



Chewing the fat ... about fat!



When we talk about 'fat', most people think of fatty foods, like fries and fatty meats. But fat is an essential nutrient. It plays an important role in the many functions that keep the body healthy. For example, it provides us with fatty acids, so that fat can be absorbed by the blood. It also helps to make strong and healthy cell membranes (cell walls), and allows the body to absorb fat-soluble vitamins (vitamins stored in our bodies).

Fruit and vegetables also contain fat, but in tiny amounts, mostly monounsaturated fats or polyunsaturated fats – the healthy kinds. Avocados contain monounsaturated fat, while soybeans have polyunsaturated fat.

Monounsaturated fats are also found in olive and canola oil and some nuts, such as cashews and almonds.

Polyunsaturated fats include omega-3 fats found in oily fish, such as salmon and sardines, and walnuts, canola oil, and soy products.

Other polyunsaturated fats include omega-6 fats found in oil, such as safflower and soybean, and some nuts such as brazil nuts.

To get the most nutrients from the fruit and vegetables we eat, add some healthy fats, which will absorb the vitamins. You can do this by putting olive oil dressing on your salad or by adding an avocado to it.

Fats are macronutrients, which give us energy and help absorb some vitamins. Other macronutrients include proteins and carbohydrates.



Avocados contain healthy fats.



The truth about protein



You probably often get told that you need to eat lots of protein in your diet! That's because protein is an important nutrient that helps your body grow and repair itself, including your hair, nails, skin, and organs like your heart, liver, and kidneys. You consume protein when you eat:

- ✓ meat, chicken, fish
- ✓ eggs
- ✓ nuts and seeds
- ✓ dried beans and lentils
- ✓ dairy products such as milk, yoghurt, and cheese
- ✓ soy products.

Proteins are made up of amino acids that are essential for healthy cells. Your body can make some of the amino acids you

need, but there are nine that you must include in your diet. These are called essential amino acids.

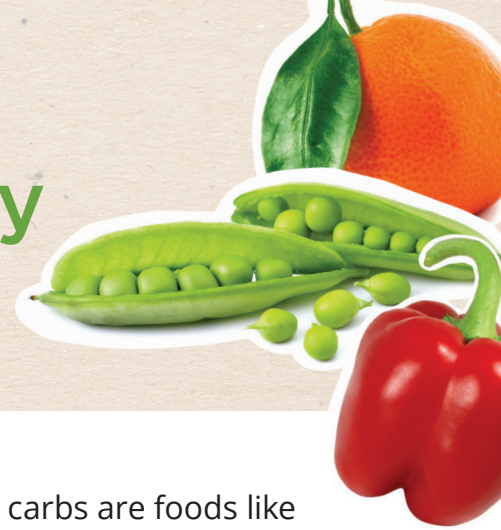
Protein from animal sources, such as meat and milk, is called complete protein, because it contains all nine essential amino acids. Most vegetable protein is considered incomplete because it lacks one or more of the essential amino acids. However, peas, beans, and lentils are all sources of protein.

Like fats and carbohydrates, protein is a macronutrient that gives us energy. The amount of protein you need to eat depends on your age, but teenagers especially need protein because their bodies are still growing.





Carbs for energy



For most people, available carbohydrates, which our bodies can absorb and easily use, are the main source of energy in their diet. You need energy to get through your day at school, whether you're solving a maths problem or playing basketball in PE. A lunch of whole-grain sandwiches or pasta and vegetables, plus an apple or a banana will give you energy to keep going during the day.

Like protein, which is made of amino acids, carbohydrates are made up of building blocks of sugars. There are two types of carbohydrate: simple and complex. Simple carbohydrates are sugars like glucose, fructose (the sugar in fruit), and lactose (the natural sugar in milk), which all our cells, including those in our brain, need to fuel us through

the day. Complex carbs are foods like starchy vegetables (potatoes, corn, and pumpkin); food made from grains (cereal, rice, pasta, and whole-grain breads); legumes like beans, lentils, and chickpeas; and leafy green vegetables.

Dietary fibre is also a carbohydrate that is found in fruit and vegetables, whole grain foods, legumes, nuts, and seeds. Unlike sugars and starch, dietary fibre is not readily available for our body to use as a source of energy. However, dietary fibre plays an important role in keeping our gut healthy and may help prevent heart disease.

Like protein and fats, available carbohydrates are macronutrients that give us energy.





Vital vitamins



We all know that vitamins are good for us, but which ones do we really need? And what's the best way to get them? Vitamins are micronutrients that are only needed in small amounts and help our bodies to work well. Our bodies can't make them, which is why it's vital to eat food that is rich in vitamins.

There are two types of vitamin: water soluble vitamins (C and B group) and fat soluble vitamins (A, D, E, and K). Our bodies don't store water soluble vitamins – we get rid of them through our urine – so we need regular, small doses of them. Fat soluble vitamins are stored in our body and stay there for a long time.

Vitamins have different functions. You've probably been told that to avoid getting a cold or to fight one off you need to eat fruit high in vitamin C, like citrus fruit or kiwifruit. Strictly this isn't true. Vitamin C can't cure a cold but it can help you fight an infection, as well as helping to heal wounds and cuts and maintain healthy teeth and gums.

Vitamins can be destroyed by heat and light, such as when food is processed, cooked, and stored. Water-soluble vitamins deteriorate more during cooking and processing than fat soluble vitamins.



Vitamin C is found in fruit like oranges, lemons, and kiwifruit.



Mighty minerals



Like vitamins, minerals help you grow and stay healthy. They are micronutrients and are only needed in small amounts.

Calcium, iodine, iron, sodium, zinc, phosphorus, and other minerals play a vital role in the different ways our bodies work.

Calcium and iron are important minerals for teenagers. While you're still growing, you need calcium to build healthy, strong bones. You can get calcium in milk, yoghurt, and cheese, canned salmon and sardines, almonds and hazelnuts, and beans and legumes.

Foods rich in iron are also important for teenagers, especially girls who

lose iron during their periods. If you don't have enough iron you might feel tired and not have much energy.

The best sources of iron are lean meat, chicken, and fish, eggs, nuts, baked beans and lentils, wholegrain bread, and vegetables like broad beans, peas, and spinach. Eating foods rich in vitamin C also helps your body to absorb iron.

During cooking or processing, the structure of a mineral doesn't change, but when vegetables are chopped and boiled the minerals they contain can be lost.

