

NUTRITION

FOR SUBSTANCE USERS

A STEP BY STEP WORKBOOK FOR PEOPLE USING
ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

Welcome!

This workbook aims to help people who use alcohol or drugs to think about the importance of eating well and find ways to achieve a more balanced diet. If you use alcohol or drugs, please read on.

This workbook is for people who are ready to think about changing how they eat to help improve their health or wellbeing.

Some people may need more specialised dietary advice from a dietitian e.g.:

people with symptoms of liver disease;

people who have lost weight over a few months (e.g. 3–6 months) without meaning to;

those who have difficulty with eating; or

those needing dietary advice for a medical condition such as diabetes.



If you fall into any of these categories you should discuss with your GP who may refer you to a dietitian.

This book is designed so you can use it by yourself or with someone's help, maybe a healthcare worker, support worker or a family member. If you would like help and support using this workbook why not ask someone like this?

Let's get started >>

terms used in this book

We know that words and phrases can mean one thing to one person, and another to someone else. Below are some of the main terms we use in this book, and what we mean by them.

Substance use

Substance use is the taking of drugs, alcohol, prescription or over-the-counter medications to get a change in how we think, feel or perceive things. Not all substance use is risky, causes problems or leads to a dependence - but some does.

Diet

Diet is the combination of foods and drinks which we eat. Special diets are those used to treat a medical condition like diabetes or raised cholesterol.

Nutrition

Nutrition is about the food we eat, what we get from it (vitamins, minerals etc) and how it affects the body. Good nutrition helps keep us healthy and can help prevent disease. We can become malnourished if we eat foods in the wrong proportions or if they are not properly used by the body.



the importance of nutrition

Regular and heavy substance use can lead to the body not getting enough food (or not enough of the right types of foods) to help us keep our bodies and minds well. Substance use combined with poor eating habits can lead to a range of **health problems**, or make them worse.

Not everyone who eats poorly uses substances and not everyone who uses substances eats poorly. However, many people who use substances regularly have a **poor diet**, especially those who have problems with substance use or are dependent on them.

Why should you read this?

Some people do not want to stop or reduce their use of substances, others do. If you would like to stop or reduce your use, a useful place to start is to talk to your GP who could recommend help if you need it. Whether you choose to stop, reduce or keep using, we want you to consider eating a more balanced diet. This approach to helping you, is known as **harm reduction**, and could improve your health and reduce some risks at the same time.

Even small changes in eating habits can be very helpful, but the more the better!

Substance use and nutrition

Drinking a lot of alcohol or using substances can have an effect on how you eat.

Look at these statements. Tick any that are relevant to you:

I miss meals because time is spent getting money for, finding, using or coming off substances

Tick

I forget to eat when using or intoxicated

I don't have money to eat regularly because it has been spent on substances

I cannot safely prepare meals due to intoxication

I have a reduced appetite or feel too sick to eat

I have a bigger appetite for less healthy foods depending on the substance(s) used

I am not very interested in what I eat really. Food isn't a priority.

Now, look at these & tick any that are relevant to you:

When I don't eat well, it can have an effect on my ability to:

Tick

stay healthy and feel and look my best.

repair damage to my body (cuts/bruises) and fight infections.

achieve and keep good mental health.

have energy to do normal activities and be physically active.

maintain a healthy weight.

Today's date:

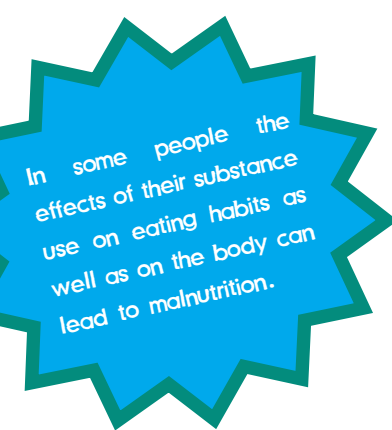
On a scale of 1 to 10 how important is eating a balanced diet for you right now?

1 = not at all important

10 = very important



1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Can you think of a time or times when your substance use has affected your eating e.g. stopped you eating properly or interfered with you eating a meal at the usual time?

1.
2.
3.
4.



factors affecting food choices

Some things that can help improve your chances of **eating well** are:

keeping money aside to buy food;

being willing and able to prepare and cook food for yourself;

having the right things to prepare and cook food such as a cooker, microwave, fridge and utensils;

being willing to try new foods; and

getting good information about food choices

What would help **YOU** to improve **YOUR** food choices?

