



Comhairle Uladh

Sláinte is Táinte

HEALTH IS WEALTH

*Moving Members Towards a Healthier Future*



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# FOREWORD



**Mairtin Mac Aibhne**  
Uachtarán Comhairle Uladh C.L.G.

The Ulster Council GAA is delighted to support this booklet, the third in a series to promote Health and Wellness among its members.

This book compliments other recent Ulster GAA health and wellness publications such as the schools Healthy Hamper, ASAP Brochure and Heads Up Mental Health Resource.

Modern society has become increasingly inactive and levels of overweight and obesity are on the increase. Through this initiative it is hoped that people will address their lifestyle choices, resulting in better overall health.

I would like to thank our Community Development, Strategy and Public Affairs Department who developed this resource. I hope you will find it useful in achieving a balanced approach to healthy living.



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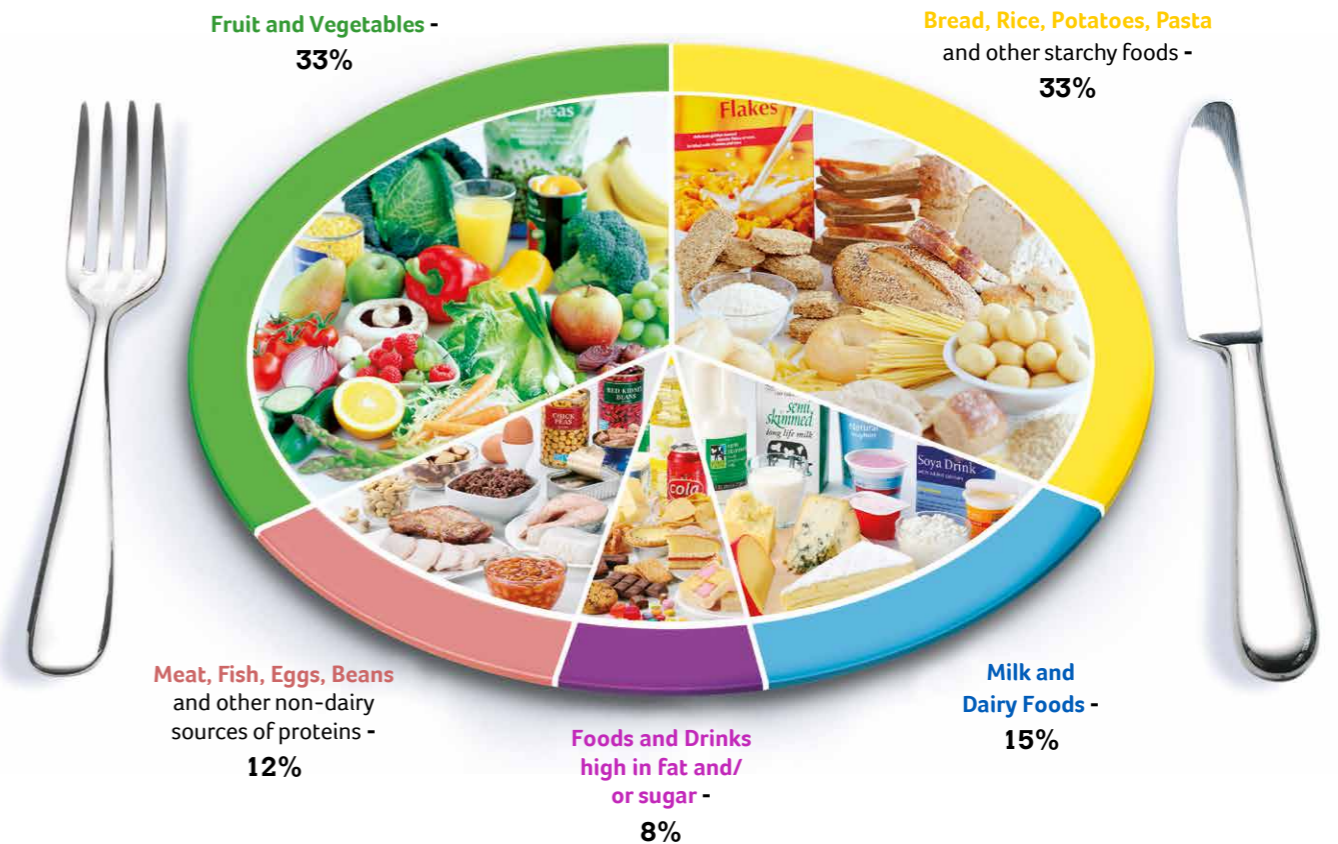
Ulster GAA would like to thank the Public Health Agency who have quality assured the content contained in this booklet.

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## The Eatwell Plate



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# NUTRITION

Ever heard the saying 'you are what you eat'? Our diet plays a crucial role in determining the state of our health, and it is widely recognised that poor diet is a contributing factor to conditions such as obesity, coronary heart disease, high blood pressure and high cholesterol, diabetes and dental decay. Some of the advice in this section is taken from Food Standards Agency literature and their website.

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/information-and-services/health-and-well-being/eatwell](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/information-and-services/health-and-well-being/eatwell)

## WHAT IS HEALTHY EATING?

The eat well plate shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group. This includes everything you eat during the day, including snacks.

Look at the eatwell plate to see how much of your food should come from each food group. You don't need to get the balance right at every meal. But try to get it right over time such as a whole day or week. Try to choose options that are lower in fat, salt and sugar when you can.

## HEALTHY EATING TIPS

The key to a healthy diet is to eat a variety of foods in the correct quantities. Most of us know this already so the following tips are designed to help you along your way to making healthy choices.

- Base your meals on starchy foods
- Eat lots of fruit and vegetables
- Eat more fish - including a portion of oily fish each week
- Cut down on saturated fat and sugar
- Try to eat less salt - no more than 6g a day for adults
- Get active and try to be a healthy weight
- Drink plenty of water
- Don't skip breakfast

**And remember to enjoy your food!**

## FRUIT AND VEG

Fruit and vegetables are really important for a healthy life. Here's some of the reasons why....

- ✓ They're full of vitamins and minerals
- ✓ They'll help you maintain a healthy weight
- ✓ They help reduce the risk of heart disease, strokes and some cancers
- ✓ They're a great source of fibre
- ✓ They taste delicious

As can be seen from the food plate above, fruit and vegetables should make up about a third of the food we eat each day. You can have them fresh, dried, tinned, frozen or juiced.



We should aim to eat **5 portions of a variety of fruit and veg each day**. One portion is 80g; some examples are below.



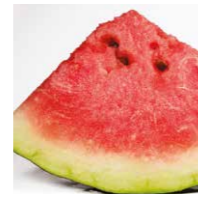
1 piece of large fruit - apple, orange, pear etc



Approximately 7 strawberries



1 cereal bowl of salad



1-2 inch slice of melon



3 tablespoons of tinned, fresh or frozen veg, beans or peas



1 glass of freshly squeezed 100% fruit juice. (Due to a high fructose content, people should refrain from drinking more than 150ml a day)

## HELPING YOU GET YOUR DAILY INTAKE...it could be easier than you think!

Visit [www.nhs.uk/livewell/5aday/pages/5adayhome.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/5aday/pages/5adayhome.aspx) for tips which could help you reach the target....

