

A guide to losing weight for men and women



So you want to
lose weight... for good



The British Heart Foundation (BHF) takes your health and your weight very seriously. We don't guarantee quick fixes or magical cures for weight loss. In fact we're dubious about anyone who does. We prefer a sensible and permanent approach to losing weight. All the research findings suggest that losing it steadily and gradually is the safest way and the weight is much more likely to stay off than if you lose it quickly.

We're not keen on the word 'diet' either. It sounds restrictive and very short term. We believe in a **weight loss plan for life**. That doesn't mean having to survive for ever on salads and crispbreads! Our plan includes plenty of tasty and filling options which you can prepare easily and enjoy at home or elsewhere.

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The British Heart Foundation and weight

If you're interested in losing weight for health benefits, we've produced this booklet for you. Whether you're male or female, in your twenties or in your sixties, whether you have any signs of heart disease or not, the advice which follows is written for you. In fact the whole family could benefit from our tips on healthy eating for life.

And your health isn't the only thing which stands to improve. Getting in shape can mean getting fitter and feeling more energetic. Many people notice a boost to their confidence too as they can wear different clothes, play more with children or grandchildren and generally get more out of life.

“The best thing about the front of the booklet is the BHF logo.
You immediately know it’s going to be sensible.”

(35 - 44 yr old overweight woman)

Heart disease and weight

If you’re very overweight you’re more likely to have a heart attack, especially if your extra weight is around your middle. The good news is that by losing weight you can cut your risk of heart disease considerably.

Research studies also suggest that many overweight people with angina, raised blood cholesterol and high blood pressure found that their conditions improved greatly, even after losing only some of their excess weight. Many of those who kept the weight off were able to reduce their medication or even stop it altogether.



What is heart disease?

The most common form of heart disease among adults is called **coronary heart disease (CHD)**. It occurs when the coronary arteries bringing oxygen-rich blood to your heart muscle get ‘furred up’ by fatty deposits (atheroma).

Angina occurs when your heart does not receive enough blood and oxygen. An attack can be brought on by physical activity or emotional stress.

A **heart attack** occurs if a coronary artery becomes completely blocked, which can happen, for example, when a blood clot forms on a pre-existing atheroma.

High blood pressure (the medical name is ‘hypertension’) increases your risk of heart disease, strokes and kidney disease. The cause of most high blood pressure is not clear but the following can all contribute: being overweight; excessive salt intake; drinking too much alcohol; physical inactivity.

High blood cholesterol increases your risk of coronary heart disease. The most common cause of high blood cholesterol is too much fat in the diet. Occasionally people have high levels due to an inherited condition.

Coronary heart disease is usually the result of several risk factors. These include:

- high blood cholesterol
 - smoking
 - high blood pressure
 - physical inactivity
 - being overweight
 - family history
 - diabetes
-

“When I became a teacher, my lifestyle changed but my diet didn’t. I’ve been sitting around much more, getting no time for exercise, and eating as much as ever, especially late at night. Since then I’ve been putting on about a stone a year.”

(25-34 year old overweight man)



Weight gain

You may be one of those people who has always been big and battled with your weight on and off for years. Or, you may have been steadily gaining weight over the years as many people gain weight with age. Many people are less active as they get older because of family commitments, long working hours and other pressures. Leisure time is often spent in front of the television or computer which doesn't help. Whichever is true you're not alone. Over half of all adults in the UK are now overweight and this is true for men and women. Remember that just preventing any further weight gain is a very valuable and worthwhile goal in itself.

Motivated to lose weight?