1.

2.

3.

potential benefits of improved nutrition

Eating regular meals and a wide variety of foods helps keep our bodies well, healthy and helps us feel good.

Eating and drinking the right things helps us keep well now but it also helps prevent illnesses like heart disease and certain cancers. A good diet can also prevent tooth decay.

As well as keeping your body healthy, regularly eating a good variety of nourishing foods can help your mood and concentration and could help you cope better with different situations you face.

The **eatwell plate** shows us that we need a wide variety of foods from each of the food groups and in the right proportions. Aim to eat more from the bigger groups and less from the smaller groups.

Do you think you have the balance right at the moment?

Look at the picture of the eatwell plate. Identify 2 or 3 foods from each group which you enjoy eating.

eatwell plate 

The eatwell plate

Use the eatwell plate to help you get the balance right. It shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group.



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Department of Health in association with the Welsh Government, the Scottish Government, and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

What do I eat?

Let's take a closer look at what you are eating and drinking at the moment to see what can be improved.

Writing down or recalling foods that you eat and drink over a couple of days can help you see patterns in your eating habits and help identify things you might like to change.

Complete the food diary below for **2 days**.

- Try to **remember everything** you ate and drank, including snacks, tea, coffee etc.
- Writing it down as you go along is best if you can.
- If you **didn't eat** - you skipped a meal, forgot to eat or didn't feel like eating - write that down too.
- Ask someone close to you to **help** if you have difficulty remembering.

your food diary

Day 1

Day 2

Morning

afternoon

Evening

	Day 1	Day 2
Morning		
afternoon		
Evening		



What do I eat?

The following questions may now help you decide what areas you could improve:

(have a look at these questions, and answer 'yes' or 'no'):

	yes	no
Did you eat regular meals and not skip meals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you eat food from each of the food groups each day or every couple of days?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you eat plenty of fruit and vegetables?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you eat plenty of starchy foods like bread, pasta or potatoes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you go easy on high fat foods and limit the amount of high sugar foods or drinks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you answered mostly 'yes' well done! If most of your answers were 'no' you probably have room for making some improvements. Small but gradual changes in how you eat can help you.

Want to **improve** your eating? **Read on....**

What should I aim for?



Eat **regular** meals!

Eat a **wide variety** of foods from the 4 main food groups.

The fab four

1. Starchy foods, like bread, rice, potatoes, pasta.
2. Fruit & vegetables.
3. Milk and dairy foods.
4. Meat, fish, eggs, beans etc.

There are examples on the next page.

Eat **small amounts** of foods and drinks high in **fat and/or sugar**.

Drink **enough fluids** throughout the day to keep hydrated.

Aim for 6-8 glasses (1.2 litres) of fluid a day. Water, tea, coffee and fruit juice all count.

Usually water is the best drink but if you are dehydrated isotonic drinks may be useful.

The four main food groups

1. Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods

e.g. oats or porridge, cereals, noodles etc.

Eat **plenty** of these energy foods.

Choose **wholegrains** e.g. wholegrain cereals, wholemeal or wheaten bread, porridge, brown rice or pasta.

2. Fruit & vegetables: fresh, frozen, tinned, dried & juices.

Good for fibre, vitamins and minerals. Try to eat at least **5 portions** a day - try to have a **variety** of types.

1 portion =



Juice. A small glassful is 1 of your 5 a day. Having extra amounts won't count towards your 5 a day.



3. Milk and dairy foods e.g. milk, cheese, yogurt, milky puddings.

Important for bone health. They contain calcium, protein, vitamins and minerals.

Eat **moderate** amounts of these foods.

If you are not eating well or would like to put on weight
choose full fat options (e.g. whole milk).

4. Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein.

Some of these can also be good sources of iron.

Include **moderate** amounts each day.

Try to include **lean red meat** a few times a week.

Aim to eat at least **2 portions of fish** each week - one should be oily (sardines, salmon, mackerel, etc).

Pulses (beans, peas or lentils) can be used with or instead of meat, e.g. bean stew or lentil soup.

Foods & drinks high in fat/sugar

Most people who are in good health should eat **small amounts** of these only.

Use rapeseed, olive, corn or sunflower oil or spreads made from these oils.

If you do choose sugary foods and drinks try to have them at the end of **mealtimes** rather than throughout the day. Taking sugary foods/drinks frequently can cause tooth decay.