### Breakfast

- Have a glass of unsweetened fruit juice (approx 150ml)
- Add fruit to a yoghurt
- Put some banana on your toast
- Add fruit to your cereal or porridge

### Lunch

- Have a side salad
- Have some fruit as a snack
- Put tomatoes, lettuce & cucumber in your sandwiches
- Eat fruit salad

### Dinner

- Add vegetables to your pasta, stir fries or soups
- Serve two types of vegetables with your meal
- Add vegetables to your curry



Children should also eat at least five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables a day. As a rough guide, one portion is the amount they can fit in the palm of their hand.

## BREAD, RICE, POTATOES, PASTA AND OTHER STARCHY FOODS

These starchy foods are important and an excellent source of energy. They contain a lot of fibre and B vitamins and are low in fat. Examples of starchy foods are shown below, but what's so good about them?



✓ Good source of energy



✓ Major source of nutrients



✓ Contain fibre, iron and calcium



When we are choosing starchy foods, it is recommended that we go for **wholegrain** varieties. This is because they contain more **fibre** and other nutrients than the white versions, and because they are digested more slowly they make us feel fuller for longer. Fibre has other health benefits which include preventing constipation, protecting against some cancers; e.g. bowel cancer and reducing the risk of developing heart disease. Wholegrain foods include brown rice, high fibre cereals and wholegrain/wholemeal breads. Fruit and vegetables are also a good source of fibre.

## ARE STARCHY FOODS FATTENING?

Recent publicity has led to concerns as to whether starchy foods are fattening. Starchy foods contain **less than half** the calories of fat and are an excellent food choice as part of a balanced diet. As previously stated, wholegrain varieties of starchy foods leave you feeling fuller for longer, and so you are less likely to nibble on fatty snacks between meals. Often it is the fats used in cooking, the sauces served with, or the spreads used to cover, the starchy foods which cause people to put on weight.

Watch your portion size. Studies have shown our portion sizes are getting larger, possibly contributing to overweight and obesity. Remember children should not be eating portions the same as adults.

'No' Carbohydrate diets can be very damaging to health as people could be missing out on a range of important nutrients. If you think you have an intolerance to wheat it is best to consult your doctor before cutting any type of food out of your diet.



If you feel you need to increase the amount of starchy foods in your diet but are concerned about it affecting your weight, here are some helpful tips:

- ✓ Porridge makes an excellent breakfast choice, add fruit to sweeten
- ✓ Enjoy pasta but have a little less sauce
- ✓ Switch to a wholegrain cereal
- ✓ Granary or seeded breads are a tasty and filling alternative to white, refined breads
- ✓ Add rice or pasta to your salads, or make a rice salad with peppers, sweet corn and beans
- ✓ Aim to eat fruit/vegetables with your carbohydrate in order to increase taste and nutritional value.

## MEAT, FISH, EGGS AND BEANS

Foods from this group are good sources of protein, vitamins and minerals. Protein helps the body build and repair cells, and we need to eat small amounts everyday. Not only are these foods rich in protein they also supply many nutrients including B vitamins, vitamin E, iron, zinc and magnesium.

Proteins function as the building blocks of muscles, bones, cartilage, skin and blood. They form important structures in enzymes, hormones, and vitamins and are essential for body systems such as the nervous system and circulatory system. Protein in the diet is essential for the growth and repair of tissues, allowing degraded or damaged tissues to be regenerated.

Increasingly people are encouraged to increase their consumption of fish, particularly oily fish.

## FISH

Eat more Fish! Fish is an excellent source of protein, vitamins, minerals and omega-3 oils in oily fish. Most of us should be eating more fish than we are. It is recommended that we eat at least two portions of fish per week, one of which should be oily. Did you know that fish...

### Helps keep your Heart Healthy

The essential fatty acids **Omega 3**, found in oily fish, help keep arteries healthy and prevent clots. It can also reduce blood pressure. All fish is good for you, but those high in omega 3 include **salmon, trout, fresh tuna, mackerel and sardines**.



### Fish is Low in Fat

Even though it contains oil, fish is low in fat. The healthiest ways to cook fish are to **steam, grill or bake** it. While it's fine to cook it in a little oil, fish which is battered, deep fried or served with very creamy sauces can be fattening.

### Fish is good for your Bones

Some fish, such as tinned sardines, whitebait and salmon, contain soft white bones which are easy to eat and an excellent source of **calcium** - which make our bones and teeth stronger.

### It needn't be Expensive

Tinned tuna or salmon is a healthy choice and is relatively inexpensive. Use fish tinned in **brine or spring water**, and if you use it canned in oil, drain it before eating.



# FAT

## CUT DOWN ON FAT

Eating too much fat can make you more likely to put on weight, because foods that are high in fat are also high in energy (calories). Being overweight raises your risk of serious health problems, such as:

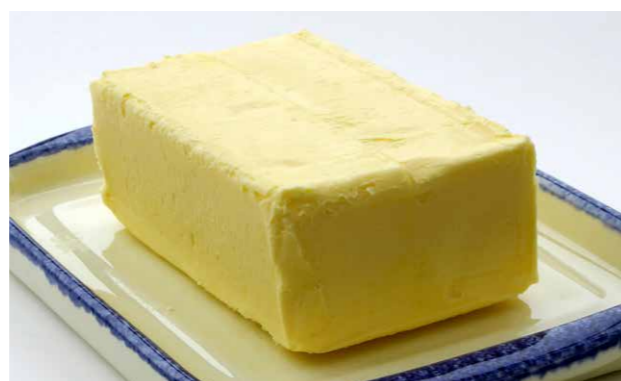
- Heart Disease Type
- High Blood Pressure
- Type 2 Diabetes
- Some Cancers

But this doesn't mean that all fat is bad. Fat is needed because it helps the body adsorb certain nutrients. Fat is a source of energy and provides essential fatty acids that the body can't make itself. For most people, its good to cut the total amount of fat in your diet. But you also need to think about the type of fat you're eating.

## TYPES OF FATS

### Saturated Fats

Saturated fat comes from **animal sources** and is found as the white fat on red meat and poultry, in butter, cheese and whole milk and foods containing those ingredients - cakes, biscuits and pastries.



**Trans-fatty acids or trans fats** are formed in a process called hydrogenation (the hardening of vegetable oils). These fats, found in some margarines, fast food and pastries may also raise cholesterol. Products containing hydrogenated vegetable oil (check the food label) may also contain trans fats.



### Unsaturated Fats

These fats should be eaten in place of saturated fats. These fats come from **vegetable sources** and are found in vegetable oils e.g. sesame, sunflower & olive; in oily fish - sardines, mackerel and salmon; avocados, nuts & seeds; and in some soft margarines.

**Mono-unsaturated and polyunsaturated** fats are from this group and it is best to use margarines and spreads made from these in place of those with a high saturated fat content.

As with any fats, it is recommended that you eat unsaturated fats in moderation.

## HOW MUCH FAT SHOULD WE EAT?

Most people are eating too much fat. Health authorities suggest that fat should make up no more than **35%** of your daily calories. Less than 10% of these should come from saturated fats, with most of these coming from the polyunsaturated and mono-unsaturated sources.

Food labels are helpful in keeping a check on your fat intake. They detail how much fat is in the product and the percentage of your daily intake it contains.