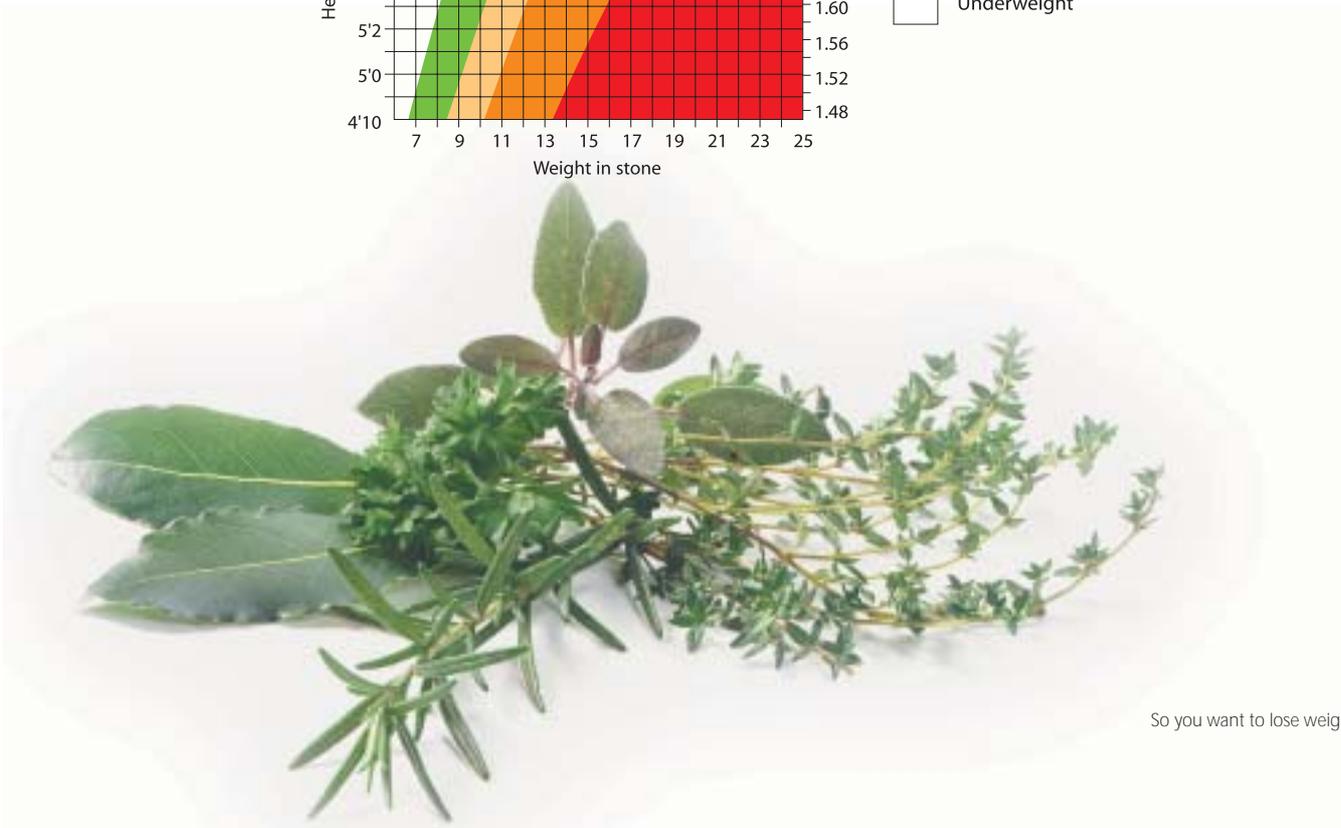
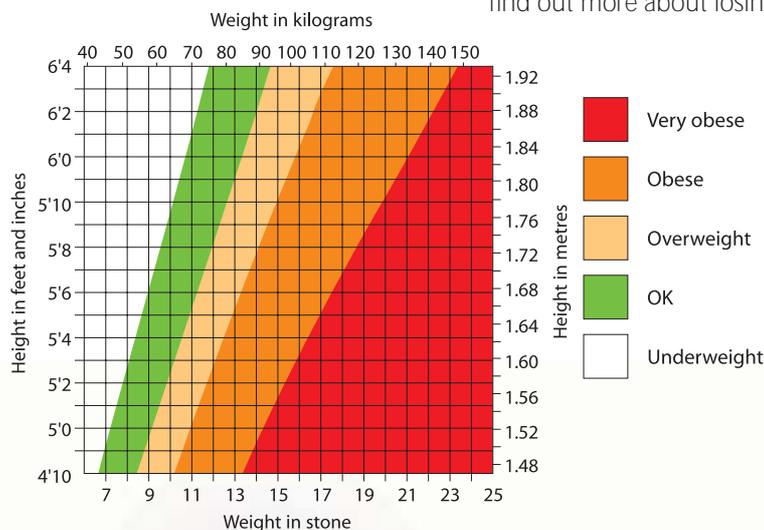
Protecting yourself from heart disease is one very good reason to think about losing weight. Getting and keeping to a healthy weight also reduces your risk of other health problems like diabetes, some cancers and arthritis, too.

