



Healthy Cooking Tips

Here are some healthy cooking tips so you can make small changes to the way you already cook to see big benefits to your health. You could even set them as challenges to try:

- Try using wholemeal or wholegrain bread instead of white.
- Trim all the visible fat off meat.
- Avoid adding butter to your vegetables. When possible use a low fat spread instead of butter or margarine. If you are having jam on toast for example, try leaving off the spread altogether and just have reduced sugar jam.
- Take the skin off chicken before you cook it. A lot of the fat on chicken lies just beneath the skin. If you cook the chicken with the skin on, the fat will melt and penetrate the chicken meat.
- Avoid frying your food, instead try to steam, bake, grill, roast or boil it. If you do occasionally have to use fat when cooking, try to reduce the amount you use and measure it out so you can control how much you are using, or try using a spray oil which usually contain one calorie per spray.
- If you're preparing mince for a shepherd's pie, bolognese or chilli for example, dry fry it and then drain off the excess fat before adding any other vegetables to it.
- When you're making a casserole try adding extra vegetables like carrots and extra protein like pulse vegetables, such as lentils or beans to bulk it out. This increases your vegetable and fibre intake and makes the casserole go further.



- Love roast potatoes? They only need a light covering of oil. Use an unsaturated vegetable oil, such as sunflower oil, and use as little as you can – don't forget to measure how much you're using and stay in control! Put the potatoes in a pan and toss in a little oil before you put them in the roasting tin. Avoid cooking them around a joint of meat as they will soak up a lot of fat from the meat.
- Most of the salt we eat is already in the food we buy. It is important to look at food labels to check how much salt they contain, however another easier way of eating less salt is to stop adding salt when cooking or serving food. Try cutting out added salt and see how good your food tastes without it.
- Salads are great – there are so many salad vegetables you can use, so many different colours, they can really brighten your plate up and boost your vegetable intake. However, beware of pre-packed salads in mayonnaise or oil dressings as these can be very high in fat, adding calories that you may be unaware of!
- Try to avoid relying on processed 'ready meals' as quite often they are high in fat and high in salt. It's ok to have them occasionally. Try bulking them out with extra veg or salad to make them more filling and healthy.
- Take aways are fine as an occasional treat but, again, they can be very high in calories. Try to reduce the number of take aways you have.
- Make your own burgers using lean mince and adding vegetables to them. Onion, carrots and mushrooms chopped up small adds extra nutrients as well as flavour and you hardly know you're eating veg at all!



Desserts

- If you like to have a pudding after your main meal, make it fruit based, like a fruit crumble. Try adding oats to the crumble topping for extra fibre and reduce the amount of fat and sugar in the crumble. Instead of sweetening the fruit with sugar try adding a naturally sweet fruit like raisins. Why not try adding cinnamon for extra flavour – its goes great with apples.
- Baked fruit is lovely especially in the cooler months. It's warm and has that comforting feeling that people who are trying to watch what they eat often feel they're missing out on. Try baking fruits such as peaches, apricots, nectarines or plums – try anything you fancy – in the oven and serve with low fat natural yogurt or fromage frais.
- Fruit platter – why not try slicing a variety of fruits and serve on a plate with a spoonful or two of low fat yogurt or a little chocolate sauce to dip in.