**1g of FAT** provides **9 calories**, more than double that of protein or carbohydrate!

☹️ **A lot of fat is.....**  
17.5g or more per 100g or 5g saturates or more per 100g

😊 **A little fat is.....**  
3g or less per 100g or 1.5g saturates or less per 100g

## CUTTING DOWN ON YOUR SATURATED FAT INTAKE

- ✓ Grill, steam, poach or boil rather than frying
- ✓ Trim off visible fat from meat
- ✓ Use lean meat varieties
- ✓ Use vegetable oils like olive or sunflower
- ✓ Choose low fat dairy products
- ✓ Check fat content on food labels
- ✓ Remove skin from chicken
- ✓ Avoid processed foods as these tend to be high in saturated/trans-fats



## SALT

### EAT LESS SALT!



It is generally recognised that most people eat too much salt! While our bodies need some salt, a high salt intake has been linked to high blood pressure and increased risk of heart attacks and strokes.

Typically our diets contain more than adequate amounts of the salt we need, without adding any extra salt. Diets high in processed or pre-packed foods contain very high levels of salt and so should be avoided.

## HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

Adults should eat no more than **6g of salt per day**. Currently the average salt intake is 9-10g per day.

Monitoring food labels can help keep a check on your salt intake. Generally the sodium content will be detailed.

😊 **A little salt is.....**  
0.1g sodium or less per 100g

☹️ **A lot of salt is.....**  
0.5g sodium or more per 100g

	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 12g	18%
Saturated Fat 3g	15%
Trans Fat 3g	
Cholesterol 30mg	10%
Sodium 470mg	20%
Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%

## TIPS FOR CUTTING DOWN

If the average salt consumption was at the recommended level of 6g per day, it is estimated that thousands of heart attacks and strokes would be prevented each year! You can reduce your intake by trying the following tips at home and in the shops.

### At home.....

- Cook with herbs & spices to enhance flavour of food
- Go easy on condiments - ketchup, mustard, soy sauce, as these can contain a lot of salt
- Stop adding salt to meals once it has been served

### At the shops.....

- Check labels for items with low salt content
- Compare different brands of the same product
- Buy less salty snacks like crisps and nuts
- Choose tinned vegetables without added salt
- Reduce the amount of processed and pre-packed foods consumed



# WATER

## DRINK PLENTY OF WATER

Our bodies are made up of **two-thirds water** and this fluid is vitally important to keep body systems functioning properly. Water is the main component in blood (which carries nutrients around the body) and it is the basis of the juices which help us to digest our food (preventing constipation). It allows the body to get rid of waste in the excretory system and is also a big part of the fluid which lubricates the joints. Why else should we drink water?



<p><b>Keeps Kidneys Healthy</b></p> <p>Dark urine can show dehydration. Drinking plenty of water will prevent dehydration and will keep your kidneys working well.</p>	<p><b>Great Beauty Product</b></p> <p>Water flushes out impurities in the skin leaving your complexion clearer. Saggy skin often 'plumps' up when skin cells are hydrated.</p>	<p><b>Helps Weight Management</b></p> <p>We often confuse thirst with hunger. While we may feel our body is asking for food, it actually needs water. Drinking water can reduce your calorie intake.</p>
<p><b>Good for Teeth</b></p> <p>Water is the best drink to keep your teeth healthy.</p>	<p><b>Increases Energy Levels</b></p> <p>Even minor dehydration can cause headaches, irritability and fatigue. Getting enough water will help you feel much better overall.</p>	<p><b>Regulates Body Temperature</b></p> <p>Sweating is the body's natural mechanism to control temperature. Water comes through the skin to regulate body temperature.</p>

## HOW MUCH WATER SHOULD WE DRINK?

Water can be lost from the body through sweat, urine, bowel movements, breathing and the skin. It is recommended that we drink between **1.6 and 2 litres a day**, approximately 8-10 glasses per day. If we are **exercising** or the **weather is hot and /or windy** we need to drink even more than this!

Often we don't feel thirsty even when our bodies need water as it can be slow to develop. That's why it's a good idea to drink water whether you feel thirsty or not!

**Dehydration** occurs when we lose more fluids than they take in. When we get dehydrated it means the amount of water in our body has dropped below the level needed for normal body function. **Thirst** is one indicator of dehydration but it may not be the first, other symptoms include:

- Producing less urine
- Dry or sticky mouth
- Headaches
- Producing darker urine
- Confusion or irritability
- Feeling dizzy or light headed
- Reduced sports performance



## WATER DO'S AND DON'TS

Water intake is essential for a healthy body and mind.

### DO

- Keep bottled water with you during the day
- Drink water early in the morning to help flush toxins
- Add a little fruit squash to retain fluid in the body better
- Drink herbal teas and avoid tea and coffee
- Drink milk (choose lower fat versions)
- Bring your own water bottle to training, matches or exercise sessions
- Drink small amounts consistently throughout the day



### DON'T

- Drink fizzy, sugary drinks as a means of hydrating
- Over indulge in alcohol
- Drink large amounts at one time



## MALE AND FEMALE DIETS

Both men and women should be eating a varied and balanced diet, as detailed in this section. For overall good health it is important to avoid becoming overweight. In general, men and women should follow the guidelines shown below.

 <p><b>Women should eat on average 2,000 calories per day</b></p> <p>In general women should eat less because their bodies don't need as much energy as men's. This is partly because a man's body is made up of more muscle, which uses up more energy than fat. Women need more iron than men due to losses during menstruation. In later life, it is important for women to get plenty of calcium and vitamin D in their diet to prevent osteoporosis.</p> <p>Pregnant women or those planning a pregnancy should take a folic acid supplement to avoid the risk of neural tube defects (NTDs).</p>	 <p><b>Men should eat on average 2,500 calories per day</b></p> <p>While men tend to require more calories than women each day, it is important that their diets are balanced. Weight gain occurs when our diets provide more energy than is being used up.</p> <p>Most men put on extra weight around their stomach, and excess fat in this area can increase their risk of heart disease and diabetes.</p>
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# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

According to the World Health Organization, approximately 2 million deaths each year are attributable to physical inactivity. The proportion of physically inactive adults around the world is increasing. Physical inactivity is defined as doing less than 30 minutes of physical activity per week.

## WHY YOU SHOULD GET MOVING

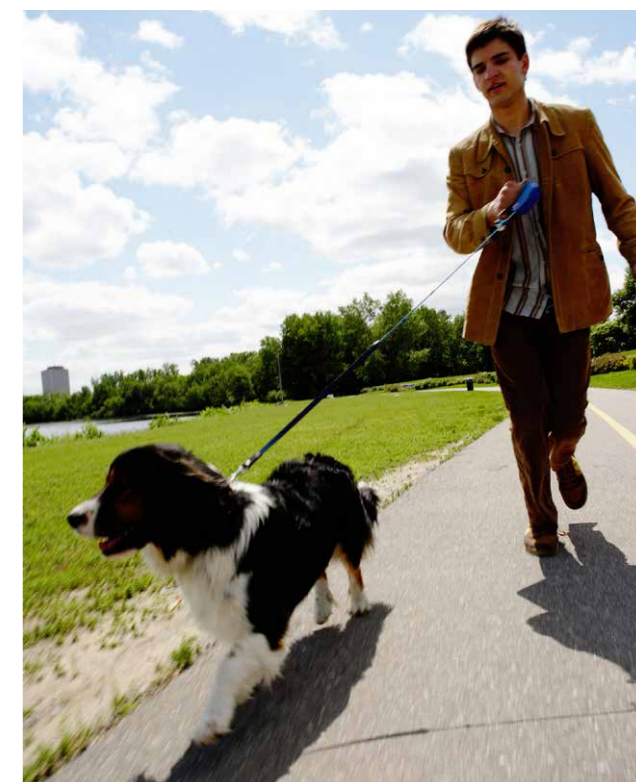
If you want to reduce your risk of suffering from disease and illness the good news is that you don't have to spend hours slogging in the gym or on the pitch! Without getting hot and sweaty, being any good at sport or having costly equipment you can improve your health and prevent illness by simply being **physically active**.

