Wellbeing in the workplace, thriving business.

Physical activity and healthy eating

Ripple **&Co**

Bolton Council

Introduction

Around a third of adults in England are negatively impacting their health through a lack of physical exercise

Employees who are in good health are less likely to need time off work and are likely to be more productive

The cost of an unhealthy workforce to the UK taxpayer has been estimated at over £60 billion per year

Healthy eating can reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke and some cancers

On average, obesity deprives an individual of an extra 9 years of life

In 2015, 57% of women and 66% of men in England were overweight or obese

Physical activity

Good physical health is closely linked to good mental health. Poor mental health can be a barrier to physical activity, a healthy balanced diet and a healthier weight. At the same time, a lack of physical activity, poor diet and excess weight can contribute to long-term mental health problems as well as physical conditions.

The UK Chief Medical Officer recommends either 150 minutes a week of moderately intense activity (increased breathing, still able to talk), 75 minutes a week of vigorous activity (breathing fast, difficulty talking), or a combination of both.

Adults should also undertake strength exercises on two or more days a week that work all the major muscles (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms).

Sedentary behaviour is a risk factor for poor physical and mental health, independent of people's level of physical activity. Even those who are physically active outside work can be adversely affected by sitting still for several hours during their working day.

Technological advancements in the workplace have made prolonged sitting (e.g. in front of an electronic screen) the norm for many adults' working lives. Prolonged sitting has been linked to premature death, heart disease, certain cancers and Type 2 diabetes.

Shift work too presents challenges as the opportunities for physical activity and participation in sports, and the benefits can be reduced if exercise is taken at unusual times of day and/or if the shift worker is sleep-deprived.

Activity in the workplace

Stand up from the desk every 30 minutes for 2 minutes, or at least every hour for 2 to 4 minutes ✓

Change meetings to standing or walking meetings ✓

Talk to colleagues in person instead of emailing or calling ✓

Use stairs instead of lifts ✓

Walk or cycle to work - ask your company to offer a cycle scheme to leverage financial incentives. It's free to use and easy to administer – Cycle Scheme) ✓

Join or create a lunchtime walking club. Paths for All has created a useful resource to promote workplace walking clubs. ✓

If possible, take screen breaks by walking away from your workstation. Frequent short breaks are better than infrequent long ones. The Health and Safety Executive recommends 5 to 10 minute breaks every hour, rather than 20 minutes every 2 hours. ✓

One You

One You is a social marketing campaign by Public Health England to encourage adults, particularly those in middle age, to take control of their health, supporting them to make simple changes to improve their health. It includes advice around physical activity, healthy eating and weight management, and tips on discouraging sedentary behaviour.

One You provides tools (including free apps), support and encouragement every step of the way, to help improve health and wellbeing.

Better Health - NHS (www.nhs.uk)
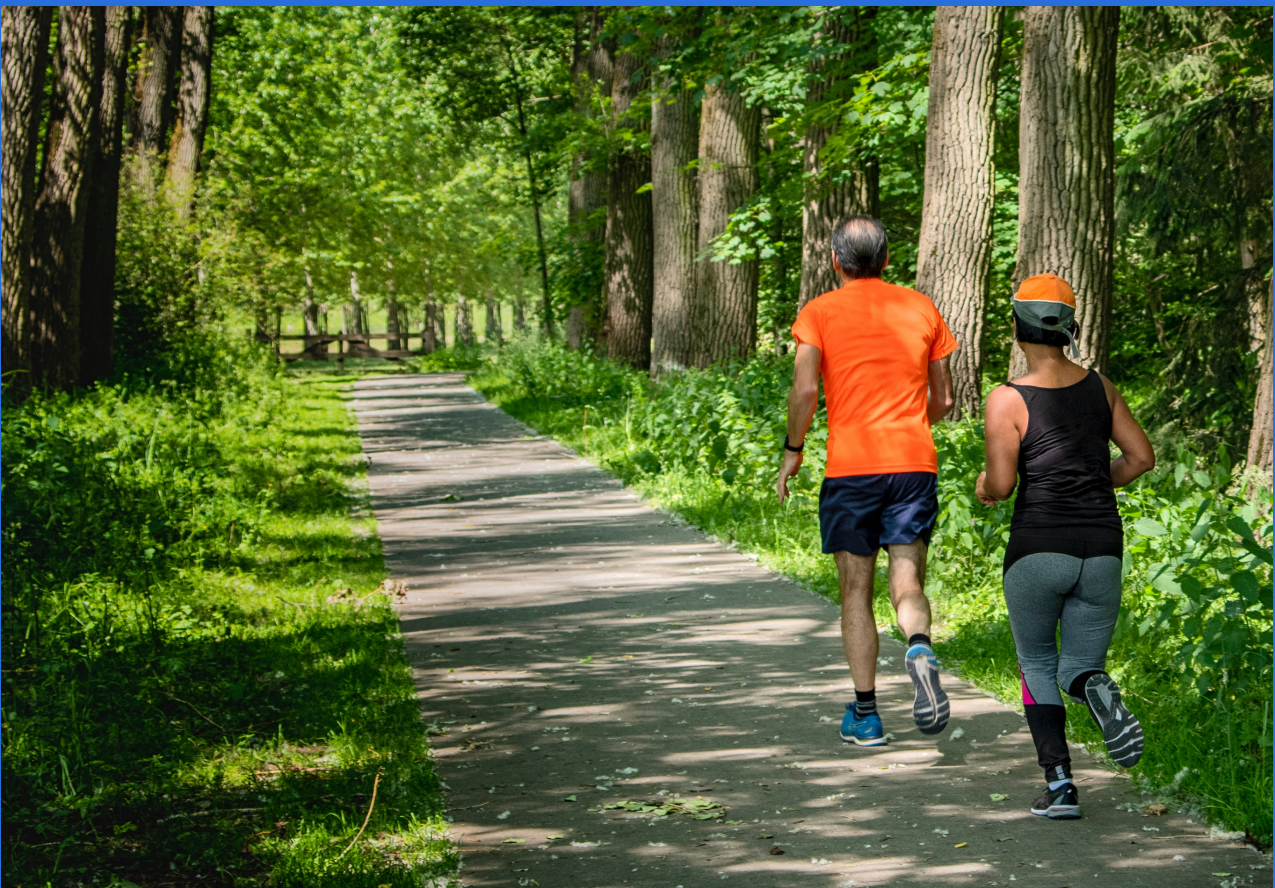
Healthy Eating

