

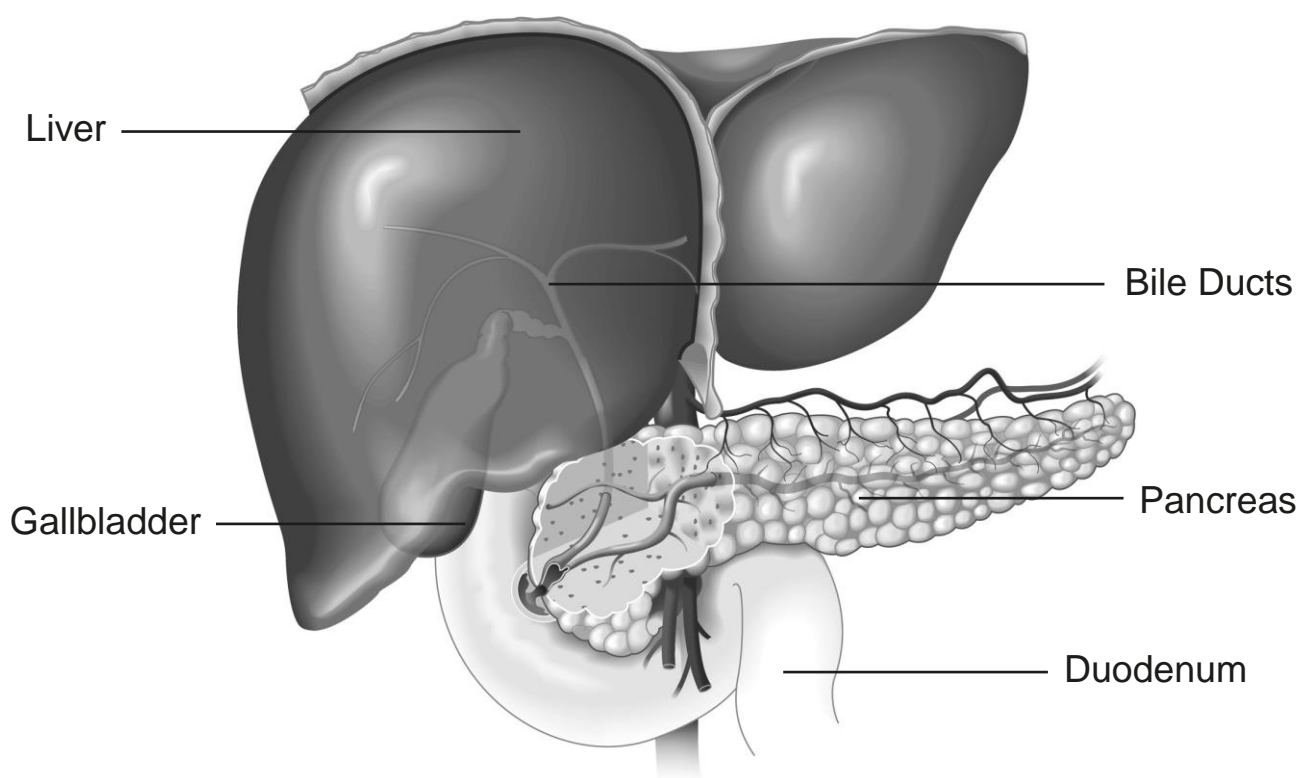
Patient information

Dietary Advice for People with Gallstones

Department of Nutrition and Dietetics

What is the gallbladder?

The gallbladder is a small pouch that sits just under the liver. The gallbladder stores bile which is produced by the liver. Bile is used to help break down and digest fat from the foods we eat. When we eat any foods the gallbladder contracts to squeeze out bile which helps with digestion.

**What are gallstones?**

Gallstones are small stones which can form in the gallbladder. They are usually made from hardened cholesterol or bile, and in most cases they do not cause any symptoms. If a gallstone becomes trapped in an opening (a duct) inside the gallbladder it can cause pain, and may cause inflammation of the gallbladder (called cholecystitis).

What causes gallstones?

Gallstones are thought to develop because of an imbalance in the chemical make-up of bile inside the gallbladder.

You are more at risk of developing gallstones if you are:

- overweight or obese
- female (particularly if you have had children)
- aged 40 or over (the risk increases as you get older).

Should I follow a special diet if I have gallstones?

People are often told to follow a very low fat diet or a fat-free diet if they have gallstones; however, there is very little evidence to suggest that removing any type of food from your diet will improve any symptoms you have, or improve your condition.