Scientists have confirmed that people who live active lifestyles are less likely to die early or to suffer from major illness. Some of the ways which doing **moderate** activity can improve your health are listed below.....

- **Protection against heart disease -** regular exercise can lower high blood pressure, increase levels of HDL cholesterol (the 'good' cholesterol) and improve circulation.

- **Prevent diabetes -** exercise promotes healthy blood sugar levels and enhances the body's ability to store glucose. The World Health Organisation believe that modest physical activity and dietary changes can prevent more than half of the cases of non-insulin dependent diabetes.
- **Prevents osteoporosis -** Osteoporosis occurs when bones become fragile and likely to break. Physical activity promotes bone density, strengthens the skeleton and decreases bone loss. By strengthening muscles it also reduces the risk of falling, preventing fractures, a common problem in post-menopausal women.
- **Maintain an ideal body weight -** combined with a healthy diet, moderate exercise can help you keep a healthy weight by burning fat. It can also prevent the slowing of your metabolism which happens as you get older.
- **More energy -** being active will actually leave you feeling more energetic. Your mind will also feel more alert to the challenges it faces!
- **Improves mental health -** regular physical activity improves mood, reduces stress, anxiety and depression. It can improve self-esteem, confidence and help you sleep better at night.
- **Back pain -** exercise increases muscle strength and endurance, improves flexibility and posture - all of which helps prevent back pain.
- **Prevents cancers -** researchers suggest that regular physical activity may reduce a person's risk of getting bowel, colon, breast, lung and prostate cancer.

All things considered, taking part in some kind of moderate physical activity will leave you looking and feeling better. As well as that, it can be great for your social life as you meet more people and will give you a great sense of achievement.



## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR HEALTH

Despite the proven benefits of physical activity many people still aren't active enough. The good news is that a little activity goes a long way. Physical activity guidelines for adults to promote health are as follows -

- Adults (19 - 64 years) should **accumulate at least 30 minutes** of moderate intensity exercise on **most days of the week**. This means you can do 3 bouts of 10 minutes or 2 of 15 minutes in a day, but should accumulate at least 150 minutes per week. Alternatively, 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity per week will have similar health benefits.
- Adults should also undertake physical activity to improve muscle strength on at least two days a week.
- In addition all adults should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (sitting) for extended periods.

## TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED

Those people who have been inactive are likely to see the greatest benefits when they increase their activity levels. But the important thing to remember is that you should **start any new activity gradually and progress at a rate which is comfortable for you.**



One of the best ways to start getting more active is to put a bit **more effort into the chores** you do everyday around your home – like vacuuming, cleaning windows or gardening. Wash your car instead of taking it to the local sponge wash or do a bit more DIY when things need fixed. Things as simple as carrying grocery bags or pushing a pram help increase your strength!



Make a habit of **walking or cycling instead of taking the car or bus.** Get off the bus a stop early or park a little farther away from your destination to increase the distance you walk each day.



Where possible **take the stairs rather than the lift or escalator.** Climbing stairs uses between 8 – 11kcal of energy per minute which is high compared to other types of physical activity. It will also improve your leg strength and heart health.



Get the **family or a few friends involved!** You can experience the social benefits of exercise by doing something as part of a group. Take the family dog for a walk or get some work colleagues to go walking at lunch time. You are more likely to stick at it if others are there to encourage you. Why not contact your local GAA Club to see if you can get active there.

Often it may seem life conspires against us being more physically active; i.e. poor weather, too little time, expensive gym membership etc. Typically people say they aren't more physically active because 'they aren't the sporty type'. However, engaging in physical activity need not require a 'sporty' mentality. People should use the tips above to increase their baseline fitness and aim to improve on this gradually. It is advisable to visit your GP before beginning a new exercise regime, particularly for inactive individuals.

Unfortunately constraints with time, money and inclement weather will continue being part of everyday life but the fact is that not meeting physical activity guidelines is damaging to our health. Invest in a good coat/running shoes and get out there, as the alternative will cost you more in the long run!



## THE FITT PRINCIPLE

For anyone wishing to undertake a balanced and structured exercise programme, the FITT principle is a useful way of planning and monitoring it. FITT is an acronym, with the letters F, I, T, T, standing for –

- F - Frequency (how often you exercise)**
- I - Intensity (how hard you exercise)**
- T - Time (how long you spend exercising)**
- T - Type (the kind of exercise you do)**

*When applying this to your training remember what the physical activity guidelines recommend.*

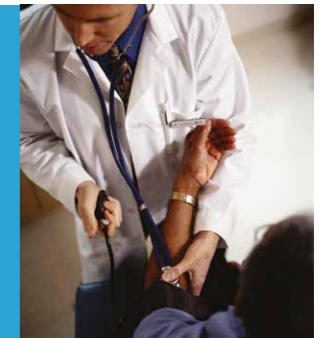
### The Moderate Message

If you wanted to undertake a moderate physical activity regime using this principle, it would look like this....

- F - Frequency** at least 5 times a week
- I - Intensity** Moderate, comfortable level
- T - Time** 30 minutes (3 x 10 minutes, 2 x 15 minutes)
- T - Type** Any kind of aerobic exercise (e.g. running, swimming etc.)

After getting used to your current activity levels, you can step up you efforts by increasing **intensity or time.**

**If you are going to increase your physical activity level beyond what has been recommended, you have been inactive for years, or you are uncertain of your health, you should consult a doctor before starting a programme.**



## TYPES OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Different types of activity have different benefits. If you want to gain as much from your routine as is possible you should include a variety of activities. The three main components of fitness are cardiovascular (aerobic), strength and flexibility. The table below will help you understand how each of the three can improve your health and well-being.

Type of Exercise	Benefits	Examples
 <b>Cardiovascular/Aerobic</b>	This type of exercise will help make your heart and lungs stronger. It can lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels, improves stamina and reduces body fat. Aerobic exercise has been shown to be most effective at improving psychological well-being.	Walking, running, cycling, swimming, dancing, aerobics, stepper, rowing machine, treadmill.
 <b>Strength</b>	This will help to strengthen and tone your muscles. By increasing muscle mass it will ensure your body burns more calories, even at rest! It also makes your bones stronger, making osteoporosis, falls and fractures less likely!	Weights, sit-ups, squats, lunges, any resistance exercise.
 <b>Flexibility</b>	These exercises help you warm up and cool down. They prevent muscle soreness and reduce the likelihood of injury. They can also improve muscle strength and endurance.	Stretching exercises, yoga, pilates.



## PLAY IT SAFE!

Sometimes people begin exercising to improve their health, but end up pushing their bodies too hard and doing themselves an injury. It is important to be sensible in your approach to physical activity, especially if you have been inactive for a long time. The following tips are designed to assist you in a safe approach to undertaking exercise in a safe and controlled manner.