If you crave for high fat/sugar foods after you use certain substances try to **limit the amount** you eat. This craving can happen when false messages are sent to your brain when under the influence, making your body want certain foods. A good example of this is getting the 'munchies' after using cannabis.

Make choices about the food you will eat before starting using substances so that these better options are nearest to you when you start to feel hungry.

Look at the list of snack options on page 27 for ideas.

Salt

Most people eat too much salt. Salt is directly linked to high blood pressure which increases the risk of stroke.

Many foods we eat already contain salt.

Try to cut down on the amount of salt you add to foods and the amount of salty foods you eat, especially if you have **high blood pressure**.

Raised blood pressure is more common in people who drink alcohol above the recommended guidelines; 3-4 units for men and 2-3 units for women daily.

Stimulant drugs also increase blood pressure at the time of use.



Water and drinks

It's important to drink enough fluids throughout the day to keep you hydrated.

Aim for **6-8 glasses (1.2 litres)** of fluid a day. Water, tea, coffee and fruit juice all count.

If you are **dehydrated** you can feel unwell and it can be hard to concentrate. Some drugs, especially alcohol can cause dehydration so if you have been drinking make sure you **replace any fluids** lost by drinking more non-alcoholic drinks.

If using stimulants and exercising or dancing you can also become dehydrated; it is important to take liquids to replace those lost through sweating. **Don't drink too much** liquid as this can be dangerous. Sipping about a pint of water per hour is best.

Usually water is the best drink but if you are dehydrated **isotonic drinks** ('sports' drinks) may be useful. Very dilute squash or fruit juice well diluted with water and a pinch of salt is a useful home-made **alternative**.

**Ready for a change? Then
read on >>**

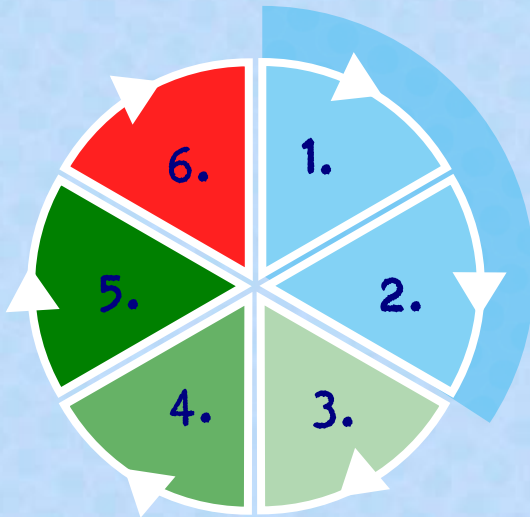
Time for change?

So far you have looked at what you eat and what prevents you from eating better. If you are now thinking of making a change in your eating behaviour it is useful to understand how people change.

Change happens in stages.

It is not easy but you can do it if you decide to and believe that you can.

Stages of change



1. Pre-contemplation

'I'm ok with how I eat at present'

2. Contemplation

'I'm thinking about changing but haven't done it yet'

3. Preparation

'I've made a decision, I've made a plan and I'm committed to change'

4. Action

'I've started the change(s). I'm working hard at it'

5. Maintenance

'I've reached my goal and I'm sticking to it'

6. Relapse

'I've slipped back to where I was'

What stage are you at? >>

What stage of change am I at?

My self-assessment of where I am with change:

a. What stage am I at now? 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.

the stages

1. Pre-contemplation
2. Contemplation
3. Preparation
4. Action
5. Maintenance
6. Relapse

b. Why do I think I'm at this stage?

1.
2.
3.

c. What's my next step?

What can I do to move forward?

1. Pre-contemplation

'I'm ok with how I eat at present'

Increase my awareness of the benefits of eating a more balanced diet by reading pages 3-10 again.

Talk to a healthcare professional like my GP or someone I trust about my food choices. Show this workbook to them.

What can I do to move forward?

2. Contemplation

'I'm thinking about changing but haven't done it yet'

Identify my reasons for changing.
Think about reasons my health is important to me e.g. what do I want to be able to do with my life, my time?

Talk to someone about my fears of not changing my diet.

Build my belief that I can do it if I want to.

3. Preparation

'I've made a decision, I've made a plan and I'm committed to change'

Think how I can make the change(s) happen.

Make a plan.

Tell someone my plan.

Get support.

4. Action

'I've started the change(s). I'm working hard at it'

Take small steps.