Most of us know if we're overweight by looking in a mirror or by the size or tightness of our clothes. You may like to check your weight on the chart below, which also takes account of your height. If your weight is within the overweight or obese section (fat or very fat), you are wise to be thinking about trying to lose some. The 'healthy weight' section (OK) is your long term goal but in the short term you may wish to set yourself a more realistic target of perhaps losing 5 or 10lbs. Don't be too ambitious in your goal otherwise you are almost certain to be disappointed with the results. Remember that maintaining your current weight (ie not gaining more) is an achievement in itself.

Your shape, as much as your weight, could be affecting your health risk. The more apple-shaped you are, rather than pear-shaped, the more at risk of heart disease you are. You can assess this simply by measuring your waist. Find the bottom of your ribs and the top of your hips, measure around your middle at a point mid-way between these, for many people this will be the tummy button. If you measure more than 32 ins (80cm) for a woman or more than 37 ins (94 cm) for a man, your health is at risk. If the measurement is more than 35 ins (88 cm) for a woman or 40 ins (102 cm) for a man, your risk is much higher.

Other reasons for trying to lose weight may be as important to you as health. You might want to get fitter, get in-shape, look better, feel better or just be able to get into clothes which no longer fit.

Whatever your reasons, you've made an important step by getting hold of this booklet. Read on to find out more about losing weight - for good.



Eating or exercise - or both

To lose weight you need to use up more energy (calories or joules) than your body takes in from food and drink. You can do this in three ways:

- by eating and drinking fewer calories
- using more calories by getting more active
- a bit of both

Most people find that doing both achieves the best results. You may prefer to start off with changes to what you eat and think about exercise later. It's up to you. For exercise to greatly reduce the risk of heart disease you need to aim for 30 minutes

of moderate activity at least five times a week which leaves you warm and breathing more heavily, but still able to hold a conversation with someone! If this sounds impossible for you just now, remember that doing anything more than you do now is a step in the right direction and will certainly help. But remember, however much you change your eating and exercise patterns, a weight loss of 1lb (½ kg) a week is all you should expect. Any more than that is a bonus! Losing weight too quickly may not be good for you (see page 29).

To greatly reduce the risk of heart disease you need to aim for 30 minutes of moderate activity at least five times a week.



Following The Balance of Good Health will give you the best possible eating plan for good health.

Your weight loss plan

Eating and drinking fewer calories doesn't mean that you have to count them. The British Heart Foundation is as interested in the quality of the foods you eat as the amount. The Balance of Good Health pictured below shows the best proportion of foods, from the five food groups, for healthy eating and for weight loss.

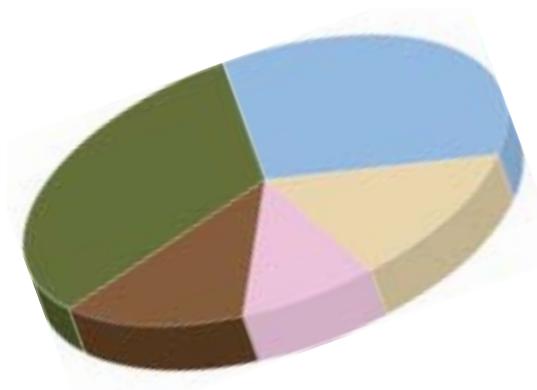
It goes like this:

- plenty of fruit and vegetables
- plenty of starchy foods such as bread, rice, grains and potatoes, try to choose wholegrains whenever possible
- smaller amounts of milk and dairy foods, low fat where possible
- smaller amounts of meat, fish, beans and nuts, low fat where possible
- tiny amounts of fatty and sugary foods, and alcoholic drinks

In essence, this is healthy eating. Eating these types of foods in the proportions shown will make sure you get the right balance of vitamins (like vitamin C) and minerals (like iron and calcium). It also provides lots of starch and fibre - keeping the bowels healthy, while keeping fat and sugar down - to reduce the risk of heart disease, some cancers, weight gain and dental problems and keep the bowels healthy.