- Get a **check-up** before you start exercising. Your doctor will advise you on any activities to avoid if you have health concerns, or inform you of appropriate activities which will benefit you in areas where you need help.



- **Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothing and appropriate footwear.** Clothing that is too tight will restrict your movement and leave you feeling uncomfortable.



- Hydrate your body by **drinking water** before, during and after exercise. Your body needs to be kept hydrated to prevent feelings of exhaustion, dizziness and cramping. Drink small amounts often.

- Choose activities which you will find **fun, not exhausting!** You will be more likely to work at a level which you are comfortable with and stick at it!
- **Don't overdo it!** Start off moderately and increase your activity levels gradually. Listen to your body and if you feel pain, stop. Give injuries time to heal before you begin working-out again, and always give your body time to rest between sessions. Set targets and goals which you will find achievable.
- To prevent injuries, soreness & stiffness, **warm up and cool down** before and after exercise. Warming up increases your heart rate & prepares the muscles and joints for the activity that is to follow. Cooling down will relieve tension & minimise muscle soreness.
- Your body needs fuel to keep it going so be sure to **eat a balanced diet** to give you enough energy to be active & achieve your goals.

## FINDING YOUR BODY MASS INDEX (BMI)

Ever wondered if your weight could be affecting your health? One way of determining this is to calculate your **body mass index (BMI)**. BMI is worked out from your height and weight, and allows you to discover whether your measurements are within healthy or unhealthy ranges. Generally the higher a person's BMI, the greater the risk of developing health problems. *It is important to remember however, that weight is only one factor related to risk for disease.*

The formula for calculating BMI is to divide a person's weight (kg) by their height in meters squared (m<sup>2</sup>)

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{weight (kg)}}{\text{height (m)}^2}$$

Example = Weight - 68kg    Height - 1.65m  
 BMI =  $68 / (1.65)^2$   
 BMI = 24.97

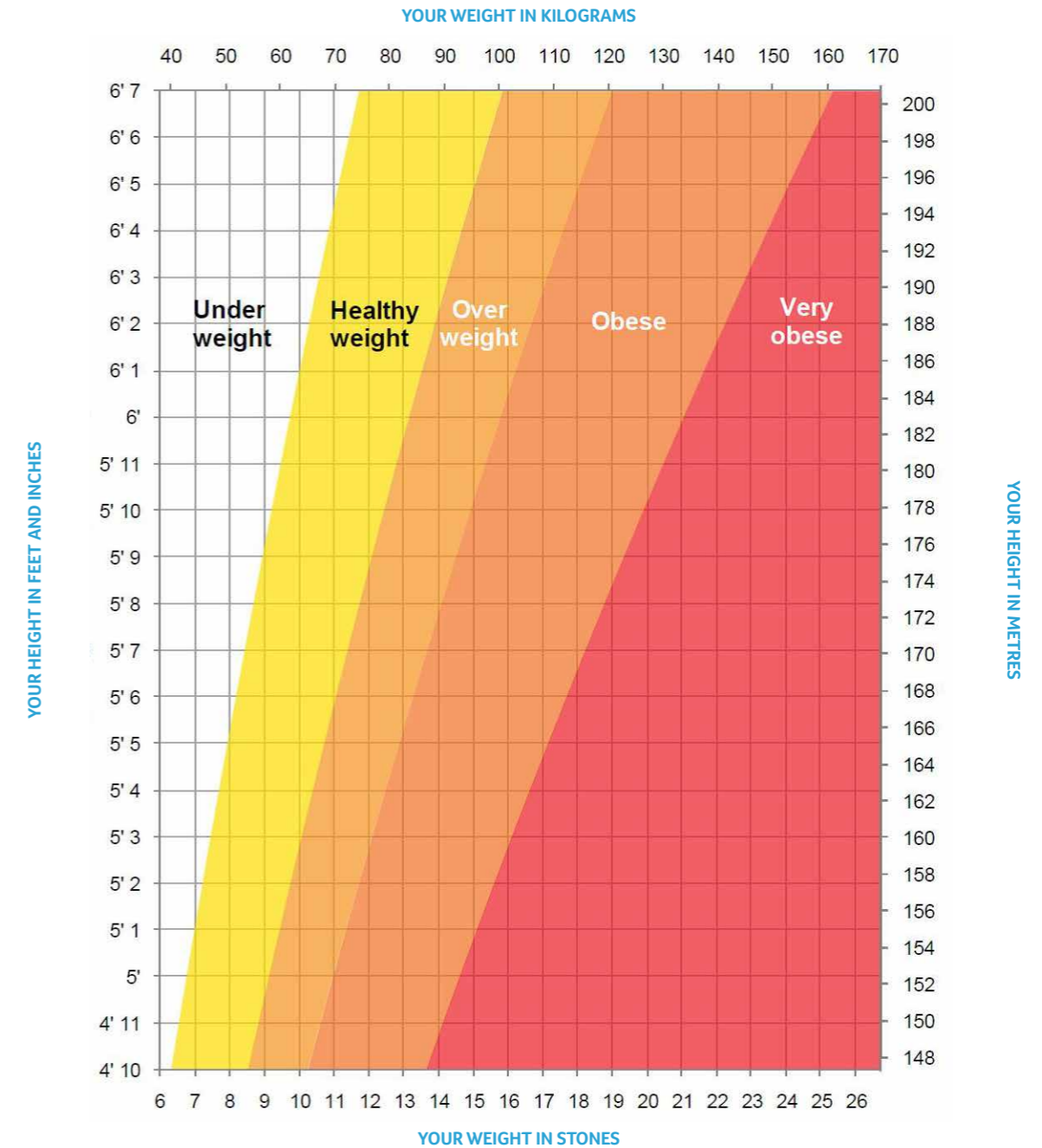
BMI	Weight Status	Risk of developing health problems
<20	Underweight	Increased
20 - 24.9	Normal	Least
25 - 29.9	Overweight	Increased
30 - 34.9	Obese	High
35 - 39.9	Obese Class 2	Very high
>40	Obese Class 3	Extremely high



**BMI is not an ideal tool as it does not take into account muscle mass. Highly trained individuals could have a high BMI due to increased muscularity rather than increased body fat!**

## ARE YOU THE RIGHT WEIGHT FOR YOUR HEIGHT?

BMI is not the only way of discovering if your weight is within a healthy bracket. The chart below allows you to check if you are the right weight for your height without using a calculator! Once again it does not take into account muscle mass (muscle weighs more than fat!) but it does provide a way of monitoring your size against the rest of the population.



If you **underweight** it would be best for your health to try to put on a bit of weight by eating a balanced diet.

If you are in the **Healthy Weight** category you are at a good weight for your health. However, if eating an unhealthy diet, or are physically inactive you will be placing your health at risk.

If you are **Overweight**, try not to put on any more weight. Check the nutrition section of this booklet to discover how you can eat a more balanced diet, DO NOT go on a crash diet. Increase your activity levels to that which is appropriate for you. Consult a doctor if you need more advice.

If you fall into the **Obese** or **Very obese** categories speak to your doctor about the best way to lose some of the weight you are carrying. It is best to lose weight GRADUALLY and your practitioner will be in a position to advise you of the safest way to do this.