Removing the majority of fat or all of the fat from your diet can lead to rapid weight loss which can actually increase the risk of more gallstones forming. Following a very low fat or a fat-free diet will also increase your risk of malnutrition, and you will become deficient in fat-soluble vitamins.

People with gallstones should eat a variety of foods, and make sure they have regular meals and snacks. Following a healthy and balanced diet is recommended for people who have gallstones.

Eatwell Guide

Check the label on packaged foods

Each serving (150g) contains

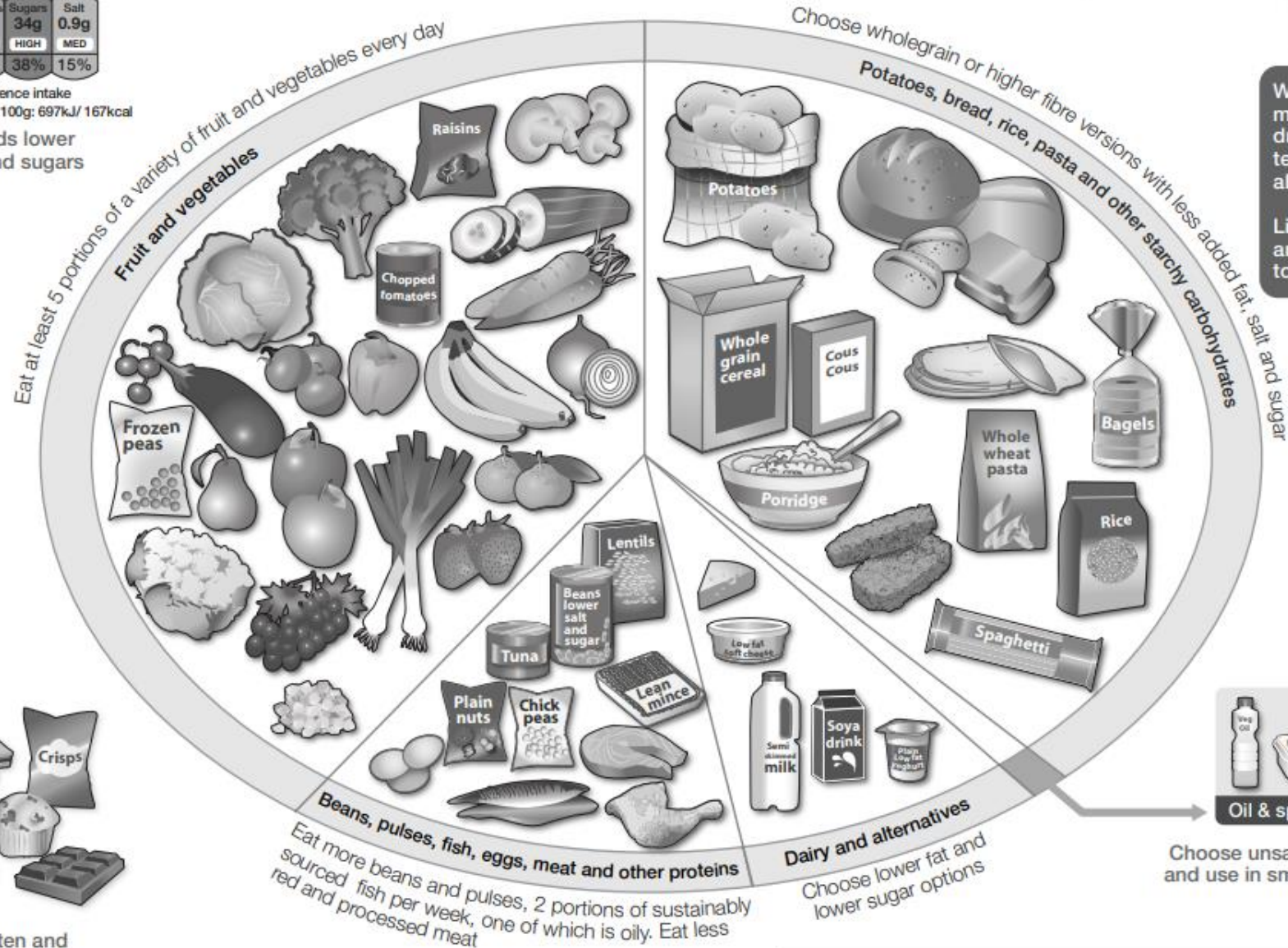
Energy	Fat	Saturated	Sugars	Salt
1046kJ 250kcal	3.0g	1.3g	34g	0.9g
	LOW	LOW	HIGH	MED
13%	4%	7%	38%	15%

of an adult's reference intake

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

Choose foods lower in fat, salt and sugars

Use the 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



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

Limit fruit juice and smoothies to 150ml a day.

