

# HEALTH MATTERS



WITH **GARY BAVERSTOCK**  
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## TOP TIPS FOR A NEW YOU!

Most of us want to start the New Year in the right way and to eat healthily, but are often confused or overwhelmed by mixed messages. So let's start 2018 off well with some of my top dietary tips for a new you!

### Say hello to H<sub>2</sub>O

It's time to start embracing the benefits of water. Your body is mostly (50% to 70%) water. The exact level depends on your age and muscle and fat content. Muscle tissue has more water than fat tissue and because the average male body has proportionately more muscle than the average female body, it also contains more water. For the same reason – more muscle – a young body has more water than an older one.

Water is brimming with minerals and electrolytes and acts as a solvent - dissolving other substances. It also carries nutrients and other materials (such as blood cells) around the body, making it possible for every organ to work properly. This is why we can't live for more than 3 to 5 days without any fluid intake. There is no system in the body that does not depend on water, which means maintaining your fluid balance is essential to life. **Sources: aim for at least 1ltr of clear liquid daily + 7 portions of vegetables and fruit.**

### Eat protein at every meal

Protein is an essential nutrient, as it is one of the building blocks of body tissue and is used for almost every metabolic process in the body. There are 20 amino acids (AAs) that form protein, 11 of which can be synthesized by the body, the other 9 are essential amino acids, which cannot be produced by the body and must be obtained from the diet.

How much do you need? If you're at a healthy weight, you don't lift weights and you don't exercise much, then aiming for 0.8g-1.3g/kg is sufficient. This amounts to: 56-91 g/day for the average male and 46-75 g/day for the average female. Protein needs are increased in pregnancy or breastfeeding and also for very active people - strength and endurance athletes, increase to around 1.2-1.7g/kg of bodyweight/day. **Sources: eggs, fish, all meats, dairy, mycoprotein, soy, quinoa, and combining grains, pulses, seeds and nuts can provide all of the essential amino acids our bodies require.**

### Love your omega-3s

Oily fish contain DHA that is a primary structural component of the human brain, cell membranes, the central nervous system, the cerebral cortex, skin and the retina and is also a key component of the cardiovascular system. DHA is transferred across the placenta during pregnancy. Infants up to 6 months need DHA so their brains, eyes and nervous systems develop properly.

The benefits of eating omega 3 include keeping your blood pressure at a healthy level and improving blood lipids, both of which reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease, and improving immune function, macular degeneration and combatting inflammatory conditions. Most vegetarian sources only contain ALA that needs to be converted to DHA. **Sources of DHA: salmon, mackerel, fresh tuna, herrings, anchovies, sardines and marine algae (vegetarian). Sources of ALA: flaxseeds, walnuts, green leaf vegetables, milk and eggs.**

### Focus on fibre and complex carbohydrates

Fibre, sometimes called roughage is an important part of our diet. Fibre is the indigestible portion of food that travels through the digestive system virtually intact. While dietary fibre has no nutritional value, it can have a profound impact on health. This includes aiding digestion, the stimulation of microbial (beneficial bacterial) growth, lowering the risk for certain types of cancer, lowering blood cholesterol levels and minimising the complications of diabetes.

Current advice says adults should aim for at least 18g fibre a day, although up to 35g daily would be more beneficial. To increase fibre intake, it is best to do so by changing your diet and not to rely on supplements. Aiming to eat 7 portions of vegetables and fruits, 2 portions of whole grains and 1 portion of pulses per day could help you meet your fibre requirements. **Sources: vegetables, pulses, wholegrains, nuts and fruits.**



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## Get your daily dose of Vitamin D

Vitamin D, also known as the sunshine vitamin, is produced by the body as a response to sun exposure; it can also be consumed in some foods or supplements. It is actually not a vitamin, but a pro-hormone. Having enough vitamin D is vital for a number of reasons, including maintaining healthy bones and teeth; it may also protect against a range of conditions such as cancer, type 1 diabetes and multiple sclerosis.

Vitamin D has multiple roles in the body, helping to: maintain the health of bones and teeth, support the health of the immune system, brain and nervous system, regulate insulin levels and aid diabetes management, support lung function and cardiovascular health and influence the expression of genes involved in cancer development. **Sources: fatty fish (salmon, fresh tuna etc), small amounts are found in beef liver, egg yolks and cheese.**

## Get your 7-a-day for colour and maximum plant nutrition

Fruit and vegetables should be part of a healthy, balanced diet and will help us stay in good health and lower the risk of serious health problems, such as heart disease, stroke and some types of cancer. They are an excellent source of most vitamins, minerals, dietary fibre and plant chemicals.

Most recent research shows that it is over 550g (7 a day) that is needed for optimal health and to protect from ill health. This should be in a ratio of 5 vegetables to 2 fruits, due to the fruit sugars. 80g = decent sized plum without its stone, or a medium apple can be 1.5 portions. **Sources: All fruit and vegetables count towards your 7 A DAY, either from fresh, frozen, or canned (be careful of high sugar and salt levels), dried. Juiced - only counts as one portion regardless of the quantity. Pulses mainly contain great levels of fibre, but only count as one portion whatever the quantity. Potatoes, yams and cassava do not count.**

## Protect with probiotics

Help balance the beneficial bacteria in your digestive system and improve the health of your body. Probiotics help improve digestion, absorption and the assimilation of nutrients, and may support your immune system, reduce the severity of certain allergies and eczema, and improve some mental health conditions.

They also may help support heart health and prevent the reabsorption of cholesterol and lowering blood levels, they may even help you lose weight. Studies have also shown that probiotic foods synthesise vitamins in the gut, such as vitamin K and B12, as a by-product of their metabolism. **Sources: eat more fermented foods like kimchi, sauerkraut, kefir, probiotic yoghurt, miso and tempeh.**

## Cut out sugar

Whilst it may make you feel good, sugar doesn't provide any health benefits and is actually very damaging to the body. It imbalances blood sugar levels, becomes inflammatory and provides a lot of calories.

## Start the day well with a delicious breakfast

The benefits of having a healthy breakfast are immense. It provides the body with essential nutrients, valuable energy and helps to stabilise blood sugar levels. Breakfasts that are savoury and without sugar are better choices, such as porridge with nuts and seeds [no honey], or poached eggs with avocado and wholemeal toast are ideal choices.

## Get enough sleep!

Sleep is an opportunity for your body to repair itself, both physically (e.g. repairing muscles) and psychologically (working through anxiety). When factors such as anxiety or depression interfere with sleep patterns, the natural ability of the body to repair itself becomes disrupted. If sleep is disrupted for an extended period of time it can lead to a number of severe health problems. Try to achieve 8hrs a night. Lavender can aid a good restful sleep.

## Limit alcohol to weekends

Alcohol is fine in moderation, but we often overdo it. The ill-health effects of exceeding the daily limits are staggering. After a long period of drinking (December!) it is a great idea to cut back, keeping to moderate levels of weekend drinking only - you'll be cutting back a lot of calories as well!

**Please note:** This handout should be used as a guide only. It does not provide medical advice and is for informative purpose only. If you think you may need to discuss your way of eating in more detail then please contact a qualified nutritionist.