Healthy eating for weight loss means eating the right balance and a suitable amount of food. This plan helps you manage the quantities - see page 10. Many people think they are already eating very healthily and this may be true for you. However, we know from studies that many people still haven't quite got it right and their diet doesn't quite represent the proportions of foods shown in The Balance of Good Health below.

The Balance of Good Health



How much is too much?

Following The Balance of Good Health will give you the best possible eating plan for good health. It's more about what you *can* eat than what you can't. In fact, nothing is banned. It gives you the flexibility to choose the foods you enjoy *and* to indulge in treats like chocolate, crisps and cakes now and then. Even the odd glass of wine or a beer is fine.

When watching your weight, you also have to plan the *amounts* of food you eat. It's not just the *quality* - the *quantity* matters too. Although everyone is different, as a rule, most people will

lose weight if they eat or drink between 1,500 and 1,800 calories a day. Women tend to need less than men, so if you're female, choose 1,500 calories. If you're male, choose 1,800 calories. The table below shows how many portions you would eat from each food group, for 1,500 or 1,800 calories a day. You could write your own plan in the blank right hand column. If you would like individualised advice ask your GP to refer you to a dietitian or your practice nurse.

Daily portions based on The Balance of Good Health

Food Group		1,500 calories	1,800 calories	Your Plan
Fruit and vegetables		7 or more	8 or more	
Bread, other cereals and potatoes		7	8	
Milk and dairy foods		2	3	
Meat, fish and alternatives		2	2	
Fatty and sugary foods	Fats	2	2	
	Occasional foods	1	1	
Alcohol (If you choose not to drink alcohol at all, you can have the points as fatty and sugary foods instead.)		up to 1	up to 2	



But what's a portion?

With this weight loss plan, you won't have to count calories at all. And you won't have to weigh out your food. Instead the list of common foods from all the food groups on pages 13-16 show handy amounts - or portions - beside each food, for you to choose as you wish. But remember, portions are a funny thing. One person's idea of a normal portion is often quite different from someone else's! If you're having a larger amount than the list shows, it could be a double or triple portion so would count as two or three.

We don't want to be negative. In fact we recommend that you *must eat* plenty of many foods. Five portions a day from the fruit and vegetable group is a minimum and you can aim for 7, 8 or even more! They are low in calories and full of goodness. The antioxidants they contain, especially if they are green, yellow, orange or red, offer some protection against CHD and some cancers. Any vegetables are fine as are most fruits, but note the word of caution in the box.



A word of caution:

We encourage you to eat lots of foods from the fruit and vegetable group. However there are just a few exceptions:

Avocado pears are high in monounsaturated fats and high in calories. Have as a salad garnish only once a week at the most and half an avocado only occasionally as a special treat.

Fruit juice is nourishing but quite concentrated in calories. Keep to only one portion of unsweetened fruit juice - a small glass - a day. Avoid sugary squash or fruit juice drinks.

Dried fruits are quite concentrated in natural sugar so have only one portion of these daily.

Also, make sure you eat enough foods from the 'Bread, other cereals and potatoes' group. These starchy foods were once thought to be 'stodgy'. In fact, they're not! They are filling but don't contain too many calories - unless you add fat to them. If you add fat, such as spread on bread, oil on pasta or butter on your baked potato, remember that these come from your portions in the 'Fatty foods' section. Enjoy them but keep to your limit.

Can I indulge?