See the benefits in front of me.

Develop my eating routines.

Start finding pleasure in eating and related activities.

Learn how to prevent relapse.

5. Maintenance

'I've reached my goal and I'm sticking to it'

Get myself back on track with my eating.

Think about why it happened and learn from it.

It is not all wasted time and effort.

Build my confidence again.

Get more support.

6. Relapse

'I've slipped back to where I was'



This section helps you decide what change(s) you want to make. It's easier to make a decision if you know the pros and cons about it, so that you can make the right decision for you.

Making a decision

Fill in the exercise below to help you see the thinking behind your decisions written down:

Today's date:

a. Why I am thinking of changing the way I eat:

.....

.....

.....

b. Next, make a list of pros and cons for changing how you eat and for not changing. Make as many as you need. List these in the table on the next page.

c. When you're happy with your list, give a score to each item you have put in, using this scoring key.

Scoring key

1 = slightly important

2 = quite important

3 = very important

4 = extremely important



Pros (score)

Cons (score)

Change

•	<input type="checkbox"/>	•	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	<input type="checkbox"/>	•	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	<input type="checkbox"/>	•	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	<input type="checkbox"/>	•	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	<input type="checkbox"/>	•	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	<input type="checkbox"/>	•	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	<input type="checkbox"/>	•	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	<input type="checkbox"/>	•	<input type="checkbox"/>

**No
change**

•	<input type="checkbox"/>	•	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	<input type="checkbox"/>	•	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	<input type="checkbox"/>	•	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	<input type="checkbox"/>	•	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	<input type="checkbox"/>	•	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	<input type="checkbox"/>	•	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	<input type="checkbox"/>	•	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	<input type="checkbox"/>	•	<input type="checkbox"/>

1 = slightly important
2 = quite important
3 = very important
4 = extremely important

d. Add up your scores for the 'pros' (of change and no change) and for the 'Cons' (again, for change and no change). Write them here:

'Pros' Score	'Cons' Score

If your 'Pros' score is more than your 'Cons' score you are nearly ready to decide to make some changes. **Congratulations!**

Ready for change?

For change to happen you need to feel that it is **important** and have **confidence in yourself** that you can do it. One without the other does not work so well.

Readiness Ruler

- a. Using the scale below, tick a box (1-10) for how **important** is it for you to change your eating behaviour?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1 = not very important ↔ 10 = very important

Why did you not pick the number before this one? E.g. if you ticked 8, why not 7?

.....

.....

- b. Using the scale below, tick a box (1-10) for how **confident** you are that you can change your eating behaviour?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1 = not very confident ↔ 10 = very confident

Why did you not pick the number before this one? E.g. if you ticked 8, why not 7?

.....

.....

Setting goals for myself

Now that you know that you are thinking of changing your eating, it is helpful to use **SMART** targets to help you make it happen. Here are two examples of **SMART** and **non-SMART** targets to guide you.



S Specific
M Measurable
A Achievable
R Realistic
T Time-bound

SMART

I want to cut down my takeaways from 4 times a week to twice a week for the next month.

I want to eat a bar of chocolate no more than 3 times this week.

Non SMART

I want to eat healthily

I want to eat less chocolate

Using SMART targets is more likely to work. The key is to be **realistic** and take **small steps**. Remember, be specific and **choose steps** that you can achieve.

From your food diary on page 9 choose an aspect of your eating or a meal you could improve and would like to change.

Fill in the exercise on the next page - set one or more SMART targets for yourself. This will make it easier for you to see what you are aiming for and to reach your goal. Start off small and build on small changes first.

What will I do?

How will I know if
I have achieved it?

What is my
timescale?

Preparing for change:

How will I achieve it?

This section aims to help you to get prepared for the change(s) you are going to make. To be successful you may need to take some action, even before you start the change; this can be getting things you need, getting support from others, learning some new skills or budgeting for particular things. **Remember the 5 P's.**

The 5 'P's
Proper
Planning
Prevents
Poor
Performance!

Here are some things which might be useful to consider:

Having appropriate foods in stock, ready for the change

Having the right equipment to prepare and cook these foods.

Budgeting to ensure you have enough money for the foods you want to eat.

Making a shopping list of the foods you are going to eat.

Attend a cookery course.

Get an alarm clock so you can be up in time to eat breakfast.

Get accurate information about food labelling to help you choose healthier options.

Get support from someone else. Together you could plan a shopping list, go shopping or prepare food and cook together.

