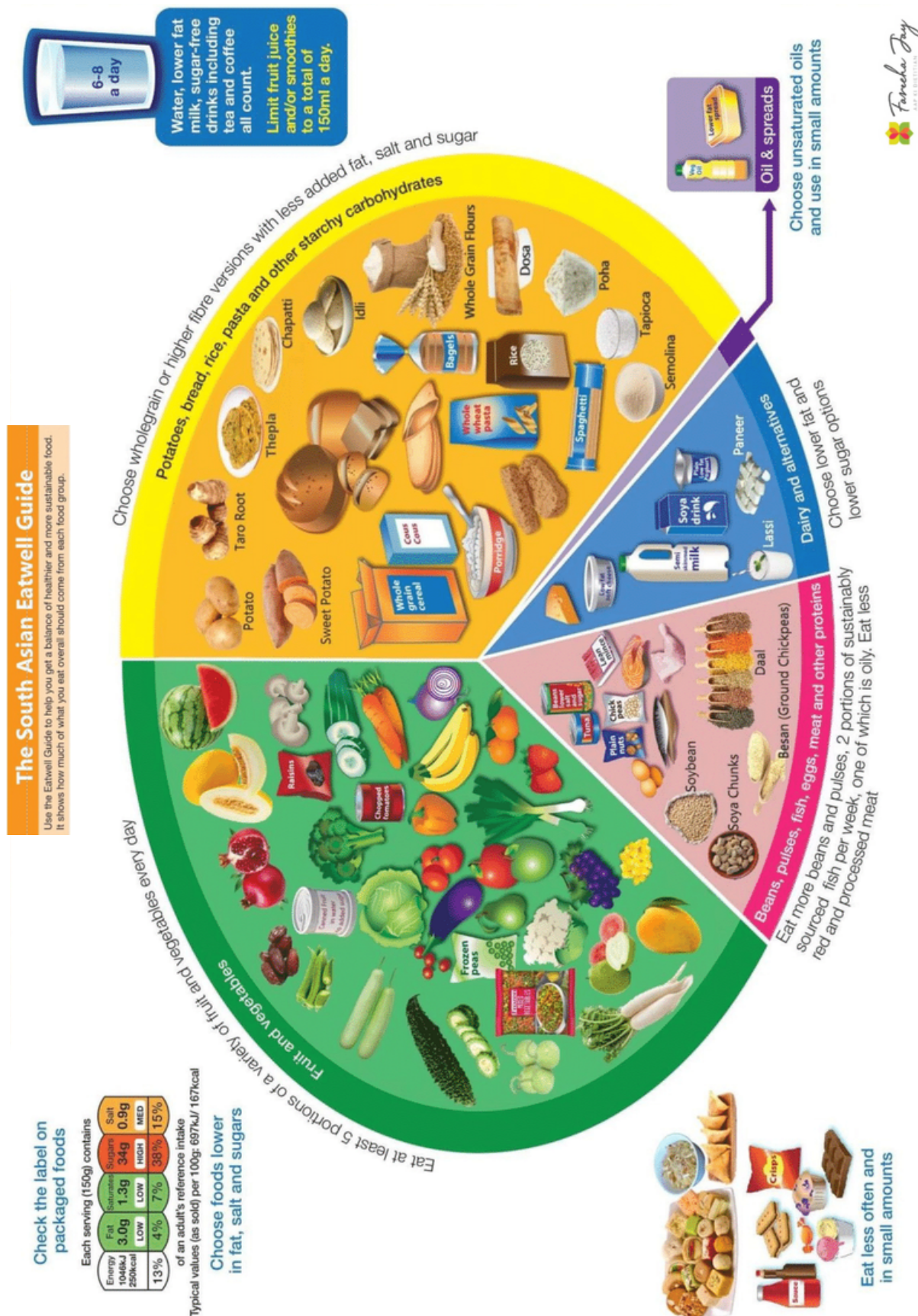
- Pakistan
- India
- Bangladesh

South As diets can be:

- High in fat
- Low in a variety of fruit and vegetables
- High in meat (depending on the culture)

The **healthy eating guidance below** helps to understand some of the cultural foods and how much should come from each food group.

Eatwell Guide: South Asian



Fruit and Vegetables

Vegetables

Bitter gourd: known as bitter melon originates from India and unlike the typical melons being round and sweet, it almost resembles a cucumber but is very bumpy and has a very sharp taste to it.