Nothing is banned in this weight loss plan, but foods from the 'Fatty and sugary foods group' provide a lot of calories with little goodness. Think of these as treats or extras to be enjoyed occasionally, rather than everyday necessities. Your daily limit of fatty and sugary foods is just one portion, but you could save them up over the week if you prefer, so have none on one day and two or three on another. Many people find they eat differently at weekends or when eating out, so this way you can keep your indulgences 'up your sleeve' for those times you really need them!

We believe in a weight loss plan for life. That doesn't mean having to survive for ever on salads and crispbreads!



How much is a portion?

Fruit and vegetables (have 7 - 8 portions per day)

Vegetables eg. cauliflower, cabbage, peas, carrots, mushrooms, tomatoes, leeks, swede, courgettes, broccoli, french beans, peppers 2 large tablespoons

Salad - mixed green eg. lettuce, cucumber, onion, pepper 1 small bowl

Tomato 1 medium

Whole fresh fruit eg. 1 apple, 1 pear, 1 orange, 1 banana, 1 peach

Tinned fruit in natural juice eg. peaches, pineapple, raspberries and pears 3 large tablespoons

Stewed fruit eg. apple, rhubarb, cherries 4 large tablespoons

Large fruits 1 slice melon or pineapple, ½ grapefruit

Small fruits 12 grapes, 3 apricots, 2 plums, 2 kiwi fruits, 7 strawberries

Dried fruit eg. raisins 1 baby box - matchbox size

Fruit juice (maximum one per day) 1 small glass or small carton

Bread, other cereals and potatoes (have 7 - 8 portions per day)

Breakfast cereal eg. flakes or crispies 3 tablespoons

Muesli 2 tablespoons

Shredded wheat 1

Weetabix 1

Bread or toast 1 large slice (medium thick)

Bread bun or roll ½ large

Pitta bread 1 mini or picnic size

Chapatti 1 small

Crackers 3

Crispbreads 4

Plain naan bread 1 small

Rice, plain boiled 2 heaped tablespoons

Bread, other cereals and potatoes (have 7 - 8 portions per day) Cont...

Pasta, plain, boiled 3 heaped tablespoons

Egg noodles, boiled half packet

Potatoes 2 egg size

Bagel, plain or cinnamon & raisin ½

Crumpet/pikelet 1

Muffin 1

Malt loaf 1 small slice

Muesli bar 1

Milk and dairy foods (have 2 - 3 portions per day)

Milk (preferably semi-skimmed or better still, skimmed) 1 medium glass, 200ml (⅓ pint)

Yoghurt, plain or flavoured, low fat and low sugar 1 small pot, 150g (5oz)

Cheese - preferably low fat 1 matchbox size, 40g (1½ oz) (Brie, Camembert, Edam, reduced fat cheddar, Smoked Austrian are good). The mini portion size cheeses are handy.

Cream cheese - light the size of 2 small matchboxes, 80g (3oz)

Cottage cheese 1 large pot, 200g (8oz)

Fromage frais - light 1 small pot 150g (5oz)



Meat, fish and alternatives (have 2 -3 portions per day)

Lean meat like beef, pork, ham, lamb, chicken (without skin) 3 slices (an amount the size of a pack of playing cards)

Fish - white or oily as meat

Fish fingers 3

Eggs 2

Baked beans in tomato sauce
(low sugar and salt if possible) 5 tablespoons

Lentils 4 tablespoons cooked

Beans eg. red kidney beans, butter beans, chick peas 4 tablespoons cooked

Nuts or peanut butter 2 tablespoons

Fatty and sugary foods (see amounts below)

Fats (have 2 portions per day)

Spreading fats and oils

Butter or margarine spread 1 teaspoon

Low fat spread 2 teaspoons

Oil (any type) 1 teaspoon

Dressings and sauces

Mayonnaise 1 teaspoon

Low calorie mayonnaise 2 teaspoons

Blue cheese dressing 1 teaspoon

Salad cream 1 tablespoon

Low calorie salad cream 2 tablespoons

Gravy or white sauce (roux) 1 tablespoon

Gravy or white sauce (made with cornflour) 4 tablespoons

Occasional foods (have 1 portion per day or 7 per week)