Per day 2000kcal 2500kcal = ALL FOOD + ALL DRINKS

The Eatwell Guide

The Eatwell Guide shows how much of what we eat overall should come from each food group to achieve a healthy, balanced diet.

Starchy carbohydrates

- Carbohydrates are a good source of energy and contain a range of nutrients important for a healthy diet.
- Base your meals on potatoes, bread, rice, pasta or other starchy carbohydrates.
- Starchy food should make up about a third of the food we eat.
- Choose higher fibre, wholegrain varieties, such as wholemeal bread, wholewheat pasta or rice, or leave skins on potatoes.

Fruit and vegetables

- Fruit and vegetables are a good source of vitamins, minerals and fibre, and are essential for a healthy diet.
- Fruit and vegetables should make up more than a third of the food we eat each day.
- Aim to eat at least five portions of fruit and veg daily: this can be fresh, tinned, frozen, dried or juiced.
- Juices or smoothies (portion size 150ml) made with fruit and/or vegetables will count for one portion only, even if you have more than one juice or smoothie in the day.

Dairy and dairy alternatives

- Dairy and dairy alternatives are good sources of protein and vitamins. They are also an important source of calcium, which is needed for bone health.
- Milk, cheese, yoghurt and fromage frais are good options.
- Choose lower fat and lower sugar products where possible, like semi-skimmed or skimmed milk, reduced-fat cheese or plain low-fat yoghurt.
- If you choose dairy alternatives, make sure these products are fortified with calcium.

Beans, pulses, eggs, meat and other protein containing foods

- Foods which contain protein are important for building strength, and also contain vitamins and minerals.
- Choose lean cuts of meat and mince, cut off any visible fat, and try to eat red meat and processed meat like bacon, ham and sausages less often.
- Pulses, such as beans (like baked beans) and lentils, are good sources of protein, and are lower in fat and higher in fibre than meat products. Pulses are a good alternative to meat products.
- Eggs are a good source of protein, and can be used as an alternative to meat or pulses. There is no limit on the number of eggs you can eat in a week.

- Aim to eat at least two portions of fish every week, one of which should be an oily fish like salmon or mackerel. Choose fish which is not battered or deep fried.

Fats

- Fats are important as they allow us to absorb our fat-soluble vitamins properly. Fats should be included as part of a healthy diet.
- All types of fat are very high in energy (calories) and should be eaten in small amounts.
- Unsaturated fats are healthier fats. Unsaturated fats include vegetable, rapeseed, olive and sunflower oils or spreads.
- Saturated fats are unhealthier fats, as these fats can affect the amount of cholesterol found in our blood. Saturated fats are found in food products like biscuits, cakes, chocolate, crisps and ice cream. You should limit these types of foods to reduce the amount of saturated fat you eat.

Fluid

- Drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids each day. Aim for at least six to eight glasses per day.
- Water, lower fat milks (semi-skimmed or skimmed), sugar-free drinks (like sugar-free cordial, sugar-free or 'zero' fizzy drinks) and tea and coffee all count as fluids.
- Fruit juice and smoothies do count as fluids, but limit your intake to 150ml per day as they contain free sugars that can damage your teeth.

What if I have symptoms when I eat certain foods?

Some people may experience pain after eating. This pain is caused by eating in general, and can be caused by any foods. This is because the gallbladder contracts (squeezes) when we eat any foods. If you notice that a certain food does cause you some pain, you can try and avoid this food for a short period to see if it helps with the pain. If your symptoms continue you should reintroduce the food and contact your doctor to ask about appropriate pain relief.

It is important you continue to eat regularly and follow a healthy, balanced diet.

How can I reduce the risk of gallstones developing?

Following a healthy and balanced diet is advised. If you are overweight, gradual weight loss may help to reduce your risk of more gallstones developing. Gradual weight loss of 1 – 2 lb (0.5 – 1kg) per week is advised until you reach a healthy weight. Avoid 'crash' diets or 'yo-yo' diets, as these can cause very rapid weight loss which can increase your risk of gallstones developing.

Do I need to change my diet if I have my gallbladder removed (cholecystectomy)?

After a cholecystectomy, you do not need to follow a special diet. Your liver will continue to produce bile that will drip into the bowel continuously rather than being stored in the gallbladder. Eating well is an important part of you recovering well from surgery. Once you have recovered, you should return to eating a healthy, balanced diet.

If you are concerned about your dietary intake, your appetite or your weight, speak with your family doctor (GP) about referral to a registered Dietitian in your area.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

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