Tindori (ivy gourd): It grows primarily in tropical climates and is commonly found in the Southern Indian states. A good source of fibre, and iron.

Bay leaf: is a leafy green that is typically used within South Asian cooking like various curries and other dishes for flavouring. It is not recommended to eat bay leaves as they are too rigid. They are however high in vitamin A, C, iron, potassium, calcium and magnesium to your foods.

Okra: is a long, slim shape vegetable with soft, white, edible seeds. Okra is popular across South Asian countries and can even be called ladyfinger. Okra is a good source of vitamin K and folate.

Fruit

Guava: is a sweet juicy fruit, normally best known as an ingredient in many tropical juices, there are different types of guava ranging from having a yellow to pale green exterior with a flesh which can be either deep red, a bright pink or white.



Litchi (Lychee): is a tropical fruit grown in the warm climate of South Asian countries and is known for its red bumpy skin and white sweet flesh.

Jackfruit: is the largest tree-borne fruit in the world which is high in fibre and low in fat and is grown all across South Asia, it has a stringy fleshy which you can either eat raw or cooked and can be used as a meat substitute.

Mango: specially Kesar, Dussehri, Badami and Alphonso mangos are grown in different regions of India and Pakistan. Mangos are a good source of Vitamin C and A.

Iron deficiency can be a common micronutrient deficiency

Tip to increase iron intake ...

1. **Eat more dark leafy green vegetables** such as spinach or mulukhiya and include a source of Vitamin C (e.g., Orange juice) to help with iron absorption.

Carbohydrates

Tapioca: is a starch that is extracted from the roots of the cassava plant, therefore is found in a white powdered form and is used in dishes like kheer, It can also be formed into tapioca pearls (balls) to make dishes like sabudana khichdi.

Cassava: is a starchy root, which has white or yellow edible flesh. The texture of cooked cassava is like potatoes and is a good source of fibre and vitamin C.

Sooran (yam): or elephant yam is a starchy tuber almost similar to a sweet potato in flesh colour however has an earthy taste it is used like potatoes in South Asian dishes and is high in nutrients like vitamin B6, B1, riboflavin, folic acid and niacin.

Chapati: is a common staple in South Asian cuisine, it is a type of flatbread traditionally made with wholemeal Atta flour which gives it a higher fibre content.

Taro: is a starchy tuber. Taros can be roasted, cooked and mashed or fried as a snack (tannia cakes). Taro is a good source of fibre, vitamin E, vitamin B6 and manganese.

Poha: is flattened rice and is steam cooked with various herbs and spices and is typically served at any time of the day whether breakfast, lunch or dinner and can be garnished with raw onions and fresh coconut.



Semolina: is a coarse flour made out of durum wheat. It is a good source of iron and high in B-vitamins and folates. It is used as the base of many South Asian dishes like Sooji Ka Halwa which is a dessert made with mixed nuts and cardamoms.

Thepla: This is a flatbread like chapati, it is made with whole wheat flour which is high in fibre but made with more herbs and spices like turmeric, methi (fenugreek) and typically enjoyed with dahi (yoghurt) and chutney.

Top Tips ...

1. Base your meals around starchy carbohydrate foods.
2. Start the day with a wholegrain porridge or cereals, choose one lower in salt and sugars.
3. Remember, you can also purchase high fibre white versions of bread (50/50 bread), or mix wholegrain versions with white versions to help increase your fibre intake using a like-for-like substitute of your family favourites.

Protein

Animal source

Chicken: is very popular in South Asian cuisine in dishes like curries, soups, and kebabs. Chicken is high in protein and relatively low in fat.

Lamb or goat: Is used within many different dishes from curries to kebabs to soups. Lamb and goat meat is high in protein and a rich source of vitamin b12, selenium, zinc and many other minerals and moderate in fat content. It is recommended to have lamb, goat or any other red meat no more than 70g cooked weight per day. In South Asian culture goat meat is often referred to as mutton, not to be confused with meat from sheep.

Eggs: are an excellent source of protein. Eggs are a staple in many South Asian cultures. Akoori is a common Indian scrambled egg dish.

Fish

Tilapia, Cod, Halibut, Salmon, and Hilsa: are popular in many dishes across South Asia. Fish is mainly eaten in Bengali culture, this is due to the large number of places that edible fish is sourced. Bangladesh is often referred to as the 'land of rivers'.



Plant source

Tofu: is a soya bean curd and a good source of calcium, selenium and manganese.