A healthy balanced diet is vital to maintaining good health. Diets based on fruit and vegetables and wholegrain starchy carbohydrates have been proven to reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke and some cancers.

A healthy diet provides the nutrients you need to keep everything in your body working smoothly. Recent studies have found a link between bacteria in your gut, your immune system and your brain. Eating a lot of "junk" or processed foods can create bad gut bacteria, generating chemicals that can affect the brain.

Knowing what foods you should and shouldn't be eating can be really confusing, especially when it feels like the advice changes regularly. However, evidence suggests that as well as affecting our physical health, what you eat may also affect the way you feel.

Improving your diet may help to:

Improve your mood

Give you more energy

Help you think more clearly

Looking after your gut

Digestive health is actually key to your immunity, with as many as 70% of our immune cells being housed in your gut wall. Therefore, basic nutrition to support your digestive health is critical for the good functioning of your immune system. The health of your digestive system supports the development of healthy immune cells. It also supports positive mood and emotional well-being. Sometimes your gut can reflect how you are feeling emotionally. Have you ever had that feeling in your stomach when you feel nervous or excited?

This bi-directional relationship is influenced by the gut–brain axis, it links the central nervous system, which houses the brain and spinal cord, with the enteric nervous system and bacteria in the gut. Diet, lifestyle, medications etc can all influence your gut flora – when disrupted this can have affect mood. If you are stressed or anxious it can make the gut slow down or speed up. For healthy digestion we need to have plenty of fibre, fluids and regular exercise.

The Eatwell Guide

The Eatwell Guide shows the proportions in which different types of foods are needed to achieve a healthy, balanced diet. The proportions are representative of food consumption over the period of a day or even a week, not necessarily each mealtime. The guide is available to download on this portal or access by searching:
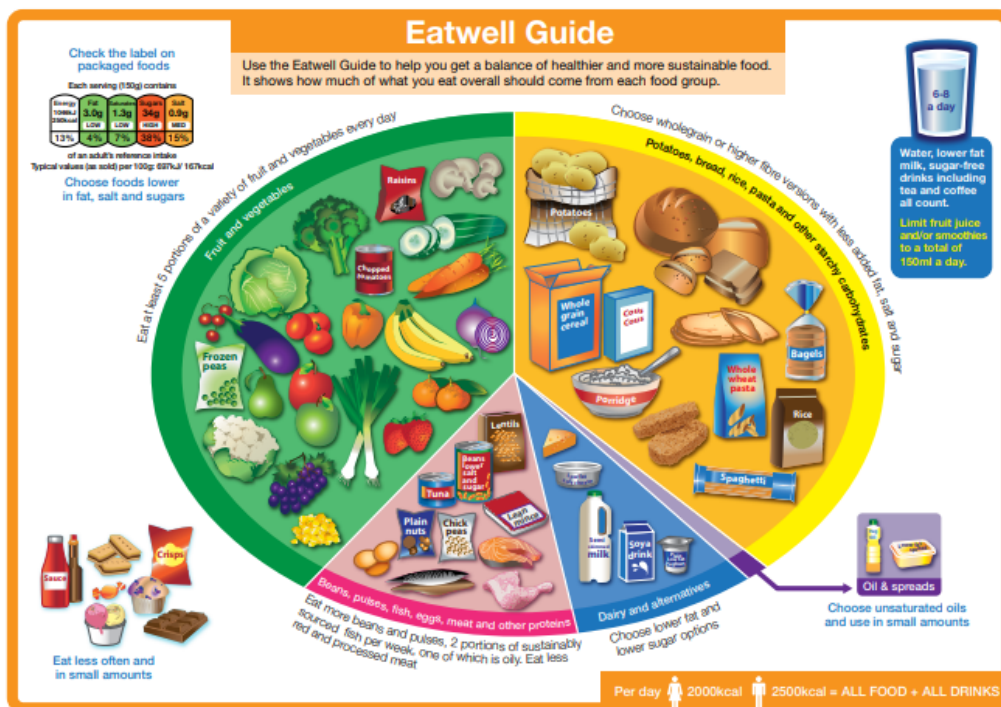
The Eatwell Guide - NHS (www.nhs.uk)

