



Healthy Eating Policy – Senior

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1 Rationale

Healthy eating is essential for good health and contributes to positive wellbeing. Many of the leading causes of disease and disability in our society – such as obesity, coronary heart disease, diabetes, and certain forms of cancer, mental ill health and osteoporosis – are associated with poor nutritional choices.

Nutrition is a significant factor in the growth, development and overall functioning of a young person. Good nutrition provides the energy and nutrients essential to sustain life and promotes physical, emotional and cognitive development.

The development of healthy eating practices and physical activity can prevent disease and support a lifetime of good health. Good nutrition is critical to optimize each young person's potential for success.

Meeting nutritional requirements is essential to the full intellectual development of young people. Research tells us that malnutrition impacts on behaviour, performance and overall development. Young people require sufficient energy and essential nutrients each day to concentrate on accomplishing learning tasks. Even mild malnutrition and short-term hunger are barriers to learning. Meals and snacks should meet nutritional needs.

2 Aims

St Christopher's Senior School aims to promote healthy lifestyles. Healthy eating is a key component in leading a healthy lifestyle and at St Christopher's we actively encourage pupils to make considered choices and be aware of the need to eat healthy foods.

We aim to:

- Improve the health of all in the Senior School community by helping to influence eating habits through the provision of information regarding healthy food choices.
- Educate our students on the importance of eating a healthy, balanced diet.
- Encourage students to eat healthily and hydrate regularly throughout the day.

3 The Importance of Nutrition for Young People

A nutritionally balanced diet is important to ensure optimum development at a time of rapid growth. A balanced diet is not only important for growth but also for learning and promoting positive habits towards healthy eating. An inadequate or unbalanced nutritional intake may not only affect growth and development but may also impact on health problems, such as heart disease and obesity later in life. It is the types and varieties of food eaten at this time that ensure nutrient requirements are met and that the diet is nutritionally balanced.

3.1 Eating a healthy, balanced diet

The key to a healthy balanced diet is not to ban or omit any foods or food groups but to balance what is eaten by consuming a variety of foods from each food group in the right proportions for good health.

The nutritional value of a person's diet depends on the overall balance of foods that is eaten over a period of time, as well as on the needs of the individual. A healthy diet is likely to include a large number or variety of foods, from



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each of the food groups, in order to get all the nutrients required.

We need energy (calories or kilojoules) to live and this is provided by the carbohydrate, protein and fat in our diets. For a person to remain healthy, the balance between these nutrients must be right. Getting the right amounts of vitamins, minerals, dietary fibre and water is also important for health.

What becomes as important as the type of foods eaten, is how often and how much different foods and drinks are included in our diet. All foods and drinks can be part of a healthy diet, so giving up the things that are a real treat is not essential, as the key message is that it is the overall balance of foods and drinks that is important for health.

As well as having the right balance of foods and drinks, it is also important to consume the right amount of calories. The latest statistics from the UK indicate that 60% of adults and 33% of 10 and 11 year-olds are either overweight or obese. This means that too many people are eating and drinking more calories than they need; in order to lose some excess weight, fewer calories should be consumed.

The UK Food Standards Agency has designed the 'eatwell plate' (see Appendix B) to help people get the appropriate balance of foods and nutrients in their daily diet. All foods can be placed into one of five different food groups:

3.1.1 Fruit and vegetables

These should make up about a third of a daily diet and can be eaten as part of every meal, as well as being the first choice for a snack. Foods in this group include fresh, frozen, dried and canned fruit and vegetables. Also, 100% fruit or vegetable juice, pure fruit juice smoothies and pulses count (potatoes do not count because they are a starchy food).

At least five portions of fruit and vegetables should be eaten each day. Research suggests this can help to protect against cancer, obesity and various chronic diseases such as heart disease. This is because of the unique package of nutrients and plant compounds they contain.

3.1.2 Bread, rice, pasta, noodles, cereals and potatoes

This food group should also make up about a third of a person's diet and contains the starchy carbohydrates that are the body's main source of energy.

When selecting products from this food group, it is recommended that unrefined carbohydrates should be chosen over those that have been refined, as they will contain the whole of the grain. Wholegrain foods are rich in fibre and other nutrients that have many health benefits, and people who consume wholegrains seem to have a reduced risk of certain cancers, diabetes and coronary heart disease.

The final third of the 'eatwell plate' is made up of three groups containing foods that need to be consumed in smaller proportions than the other two principal categories. These food groups also contain nutrients essential to a diet, so it is important not to leave them out altogether.

3.1.3 Milk and dairy foods

These include milk, cheese, yoghurt and fromage frais. These should be eaten in moderation because of their high saturated fat content, but they are an important source of calcium, which is essential for healthy



bones and teeth. Choose low-fat or reduced-fat versions.

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

This food group includes both animal and plant sources of protein, which is a major functional and structural component of all cells. Protein provides the body with between 10 and 15 percent of its dietary energy, and is needed for growth and repair. This food group includes meat, poultry, fish (frozen, fresh, smoked and canned fish as well as fish products such as fish fingers and fish cakes), eggs and other non-dairy sources of protein e.g. nuts, tofu, mycoprotein, textured vegetable protein (TVP), beans such as red kidney beans and canned beans and pulses such as lentils and split peas.

3.1.5 Foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar

This group makes up the smallest section on the 'eatwell plate' and includes foods that should only be eaten sparingly because, although they are an important energy source, they contain very few nutrients and are often known as 'empty calories'.