### In this section:

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Focus on Where You Need Help	18
Tracking Your Smoking	18
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Withdrawal Symptoms	20
Coping with Withdrawal	20

# SMOKING

**Do you smoke and are thinking of quitting? Maybe you know someone who wants to quit or perhaps you just want to learn more? This section contains information on smoking and hints to help you kick the habit!**

## SMOKING - IS IT REALLY THAT BAD?

**Smoking kills!** It is the single most avoidable cause of death and the World Health Organisation estimate that on a global scale, tobacco kills someone every 10 seconds!

Generally smokers experience shortness of breath, persistent coughs, stained teeth and are also at a greater risk of minor illnesses. More seriously however, nicotine and carbon monoxide in cigarettes immediately increases heart rate and blood pressure, which can lead to **heart attacks or strokes**.

The tar in cigarettes coats up your lungs like soot on a chimney, leading to **lung cancer** or other diseases such as **bronchitis or emphysema**. Smokers have increased risk of developing **throat & mouth cancers, stomach ulcers** and experiencing **infertility and impotence!**

Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas inhaled in small but significant amounts in cigarette smoke. It is linked to heart disease and adverse effects in pregnancy. Nicotine contained in cigarettes is highly addictive; similar to that of heroin and cocaine.

Smoking harms not only you, but those around you. **Passive smoking**, where a person breathes in the cigarette smoke of others, can cause eye irritation, coughs & nausea. In the long term, it can increase the risk of lung cancer & heart disease in non-smokers.

## IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO QUIT!

The good news is it's never too late to quit smoking, even if you've smoked for years! According to the PHA (Public Health Agency) 74% of female smokers and 77% of male smokers in NI would like to stop smoking. According to ASH (Action on Smoking and Health), if you stop smoking the body will begin to repair the damage done almost immediately.

**After 20 minutes** your blood pressure and pulse rate return to normal. **8 hours later** the nicotine and carbon monoxide levels in the blood have halved. **After 24 hours** your lungs will begin to clear out the build up of mucus and by **48 hours** your ability to taste and smell will have improved and there will be no nicotine left in your body. **After 72 hours** your bronchial tubes relax making breathing easier. **In 3 months time** your circulation and fitness will have improved, at **9 months** your breathing & coughing problems should have decreased as lung function improves. In **a year** your risk of a heart attack falls to about half that of a smoker, in **10 years** the risk of lung cancer falls to half that of a smoker and by **15 years** the risk of heart attack falls to the same as someone who has never smoked!



**Each cigarette contains 4000 chemicals - 400 are poisonous & 40 are cancer causing!**

## UNDERSTANDING WHY YOU SMOKE

The urge to smoke arises from 3 factors:

- **addiction to nicotine**
- **force of habit**
- **psychological dependence on the act of smoking**

All 3 factors affect the smoker to a different extent. Often one factor is more important than the other two. Understanding why you smoke will help you prepare to quit.




The quiz opposite will help you discover which is the most important factor for you! Just tick the statements which apply to you.



### Which of these sounds like you?

-  I can't last half a day without smoking
-  I sometimes find myself smoking but don't remember lighting up
-  Smoking perks me up. It makes me think better.
-  I feel a strong urge to smoke when I haven't smoked for a few hours
-  Smoking is one of the greatest pleasures in my life
-  I enjoy the steps I take to light up
-  I need a cigarette as soon as I waken up in the morning
-  I enjoy smoking during my break or after a meal
-  I reach for a cigarette when I'm angry or depressed
-  If I don't smoke I feel weak
-  Smoking relaxes me in a stressful situation
-  I feel more comfortable with a cigarette in my hand

## WHICH SYMBOL DID YOU TICK MOST OFTEN?

-  **You could be addicted to the nicotine in cigarettes.** Being hooked on nicotine is a form of drug addiction. Your body craves for more and you experience withdrawal symptoms when you don't smoke. Being addicted to nicotine is the main reason why smokers continue to smoke.
-  **You may smoke out of habit.** You could have formed links between your daily activities and smoking, like smoking after a meal, during your coffee break or while talking on the phone. Sometimes you may smoke because it gives you something to do with your hands. Giving up can be hard because you have formed this habit over time.
-  **You could be psychologically dependant on cigarettes.** Perhaps you smoke because you think it will perk you up and help you to feel better when you are stressed, nervous or depressed. Cigarettes cannot do either! You only feel better because you have convinced yourself that cigarettes are your source of comfort.

## FOCUSING ON THE AREAS WHERE YOU NEED HELP

<p><b>Addicted to Nicotine:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Nicotine Replacement Therapy may help (page 19)</li> <li>✓ Get support from family/friends</li> <li>✓ Avoid situations/places where you might be tempted to smoke</li> <li>✓ When you have a craving distract yourself with another activity</li> </ul>	<p><b>Smoke out of habit:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Track your smoking pattern (below)</li> <li>✓ Change your daily routine to break up links with your usual activities</li> <li>✓ Do other things that require you to use your hands</li> <li>✓ Suck on sugar free sweets/lollies if you miss having something in your mouth</li> </ul>	<p><b>Psychologically dependant:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Think of yourself as a non-smoker</li> <li>✓ Use positive thinking</li> <li>✓ Exercise regularly to relieve stress and fatigue</li> <li>✓ Learn relaxation techniques or other ways to cope with stress</li> <li>✓ Take up new hobbies</li> </ul>
		

## TRACKING YOUR SMOKING

By tracking your smoking pattern you can identify situations in which you are more likely to smoke. This will help you to plan in advance of how to cope with these urges when they arise. You can also use it when you have quit to record cravings and how you dealt with them!

Rate your cravings as follows:

1. **Weak** - could do without it.
2. **Medium** - would like to smoke!
3. **STRONG** - must smoke!!

Using the template below, track your smoking on **3 days, 2 weekdays and 1 at the weekend**, recording every cigarette you smoke, when you smoked it, what prompted you to light up and how much you feel you needed it! Once you have recorded 3 days smoking behaviour, review your smoking charts, identify the occasions when you are likely to smoke and **work out some coping actions** to help you avoid smoking in these situations. Some examples are given above and on page 20.

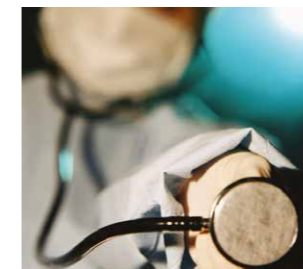


Time / Day	Craving Level	Activity	Who was I with	Feelings
7.45am Monday	1	Just got up	Alone	Tired
9.15am Monday	2	Stuck in traffic	Alone	Frustrated

## MAKING UP YOUR MIND

The most important part of preparing yourself to stop smoking is to make up your mind that it's something you really want to do! Quitting won't be easy but it can be done if you are committed and prepare yourself properly.

Now that you understand more about why you smoke, and have planned how to cope in situations which trigger your smoking, you can make that decision. **Write down why you want to quit**, it will help you focus should you start to struggle. If you're still undecided, here's a few more reasons to help you make up your mind.



### Better health!

You will decrease your risk of illness and disease caused by smoking.



### Saves you money!

Think of the amount of money you are smoking away. If you smoke 10 cigarettes a day you will save over £1,200/€1330 in a year!



### Whiter teeth & nails!

Smoking harms your appearance by discolouring your teeth and nails.