The Eatwell Guide defines government recommendations on achieving a healthy, balanced diet. You should aim to:

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

➡️ Base meals on potatoes, bread, rice, pasta or other starchy carbohydrates; choose wholegrain versions where possible

➡️ Have some dairy or dairy alternatives (such as soya drinks); choosing lower fat and lower sugar options

➡️ Eat some beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins (including 2 portions of fish every week, one of which should be oily)

➡️ Choose unsaturated oils and spreads and eat in small amounts

➡️ Drink 6-8 cups/glasses of fluid a day

If consuming foods and drinks high in fat, salt or sugar, these should be less often and in small amounts

Use these evidence-based recommendations to help guide the choice of food and drink that you provide in the workplace.

Eating healthier food and drink does not necessarily cost more than less healthy options. A recent study concluded that achieving the UK dietary recommendations, as illustrated through the Eatwell Guide, would not lead to significant changes in the cost.

Hydration and drinks

Keeping hydrated is part of a healthy balanced diet, but remember that drinks can also contribute to our calorie intake. The Eatwell Guide offers key advice:

- Aim to drink 6-8 glasses of fluid every day

- Water, lower fat milk and sugar-free drinks including tea and coffee all count towards fluid consumption

- Fruit and vegetable juices and smoothies also count, although they are a source of free sugars (see NHS Choices for more information) so limit consumption to no more than a combined total of 150ml per day and consume at mealtimes to reduce the impact of the sugar on teeth

- Sugary drinks are one of the main contributors to excess sugar consumption. Swap sugary soft drinks for diet, sugar-free or no added sugar varieties to reduce sugar and calorie intake in a simple step .

Healthier weight

Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight is important to support good ongoing health and wellbeing. Excess weight can bring physical, social, emotional and psychosocial problems, which can lead to the onset of preventable long-term illness, stigma, discrimination and reduced life expectancy.

On average, obesity deprives an individual of an extra nine years of life. People with excess weight are at an increased risk of conditions including type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, certain cancers and stroke. Diabetes is five times more prevalent in adults with obesity than those of a healthy weight, while hypertension is twice as common.

People tend not to recognise obesity, especially so in men, and not all of the health risks associated with obesity are understood (e.g. Cancer Research UK estimates that 1 in 20 UK cancers is linked to weight), and people with obesity often face stigma about their weight.

For individuals with excess weight, losing even a small amount of weight and keeping it off can have health benefits – physically and psychologically.

What is a healthy weight?

NHS Choices has an easy-to-use height / weight chart to help individuals work out what is a healthy weight range. You can check it our by going to

www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/bmi-calculator/

BMI stands for body mass index. It is a measure which uses a person's height and weight to work out if their weight is healthy. BMI is calculated by dividing an adult's weight in kilograms by their height in metres squared. For example, a BMI of 25 means 25kg/m2.

For most adults, a healthy BMI is in the 18.5 to 24.9 range. BMI takes into account natural variations in body shape, giving a healthy weight range for a particular height. Muscle is denser than fat, so muscular people may be a healthy weight even if their BMI is above the healthy weight range.

BMI isn't used to definitively diagnose obesity. But for most people, BMI is a useful indication of whether they are a healthy weight, overweight or obese. Another measure of excess fat is waist circumference, which can be used as an additional measure in people who have a BMI of or above 25. Generally, men with a waist circumference of 94cm (37in) or more and women with a waist circumference of 80cm (about 31.5in) or more are more likely to develop obesity-related health problems.

Losing weight can be hard, especially if you're doing this alone. Sometimes it can help to have the support of a group.

Search here to find a support group:

[Find Weight loss support groups services - NHS (www.nhs.uk)](www.nhs.uk)

The NHS also has a free app to support your weight loss programme:

[Lose weight - Better Health - NHS (www.nhs.uk)](www.nhs.uk)