Foods from this group are high in unhealthy components such as saturated fat, trans fatty acids, sugar and salt - all of which are associated with an increased risk of developing certain diseases. Foods in this group high in fat include butter, margarine, cooking oils, oil-based salad dressings, mayonnaise, cream, fried foods, chocolate, cakes, crisps, pastries ice-cream, puddings, rich sauces and gravies. Foods high in sugar include soft drinks (not diet drinks), sweets, jam, sugar, honey, cakes, puddings, biscuits, pastries and ice-cream.

Foods in this group should be used sparingly if they are eaten every day (such as butter and spreads) or not eaten too often (such as sweets and some crisps). They should only be eaten as occasional treats, or to increase the palatability of other important foods (such as olive oil on salads, a scraping of spread on bread, or a sprinkling of sugar on some tart fruits).

It is essential to have a small amount of fat in the diet, but foods containing a lot of fat can be high in calories. Foods containing high amounts of saturated fat, such as some foods of animal origin, cakes, biscuits and pastries, should only be eaten in small amounts.

There are two types of essential fats, which must be supplied by the diet in small amounts: omega-3 fatty acids (found in oily fish but also present in smaller amounts in food such as walnuts, omega-3 enriched eggs, and rapeseed and soya oil) and omega-6 fatty acids (found in vegetable oils such as sunflower, corn and soya oil and spreads made from these).

Sugar adds flavour and sweetness to foods, but frequent consumption of sugar-containing foods and drinks is associated with an increased tendency towards tooth decay especially in those with poor dental hygiene.

4 Nutrition during the School Day

- There are three breaks in the Senior School; a 50 minute lunch break and two 15 minute breaks
- Students have the option of bringing a packed lunch from home and/or using the tuck shop. The food offered in our tuck shop is varied and ranges from sandwiches, wraps, salads, subs, hot food (e.g. noodles, biryani, spaghetti, potatoes with filling), pastries, pies and fresh fruit. Drinks offered are a range of fruit



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juices and water. Fizzy drinks or crisps are not on sale in the tuck shop.

- The food offered by our supplier is monitored by the school. The Student Council offers suggestions on how the food can be improved.
- The Ministry of Health conducts checks of the standards of hygiene in the tuck shop.
- Sixth Form students have the Juice Bar exclusively available to them, it has a wide selection of healthy food and drinks.
- There are numerous water dispensers around the site allowing easy access to water for all the students. Students are encouraged to bring water bottles into lessons.

5 Lunch provided from Home - Packed Lunches

We recommend that food provided from home for pupils to eat at school should be nutritious, avoiding large quantities of sugar, salt, saturated fats, additives, preservatives and colourings. It should be fresh, wholesome and balanced.

The key to a healthy packed lunch is getting the right balance. Choose a wide variety of foods which will help provide all the nutrients a young person will need and enough energy to get through the day. This advice is based on the UK governments' 'eatwell plate'.

To make a packed lunch as healthy as possible try to include:

- A good portion of starchy food, e.g. whole grain roll, wraps or pitta pockets, pasta or rice
- A portion of lean meat, fish, egg, pulses or other non-dairy protein sources, e.g. chicken, beef, tuna, sardines, mackerel, egg, beans or hummus
- Plenty of fruit and vegetables, e.g. an apple, orange, pineapple, melon, satsuma, handful of cherry tomatoes or carrot sticks, small tub of fruit salad or small box of raisins
- A portion of semi-skimmed or 1% fat milk or other dairy food, e.g. reduced fat cheese, yogurt or fromage frais
- A drink e.g. fruit juice, semi-skimmed or 1% fat milk, yoghurt drink or a bottle of water

6 Education

There are planned activities in the curriculum which educate our students on the importance of 'Healthy Eating'

- In the Senior School, 'Healthy Eating' is covered in the Enrichment / PSHE programme and in the Science and Physical Education curriculum.
- Information on healthy eating and nutrition is in the Senior School Information Booklet.
- There are also dedicated days built into our calendar to raise the profile of a healthy lifestyle including World Heart Day.
- For more information on the UK Government's 'eatwell plate', use this link:
<http://www.nutrition.org.uk/healthyliving/healthyeating/a-healthy-varied-diet>



7 Appendix A: A Balanced Diet

7.1 How to eat a balanced diet

- Eat a variety of foods to obtain all of the essential nutrients
- Too much as well as too little can be bad for you – balance is required

7.2 Maintaining a healthy, balanced diet

7.2.1 The Food Standards Agency's eight tips for eating well are:

- Base meals on starchy foods
- Eat lots of fruit and vegetables
- Eat more fish
- Cut down on saturated fat and sugar
- Try to eat less salt - no more than 6g a day
- Get active and try to be a healthy weight
- Drink plenty of water
- Do not skip breakfast

7.2.2 What about snacks?

It is fine to snack - as long as a healthy balance of foods is maintained. If you feel hungry between meals, or you know it will be a while before you eat your next meal, choose snacks that provide energy (preferably in the form of starchy carbohydrate), vitamins and minerals and not too much fat, sugar or salt.

- Choose snacks that will provide nutrients to complement meals and choose a snack from a food group you may not have already had. For example if you had toast and fruit juice for breakfast, a yoghurt would make a good morning snack. If you ate cereal and milk for breakfast, a banana would be a good morning snack choice.
- Avoid snacks and drinks with a high sugar content between meals.

7.2.3 Portion Size

In recent years, portions have been gradually getting bigger with the introduction of king-size chocolate bars, bigger bags of crisps and super-sized meals.

Larger packets and plates can encourage us to eat greater quantities of food, which increases our energy intake. Studies have found that consuming additional food does not increase your sense of fullness, so think of “down-sizing” rather than “supersizing” for most foods, except fruit and vegetables.

8 Appendix B: 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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Source: Public Health England in association with the Welsh government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

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