Soya chunks: are made from dehydrated soya beans flour. Soya chunks are a great vegetarian alternative to meat that absorbs sauces from dishes well. Soya is an important protein source as it has all of the essential amino acids.

Top Tips ...

1. Protein should take up 1/3 of your plate.
2. Choose fish and lean meat without fatty skin instead of red and processed meats.
3. If you like fish dishes eat them, remember the guidance of 2 portions a week
4. Include pulses in your meals

Dairy and dairy alternatives

Paneer: is an Indian cottage cheese used across South Asia in dishes such as sag paneer which is a popular vegetarian dish.

Lassi: Lassi is a regional name for buttermilk, it is a blend of yoghurt, water, spices and sometimes fruit. A popular variety of Lassi is mango. This can be high in sugar.



Top Tips ...

1. **Choose lower fat** and **lower or no sugar** products such as **Labneh**.
2. **Choose dairy alternatives** that are non-sweetened and fortified with Calcium, Vitamin D, B12, and iodine.
3. **Reduce the portion size** of cheese.

Oils and spreads

Canola/rapeseed oil: vegetable oil derived from a variety of rapeseed.

Groundnut oil: often used cold in dressings or for making baked goods such as pastries.

Ghee: Popular in cooking, this is very high in saturated fat and therefore high consumption may increase the risk of heart disease. Vegan ghee may be a healthier alternative.



Top Tips ...

1. **Choose whole foods sources** like nuts and seeds as your primary source of fat.
2. **Be sensible** with portion sizes.
3. **Use vegetable oils** instead of ghee, lard or samna .

Less often and in small amounts

Pakora: This is a popular snack and is a fried fritter typically sold by street vendors and restaurants all across Southern Asia. Commonly the batter is made with Gram flour, herbs and spices. Vegetables or chicken are dipped in the batter and then fried in vegetable oil.

Gulab Jamun and Rasgulla: This is a milky dessert made from curdling milk and making it into balls then cooked in sugar syrup.

Jalebi: This is a crispy spiral pastry made with all-purpose flour dipped in a sugar syrup enjoyed all across South Asia.

Samosa: This is a fried or sometimes baked savoury pastry either in the shape of a triangle or pyramid. The fillings can range from spiced potatoes to meat.

Chaat: a term signifying a huge variety of South Asian street foods, snacks, or small meals which usually combine salty, spicy, sweet, and sour flavours.

Bhaji: very popular in South Asian culture. Bhajis are any kind of vegetable that has been battered and deep-fried. The most popular type of bhaji is onion. Bhajis are high in saturated fat.



Pani puri: are hollow dough balls that are stuffed with boiled potatoes, steamed moong sprouts or boiled chick peas. Pani puri is often enjoyed with sweet chutney.

Top Tips ...

1. If you consume these foods and drinks often, **try to limit their consumption** so you have them less often and in smaller amounts.
2. **Be sensible** of portion sizes.
3. **Check the label** and avoid foods that are high in fat, salt and sugar.

Healthier food alternatives

Instead of:

Enjoy:

Food Group: Fruit and vegetables

Bhel puri



Fruit chaat

Creamed or deep fried vegetables



Vegetables shallow fried or oven baked

Food Group: Carbohydrates

Basmati rice (low fibre content)



Wholegrain Basmati rice or black rice

Kathi rolls



Wholemeal wrap instead of the paratha, lean meat and bulk with vegetables

Thalipeeth with full fat yoghurt



Thalipeeth using wholegrain flour and low fat yoghurt

Food Group: Protein

Pan fried Seekh kebab



Grilled Seekh kebab with ground chicken or reduced fat mincemeat

Aloo keema using less healthy oils



Aloo keema made with reduced fat mince. Served with mixed vegetables

Chicken thigh curry with extra masala



Chicken breast or tofu with less masala

Fish kabiraji



Fish kabiraji that has been made with almond flour, and air-fried

Healthier food alternatives

Instead of:

Enjoy:

Food group: Oil and spreads

Ghee



Vegan ghee, olive oil,
rapeseed oil, nut oil

Food Group: Dairy and alternatives

Lassi



Low fat lassi

Desi or masala Chai with
full fat milk and two sugars



ginger chai with low fat milk
and low calorie natural
sweetener e.g. stevia

Food group: Less often and in small amounts

Deep fried Samosa



Oven cooked Samosa and
filling cooked using olive oil

Fried pakora



Oven baked pakoras

Bombay Mix/ Pre
packaged snack



Homemade roasted peas and
chickpeas in a light mix
seasoning

Jalebi



Portion of dried mango,
papaya, or aam papad

Onion bhaji



Air-fried onion bhaji

Potato vada



Spiced popcorn

Healthy cooking looks like:

Ghee is common in South Asian cooking where it is used for frying, spreading on bread, to top popcorn, and drizzled on roasted vegetables and potatoes. Ghee is made from cows milk, and is part of the oil and spread food group. Ghee is high in saturated fat and therefore may be linked to an increased risk of heart disease. Healthier cooking oils are advised such as rapeseed, or olive oils. These types of oils are a good alternative for frying as they both have moderately high smoking points, they are also a healthier alternative for dressing food due to their high monounsaturated fat content.

Deep fried cutlet, samosa, pakora or bhajia



Baked cutlet, samosa, pakora or bhajia

Fried higher fat meats with skin on



Remove skin, trim fat, or opt for a leaner meat such as chicken breast

Fried vegetables



Steamed, boiled veg or roasted vegetables

Butter, cream, ghee



Cook with rapeseed, olive oil, or vegan ghee

Fried fish



Baked or air-fried fish



Healthier menu inspiration

Breakfast suggestions

Scrambled eggs with one wholemeal chapati and a portion of mixed fruit.

Porridge with half a banana, cinnamon, mixed nuts, with a sprinkle of crushed cardamom, served with chai with skimmed milk and sweetener.

Spiced tofu scramble with mixed fruit on the side.

Lunch suggestions

Halibut with boiled cassava and mixed leafy greens.

Fish tikka with one small wholemeal (homemade) pitta bread, and a fruit bowl.

Grilled spiced cutlets of lamb and a chickpea salad.

Dinner suggestions

Oven-baked tandoori chicken with boiled sweet potato and a leafy green salad.

Mung dhal with spinach, grilled salmon and one wholemeal chapati.

Mutter paneer with tofu in place of paneer, with a serving of wild or brown rice and a mixed salad.

Snack suggestions

Oatcakes or rye-based crackers with tomato salsa or cottage cheese

Homemade vegetable samosa baked in the oven

Palmful of dried fruit e.g., Medjool dates.

Eatwell Guide: Vegetarian

Vegetarian Eatwell Guide

Use the Vegetarian Eatwell Guide to help you get a balance of healthier and more sustainable food. It shows how much of what you eat overall should come from each food group.

Check the label on packaged foods

Each serving (150g) contains			
Energy	Fat	Sugars	Salt
1046kJ 250kcal	3.0g	1.3g	0.9g
	LOW	LOW	HIGH
13%	4%	7%	15%

Typical values (as sold) per 100g: 697kJ/167kcal

Choose foods lower in fat, salt and sugars



Water, lower fat milk, sugar-free drinks including tea and coffee all count.
Limit fruit juice and/or smoothies to a total of 150ml a day.

Choose wholegrain or higher fibre versions with less added fat, salt and sugar

Eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day



Choose unsaturated oils and use in small amounts

Choose lower fat and lower sugar options

Eat a wide variety of vegetarian proteins including plenty of beans and pulses. Choose vegetarian meat-alternatives lower in fat and salt

Eat less often and in small amounts

Per day 2000kcal = ALL FOOD + ALL DRINKS

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Eatwell Guide: Vegan

Vegan Eatwell Guide

Good nutritional planning is about balancing food groups well and using fortified foods and supplementation wisely. Use the Vegan Eatwell Guide to help you get all the nutrients you need without animal products.

Check the label on packaged foods

Each serving (150g) contains

Energy	1048kJ	250kcal	13%
Saturated Fat	3.0g	LOW	4%
Sugars	1.3g	LOW	7%
Salt	0.9g	MED	15%

Typical values (as sold) per 100g: 697kJ / 167kcal of an adult's reference intake

Choose foods lower in fat, salt and sugars



Water, sugar-free tea and coffee, and plain/unsweetened milk alternatives all count. Limit fruit juice and smoothies to a total of 150ml a day.

Choose wholegrain or higher fibre versions with less added fat, salt and sugar

Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates

Fruit and vegetables

Eat at least five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day

Walnuts
Ground linseed
Omega-3 fat

Vitamin D (autumn and winter minimum)
Vitamin B12
Iodine
Selenium
Vitamin and mineral checklist

Oil and spreads

Choose unsaturated oils and use in small amounts

Calcium-rich foods

Choose lower fat and lower sugar dairy alternatives

Beans, peas, lentils and other proteins

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