Sugar 3 teaspoons

Jam or honey 1 heaped teaspoon

Crisps, preferably low fat 1 small packet

Cream 1 tablespoon

Ice cream 1 small scoop

Biscuits, plain 2

Slice of cake $\frac{1}{2}$

Doughnut $\frac{1}{2}$

Danish pastry $\frac{1}{2}$

Chocolate 1 small bar or 2 mini bars

Sweets 1 small tube/bag

Pastry in savoury item eg. pork pie, sausage roll,
quiche lorraine $\frac{1}{2}$

Half a slice of cake or half a sausage roll may seem rather impractical. You may wish to save up your weekly 'ration' of cakes and pastries to have at weekends or a time when you know you would like to enjoy a special treat. For example, one doughnut would be 2 portions, so 2 day's 'rations'.

Alcoholic drinks (max 1- 2 per day or 7 - 14 per week)

Ordinary strength beer or lager 1 small, 300 ml ($\frac{1}{2}$ pint)

Wine 1 glass, 100ml (4 fl oz)

Spirits 1 tot (pub measure), 25 ml (1 fl oz)

An example of a day's eating plan

The day's eating plan below shows how someone having 1,500 calories a day might choose from The Balance of Good Health. Obviously no two days are ever the same, so this is just an example.

Meals	Food Group	Fruit and veg	Bread, other cereals and potatoes	Milk and dairy	Meat, fish and alternatives	Fats	Fatty & sugary foods/ and alcohol
For 1,500 Calories	(portions)	7	7	2	2	2	1/1
Breakfast							
Bran flakes	6 tablespoons		2				
Semi-skimmed milk	200 ml (½ pint)			1			
Small fruit juice		1					
Cups of tea, milk no sugar							
Mid morning							
Coffee, milk no sugar							
Apple		1					
Lunch							
Chicken salad sandwich:							
2 slices bread			2				
low fat spread	1 teaspoon					1	
Sliced chicken					1		
Mixed salad filling		1					
Mineral water							
Small slice Malt Loaf			1				
Mid afternoon							
Pot of tea, milk no sugar							
Large glass water							
Dinner							
Pasta twirls (boiled)	6 large tablespoons		2				
Small lean pork steak					1		
Sauce made with olive oil (onions, tomato & mushrooms)		1				1	
Carrots		1					
Broccoli		1					
Peaches in natural juice		1					
Cream	1 tablespoon						1
Glass of wine							1
Milk in tea/coffee throughout day	200 ml (½ pint)			1			
TOTAL		7	7	2	2	2	1/1



A word about fat

Keeping the fat in your diet low is the best possible aid to weight loss and The Balance of Good Health is designed to do this. By choosing low fat options in all the food groups, you will be keeping your fat intake well within the recommended limit for good health. But remember fat is sometimes hidden in foods so may not be obvious. Watch out! And always count the fat portions up to ensure you don't go over your daily or weekly limit. Here are things to look out for in the different food groups:

Bread, cereal and potatoes

Choose a vegetable/tomato based sauce for your pasta rather than a rich cream/cheese sauce. Do you really need to add margarine to the mashed potato? Greasy chips? Try low fat oven chips for flavour without fat. Experiment with different breads which are so tasty they don't need spread. Choose steamed or boiled rice rather than fried.

Fruit and vegetables

Have your vegetables been stir-fried in oil or served with a daub of margarine? Count the fat! Has your salad been drowned in an oil rich dressing? Choose low calorie or fat free instead. Wouldn't your fresh fruit taste even better without the cream?

Milk and dairy foods

Semi-skimmed milk is great, skimmed even better. Choose low fat but remember, with yoghurts that doesn't always mean low sugar or low calorie! Choose fromage frais and choose the very low fat type. Watch out for creme fraiche which sounds very low fat but isn't! Have tiny servings of strong tasty cheeses in sandwiches and cooking to make a little go a long way.