### Clothes and hair smell better!

And your sense of smell will improve so you get to enjoy your fresher lifestyle!

## QUIT TIPS...BEFORE YOU QUIT

- Record your smoking pattern
- Discover why and when you are smoking
- Plan how you will cope in high risk situations
- Make the decision that you want to quit and write it down
- Pick a quit date - don't pick a day which you know might be stressful for you for some reason
- Inform your family, friends & colleagues and get their support

**Studies show that those who involve family in their quit attempts have the highest success rates!**

- Get rid of temptation by throwing away remaining cigarettes, lighters and ash trays
- Clean your smoking environment, open windows and get rid of the tobacco smell
- Invest in some Nicotine Replacement Therapy if you feel you may need it

**Why not avail of professional help in your aim to quit smoking?** The Public Health Agency (PHA) has a remit for smoking cessation in the six counties. Freephone PHA on : **0808 812 8008**. The Health Service Executive (HSE) has a remit for smoking cessation in the twenty six counties. Freephone HSE National Smoker's Quitline on: **1800 201 203**.

## NICOTINE REPLACEMENT THERAPY (NRT)

**Cigarettes contain nicotine, and when you stop smoking your body stops getting the supply it is used to receiving. This can lead to unpleasant withdrawal symptoms, which can be lessened by NRT.**

**Nicotine replacement** is recommended for those whose addiction to nicotine is the main barrier in stopping smoking.

**How does it work?** NRT provides a low, controlled daily dose of nicotine to smokers so that the body does not crave cigarettes. This allows the smokers to concentrate on ways to break the smoking habit. Nicotine Replacement supplies a constant level of nicotine so levels within the body remain constant, and withdrawal symptoms are lessened. NRT does not contain all the other harmful chemicals which cigarettes do.

**NRT** comes in various forms—gum, patches, inhaler and spray. A **doctor or pharmacist** will advise you on which is best for you, and the dosage which you require. It's important to remember that Nicotine Replacement is only an aid to quitting and that motivation and willpower are still the most important factors in determining your success!



## WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS

If you've just quit smoking and are feeling terrible, take heart! This is a **sign that your body is actually getting better, as it rids itself of the poisons associated with cigarettes!**

Withdrawal symptoms affect some people after they give up smoking due to the decrease in the nicotine levels in the body. Nicotine in cigarettes acts on the brain, giving a rewarding sensation. When the level falls, quitters often experience associated symptoms.

Some of the **symptoms** of withdrawal may include:

- Cigarette cravings
- Irritability
- Headaches
- Tiredness
- Upset stomach
- Coughing
- Tingling hands / feet

These symptoms may interfere with many aspects of your daily life but it's important that you do not feel discouraged and give in to smoking. The symptoms will go away and you will feel much better, and if you start smoking you will have to go through the whole process again!

The section below gives some tips on how to cope with the symptoms which ex-smokers experience at the early stages of quitting.



**The symptoms are worst in the first week but should have gone by the end of week two!**

## WITHDRAWAL AND DEALING WITH IT!

### Need a cigarette

As your nicotine level drops, you may develop cravings for a cigarette. This urge will disappear after a few minutes, even if you don't smoke.

- Distract yourself - go for a walk
- Munch on some **healthy** snacks/ have a healthy drink



### Feeling Irritable

As your body learns to cope without nicotine you may experience some feelings of irritability. These will lessen as your body adjusts to being without nicotine.

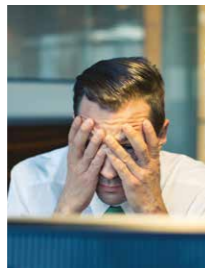
- Take some deep breaths
- Listen to soothing music



### Headaches

There may be a change in the flow of oxygen to the brain causing headaches. These will decrease in severity each day.

- Drink lots of water
- Get enough sleep
- Avoid eye strain



### Coughing

This is the body's way of getting rid of the mucus and tar which has built up in your lungs. Once the dirt has cleared your cough will cease.

- Sip some warm water
- Use sugar free cough sweets



### Upset stomach / nausea

You may experience some feelings of sickness, constipation or gas as your nicotine level drops. These should be short lived.

- Avoid fatty or sugary foods
- Add moderate amounts of high fibre foods to your diet
- Drink plenty of water



### Tiredness

Nicotine is a stimulant which perks you up so without it you may feel fatigued. You will feel better as your circulation improves.

- Get plenty of sleep at night
- Take some light exercise
- Take breaks at work and get some fresh air



### Tingling hands/feet

This is due to the fact your circulation will have improved and more oxygen is reaching these extremities. It's a healthy tingle, but will cease when your body functions return to normal.

- Squeeze a rubber ball
- Keep something in your hand
- Go for a walk

### In this section:

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Recommended Drink Limits	23
Binge Drinking	23
Females and Alcohol	23
Drinking and Driving	23
Calories in Alcohol	24
Safer Drinking Tips	24

#### Alcoholic drinks come in different forms:

- Beer
- Cider
- Wine
- Spirits
- Liqueur
- Alcopops

# ALCOHOL

**In general people drink alcohol to relax, celebrate social occasions or to enhance social gatherings. Many drink in moderation and within the recommended limits. It is when people drink too much that problems occur. Public Health Agency literature and their website were consulted in the research of this section.**

## ALCOHOL - WHAT IS IT DOING TO YOU?

Alcohol enters your bloodstream minutes after ingestion. The effects of alcohol can be wide ranging; from changes to your behaviour to serious health problems. Cognition is the first body function to be affected by alcohol and the more you drink the more body functions are affected. Some of the possible effects of alcohol are:

### Short Term Effects

- Slurred speech
- Blurred vision
- Reduced inhibitions
- Blackouts / memory loss
- Vomiting / diarrhoea
- Arguments / fights
- Falls
- Hangovers
- Regrets

### Long Term Effects

- Heart disease & high blood pressure
- Depression
- Liver and kidney problems
- Stomach ulcers
- Cancers of the mouth, throat, lung & liver
- Cirrhosis of the liver
- Alcoholism
- Reproductive problems



Alcohol is a contributing factor to numerous traffic accidents, drownings, fires, thefts and assaults in Ireland each year. Research has shown that Irish people drink more than those in other European countries and are the most likely to binge drink.

## HOW DOES ALCOHOL AFFECT US?

The effects of alcohol will depend on who is drinking and what they are drinking!

**Gender** - Females are more affected by alcohol than males because their bodies are generally smaller, with more body fat & less water. This results in the concentration of alcohol in their bodies being greater.

**Type of Drink** - Fizzy alcoholic drinks and spirits are absorbed most quickly.

**Volume & Speed** - The more you drink the worse the effects, and the faster you drink the quicker they will occur! The liver can only process 1 unit of alcohol per hour so drinking faster than this will cause it to build up in the bloodstream.

**Tolerance** - Regular drinkers will build up a tolerance to alcohol while first time drinkers will feel the effects much more quickly.

**Stomach contents** - Eating before you drink will slow down alcohol absorption and allow the liver more time to break it down.

## HOW MUCH ALCOHOL IS IN A DRINK?

The strength of an alcoholic drink will depend on how much alcohol (**ethanol**) it contains. This information is shown at the side of the bottle or can, as the %ABV - percentage of alcohol per volume. The higher the %ABV, the stronger the drink! Commonly drinks with higher %ABV are consumed in smaller measures.