Any others?

1.

2.

3.

Benefits of improved nutrition

You are ready to use this section now if you have made the change(s) you decided on. Fill in the table below after 1 week, 2 weeks and 4 weeks:

	date:	benefits of the changes I've made
1 week		
2 weeks		
4 weeks		



Make your meals more balanced

We hope that you have got benefits from the changes you've made. Here are some examples of how you can begin to build on what you eat to make it more nourishing and to include a better variety of foods.

If you eat >>

Cheese and Ham toastie.

Chips and gravy.

Chicken Soup and roll.

Fried egg soda.

Bacon buttie.

Burger in a bap.

Try instead >>

Add tomato or salad. Try wholemeal/wheaten bread.

Fish and chips with peas and a glass of milk.

Add some frozen veg or try vegetable soup. Fill the roll (cheese / meat). Have a piece of fruit too.

Use wheaten. Add beans or mushrooms.

Try BLT. Use wholemeal bread /wheaten.

Add salad and orange or apple juice.

Look at the list of snacks on the next page. Tick the snacks you eat and the **alternatives** you might be willing to try instead.

time to look at snacks >>



snacks

Snacks >>

Packet of crisps.

Chocolate bar /
chocolate biscuits.

Sweets.

Sugary fizzy drinks.

Buns or cake.

Try instead >>

Toast + peanut butter & banana or
tomato.

Pasta or rice salad pot.

Cereal/porridge + fruit.

Digestive* or oat biscuits*.

Fresh or tinned fruit.

Yogurt* or dried fruit* and nuts.

Milk, water, or milky drink (milky
coffee, milkshake* or smoothie*).

Crackers/oatcake + Cheese/hummous.

Scones or pancakes.

Custard and fruit crumble*.

* these foods can be high in sugar, so try to eat them less often. Someone who needs to put on weight or who is malnourished may need to eat them more regularly.

Build-a-meal

Think of a meal you eat that you'd like to improve. Write down the meal in **BOX A**. Think of some changes you could make to make it more balanced. Write these down in **BOX B**.

Box A

A meal I like

Box B

Changes to the meal

--	--

And finally...

Now that you have started to make positive changes, continue to build on these by making others in the same way!

Why not plan a healthy reward for yourself if you can, such as buying something you have wanted or a trip out somewhere. This can make you feel that your effort has been worthwhile.

A brief but important word about **relapse** though: remember that relapse is **normal** when changing any behaviour, including your eating. Most people go back to their previous pattern of behaviour from time to time before the change in these habits becomes more permanent.

In fact some people seem to need to learn from their relapse experience before change is long lasting. If this happens to you **do not be hard on yourself** (it definitely doesn't help), but do pick up where you left off as soon as possible. Re-reading the change section of this workbook may help if this happens.

**need more info or support?
check out these links >>**

Links and resources

Public Health Agency:
food information and recipes.

www.enjoyhealthyeating.info/

NI Direct: 'Eat well'. Find out about how you can have a balanced diet.

<http://tinyurl.com/7u4qyxu>

Belfast HSC Trust: healthy diet & lifestyle information.

www.belfasttrust.hscni.net/livewell/GoodFood.htm

British Dental Health Foundation:
with a wide range of leaflets on oral health matters.

www.dentalhealth.org/tell-me-about

CRIS library (eastern area) for information, leaflets and resources on a range of health topics.

www.eahealthpro.org/IRC/LeafletsandPosters.asp; Tel: 02890 565 862

Cook it! programme

A practical cooking and nutrition programme suitable for adults, usually delivered as 6 weekly sessions. Contact Belfast or South Eastern Trust Community Nutrition and Dietetic Service (details below).

Dig it and eat it!

Helps develop community based food gardens. Training is given on how to grow your own produce, and nutrition information is provided by a community dietitian. For more information contact: Conservation Volunteers Northern Ireland, Tel: 028 9064 5169

Community nutrition and Dietetic Service, Belfast Trust. For advice on nutrition and dietary issues.

Knockbreda Centre, Belfast, BT8 6GR.
Tel: 028 9063 1790

Belfast HSC Trust nutrition and dietetics information.

www.belfasttrust.hscni.net/services/Nutrition-Dietetics%20.htm

Community Nutrition and Dietetic Service, South Eastern Trust.

Lagan Valley Hospital, Lisburn, BT28 1JP. Tel: 028 9041 1792

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