Meat, fish and alternatives

Is your chicken breast coated in fried crumbs or basted in butter? Have red meat but keep it lean and make a little go a long way using vegetables to bulk out the dish (eg. casseroles, stir fry). Has your fish been battered and deep fried? Ask for it uncoated! Or have grilled fish fingers. Is your sausage or burger fried or grilled? Grilled is much healthier. Choose a vegetarian meal from time to time but watch out for pastry and lots of extra cheese. Have eggs! Not fried, but poached or boiled. Keep it to 3-4 eggs a week if you have high blood cholesterol levels. Vegetarian alternatives to meat and fish such as nuts and beans or lentils are very tasty and much cheaper. Try them.

Fatty and sugary foods

Fats

Use cornflour to thicken cooking sauces or gravies for meat or fish, so you won't need fat. Have mixed salads with low calorie salad dressings rather than

mayonnaise and oily dressings. Oil is better than lard for cooking but is still calorie-rich so use as little as you can get away with, even olive or sunflower oil. What exactly are you spreading on your bread? (see page 20)

Occasional foods

Make or buy fruit pies with a top crust only to save half the fat and get more fruit. Have bread-based pizza or bagels with low fat cream cheese instead of fat-laden savoury pastries like sausage rolls and quiche. Choose low fat biscuits and cakes as these will contain a bit less fat than the traditional product. But beware they can still be quite high in fat. Those in wrappers may help you keep to a small portion. Compare the labels of different savoury snacks such as potato crisps, tortilla chips and maize-curls. Choose the brand with the lowest fat in the pack.





The majority of the salt we eat is hidden within pre-cooked or pre-prepared meals.

A word about spreading fats

It's hard to keep pace of the full range of new 'fat spreads' on the market which are intended as alternatives to butter. Remember that strictly, butter and margarine contain the same amount of fat and calories. A good rule of thumb is to avoid butter altogether if you can and use whichever type of alternative you prefer but spread it very thinly. Choose one which contains the best type of fat; 'high in unsaturated fat', which could be *polyunsaturates* or *monounsaturates*, both are recommended. Also choose one which is labelled 'reduced fat' or 'low fat' - the lower the better. If you really can't resist butter have it as a special treat once a week. Despite what you may have read in the papers, it really is bad news for the heart as well as the waistline.

Avoid spreading fats that have hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated fat listed in the ingredients. They contain trans fat which can raise LDL cholesterol. Hydrogenated fat is also often found in commercially baked biscuits, cakes, crackers and pastries, fried foods, shortening and snack foods.

A word about sugar

Sugar can count for a lot of wasted calories especially if you have one or two spoons full in every drink. Three teaspoons is one portion from the 'Fatty and sugary foods' group so it quickly uses up your limit. Try to wean yourself off it or if you really need the sweet taste, try artificial sweeteners instead.

A word about salt

You should avoid eating too much salt as it is linked with high blood pressure. Table salt is made up of the minerals sodium and chloride. It is the sodium in salt that is linked to increased health risks.

The guidelines for daily salt intake are less than 6 grams a day for an adult, or about one level teaspoon. The majority of adults in the UK are eating over 9 grams a day and it's easy to see why. Salt is in many of the processed foods we eat such as bread, biscuits, crisps, tinned vegetables, baked beans, canned soups, takeaways, sauces and ready meals. Approximately 65-85% of the salt we eat comes from processed foods.

There are three ways that you can reduce the salt that you eat.

- Don't add it to your food when cooking, use herbs, spices and lemon juice to flavour food instead
- Don't add salt to your food at the table. Your taste buds will soon adapt to change and you may even find that you prefer the taste!
- Check the nutrition labels when buying food. You will often see sodium listed rather than salt so watch out for that. 6 grams of salt is equivalent to 2.5 grams of sodium.



Alcohol

Most people enjoy a drink or two and there's no reason why you shouldn't have an occasional drink when you're trying to lose weight. Remember though, that alcoholic drinks are low on nourishment and high on calories. So the more you drink the more extra calories you'll be taking in. Less is definitely better. Also, because alcohol is an appetite stimulant some people notice they tend to eat more when they drink alcohol. High calorie nibbles like nuts, crisps and cheese are especially damaging or worse still, a late night take-away meal!