## UNDERSTANDING UNITS

Alcohol is measured in **units** to help us keep track of how much we are drinking. Some bottles will declare how many units are in the drink. This makes it easy to keep track of how much you are drinking, but there are other ways to work this out. The number of units in a drink depends on **the strength of the drink and how much of it there is.**

- For example:**
- A glass of wine at 8% ABV in a 175ml glass = **1.4 units**
  - A glass of wine at 13% ABV in a 175ml glass = **2.3 units**
  - A glass of wine at 13% ABV in a 250ml glass = **3.25 units**

Can you tell the difference?



## WORK IT OUT FOR YOURSELF!

If you know the % ABV of a drink you can work out how many units you are drinking using this calculation:

**Quantity of drink (ml) x % ABV**

**1000**

So a **330ml** bottle of beer at **5% ABV** can be worked out as:







$$330 \times 5 = 1650$$

$$1650 / 1,000 = 1.65$$

So the bottle of beer contains **1.65 units of alcohol**



## WHAT'S IN A STANDARD DRINK?

	<b>Pint of Beer</b> (568ml) 3.5-4% ABV 2 - 2.5 units		<b>Bottle of Beer</b> (330ml) 4.5% ABV 1.5 units		<b>Pint of Stout</b> (568ml) 4.2% ABV 2 units
	<b>Small Glass of Wine</b> (125ml) 12.5-13% ABV 1.5 units		<b>Spirits</b> (35ml) 37.5-40% ABV 1.5 units		<b>Alcopop</b> (275ml) 5-5.5% ABV 1.5 units

## RECOMMENDED DRINKING LIMITS

Medical opinion recommends that.....

**men** drink no more than **21 units per week**  
**women** drink no more than **14 units per week**

It is important not to drink too much on a single day.....

**men** should not drink more than **3-4 units per day**  
**women** should not drink more than **2-3 units per day**

Try to spread your drink out over the week and have a few alcohol-free days. Remember, the drinks you pour at home may differ greatly in size to those you buy in a pub!

**These weekly drinking limits do not apply to teenagers, pregnant women, or those who are sick or on medication.**

## BINGE DRINKING - It's not what you think

Most people think the term **binge drinking** means going on a three day session or drinking until you fall over! This is not the case at all. Binge drinking is a term which is used to describe an occasion when we **drink too much over a short period of time**, and the amount may be less than you'd think! Binge drinking is a potentially harmful approach to alcohol consumption.



**Research has shown that binge drinking as defined here can damage your health, even if you stick to the weekly limit!**

**Binge drinking** is defined by medical and health professionals as

**men** - drinking 10 or more units of alcohol at one sitting.  
**women** - drinking 7 or more units of alcohol at one sitting.

## FEMALES & ALCOHOL - Why alcohol affects women differently than men

The recommended drinking limits for females are lower than that of males, partly because women's bodies are more sensitive to alcohol than men's. If the average man and the average woman drink the same amount of alcohol, the concentration of alcohol in the women's body will be greater. This is due to the fact, that generally a woman's **body mass is smaller** than a man's, and **contains less water** (alcohol dissolves more easily in watery body fluids). In addition to this, the digestive enzymes which females produce are less efficient in processing alcohol than those produced by men!

- Hormonal fluctuations to females during the menstrual cycle, pregnancy and the menopause are also factors in their unpredictable response to alcohol - both physically and mentally.
- Women on the contraceptive pill tend to have a more predictable response but they metabolise alcohol more slowly so it will stay in their systems longer.
- Pregnant women are advised to avoid alcohol as it can harm an unborn baby. Women who are trying to get pregnant should also cut down, and if both partners do so, there is an increased chance of success.

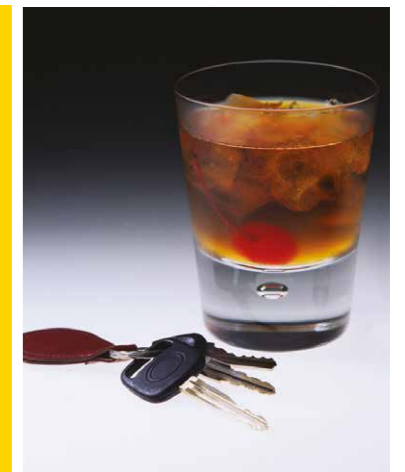
## DRINKING AND DRIVING..... even one drink will affect your judgement!

The legal drink driving limits for **all adults** are:

- 80 milligrams of alcohol in 100 millilitres of blood or 35 micrograms of alcohol in 100 millilitres of breath

This is difficult to measure in units because people's bodies react differently to alcohol. It is possible to be over the legal limit the morning after you have been drinking. To be on the safe side,

**if you plan to drive, do not drink alcohol.**



## THE CALORIES IN ALCOHOL - It's not called a 'beer belly' for nothing you know!

Alcohol has a very high calorie content. It contains **7 calories per gram** - almost as many calories per gram as **FAT!** The calories in alcohol are often referred to as 'empty' calories because they have little or no nutritional value. If you are trying to keep in shape, it might be an idea to cut down on the amount of alcohol you are drinking.

The images below give you an **approximate** measure of the calories in your favourite tipple:



Some data taken from 'Weight Loss Resources' & 'EDiets'

## AND IT DOESN'T END THERE.....

Alcohol increases our blood sugar levels, leaving us feeling **hungry**. Unfortunately at the end of a night out, food options are generally limited to fatty or 'junk' foods. **How many calories is your night out costing you?**



## TIPS FOR SAFER DRINKING -

**Your body can only deal with 1 unit of alcohol per hour, so help it out!**

- Always **eat a meal** before having a drink
- Try to have a few glasses of **water** throughout the night
- Try not to drink alcohol if you are thirsty - quench your thirst with water or a **non-alcoholic drink** first
- **Avoid salty snacks** as these will make you feel more thirsty
- Consider switching to a **lower strength** of alcoholic drink
- Always **dilute spirits**
- Be careful using fizzy mixers, the gas in them speeds up the rate at which alcohol enters our system
- **Pour home drinks wisely - use a measure for spirits**
- Allow a couple of **alcohol free nights** throughout the week
- Try not to exceed the recommended drinking limits
- **Don't binge drink**



# CONTACTS

The following is a list of professionals who can offer you advice and support should you need further information or help.

Remember your GP is in the ideal position to advise or refer you for any specialist help you may require so you may prefer to speak to him or her.

Some of the websites listed were used in the research for this booklet.

<b>Public Health Agency</b>	028 9032 1313 <a href="http://www.publichealth.hscni.net">www.publichealth.hscni.net</a>
<b>Mental Health</b>	<a href="http://www.mindingyourhead.info">www.mindingyourhead.info</a>
<b>Smokers Quitline</b>	PHA: 0808 812 8008 HSE: 1850 201 203
<b>Northern Ireland Chest, Heart &amp; Stroke</b>	028 9032 0184 <a href="http://www.nichs.org.uk">www.nichs.org.uk</a>
<b>Irish Heart Foundation</b>	01 668 5001 <a href="http://www.irisheart.ie">www.irisheart.ie</a>
<b>Cancer Focus NI</b>	028 9066 3281 <a href="http://www.cancerfocusni.org">www.cancerfocusni.org</a>
<b>Irish Cancer Society</b>	Helpline: 1800 200 700 <a href="http://www.cancer.ie">www.cancer.ie</a>



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