So, if you drink, count up the extra portions on your weight loss plan and keep within your weekly limit. Avoid the strong ales and sugary mixers and choose 'diet', 'lite' or sugar free drinks where possible. The following amounts count as one portion (or one UNIT) of alcohol:

1 small bitter, lager or cider, 300 ml (½ pint)
1 small glass of white or red wine, 100ml (4 fl oz)
1 pub measure of spirits, 25 ml (1 fl oz)
1 small glass of sherry, 50 ml (2 fl oz)

Of course the message which applies to everyone, whether trying to lose weight or not is about alcohol and safety. Safety for your own health and others. Keep within the safe limits of NO MORE THAN 14 units of alcohol per week for women and 21 units per week for men. The maximum that men should drink each day is four units, the maximum per day for women is three units

Non-alcoholic drinks

If you're keeping off the alcohol, or just don't like drinking alcohol, choose alternative drinks carefully. Alcohol free does not mean calorie free! If in doubt, read the label.

The best choices:

- Tap water with ice and a slice of lemon
- Plain spring water or mineral water, sparkling or still
- Sugar free or 'diet' fizzy drinks (coca-cola, lemonade) and mixers (tonic, dry ginger, bitter lemon)
- Flavoured waters with a hint of fruit (may contain a small amount of sugar)
- Your own diluted fruit juice (1 part juice to 8 water)
- Tea or coffee, without sugar

Things to beware of:

- Low alcohol or 'lite' beers or lagers
 - Sugary fizzy drinks like lemonade or coca-cola
 - Fruit juice
 - Cream liqueurs
 - Cocktails
 - Alcopops
-

Looking at labels

The BHF has a separate leaflet 'Guide to Food Labelling' which may be of interest. Checking food labels isn't necessary for your weight loss plan but it does help identify hidden fats and hidden salts in processed foods and may identify the types of fats in food. You won't have time while shopping to read everything. Here are some things you can check at a glance.

Choose foods making general claims such as:

- diet, reduced calorie, low calorie
- reduced fat, low fat, virtually fat free
- healthy eating

Although these don't guarantee that the product is perfect for your needs, they suggest the product was made with the health-conscious person in

mind. Remember that sugar free doesn't mean low calorie or low fat. Such foods may be high in both. But, beware of 0% cholesterol - as such foods may still have plenty of fat and calories!

Look at the nutritional information, especially energy (calories), fat and saturated fat, per 100g or per serving. Compare similar products and choose the brand with the lowest. The fat content is probably the most helpful piece of information and the amount you can eat in a day depends on the total daily calorie level you are aiming for.

	1,500 kcals	1,800 kcals
Total fat per day	57 grams	68 grams
Saturated fat per day	15 grams	18 grams



Walking is particularly good because it doesn't cost anything and you don't need a gym or any special kit other than sensible shoes for it!



Getting moving

Exercise and activity can make a real difference to your weight loss, as well as your state of mind. Being more active will help use up more calories as well as keeping your mind off food! It doesn't have to mean going to classes or taking up jogging. It's more about finding something which suits you - which is safe and enjoyable. Aim to increase your activity levels gradually up to half an hour a day of moderate activity on at least five days of the week.

You can build this into your everyday life with a bit of thought and determination. Walking is particularly good because it doesn't cost anything and you don't need a gym or any special kit other than

sensible shoes for it! People have found that taking the stairs instead of the lift (up as well as down), walking to the shops, cycling to work, digging the garden or playing outdoors with the children can make quite a difference.

If more structured exercise appeals to you, such as swimming, the gym or exercise classes, find out if your local leisure centre runs sessions for people like you at a time which suits you. Remember that for weight loss and heart health you need to get slightly breathless (but still able to talk) and a little hot and sweaty for the exercise to be worthwhile. If you have any health problems, check with your doctor before starting an exercise programme.

Changing behaviour

As you know, changing your diet or getting more active both need a lot of careful thought and effort. That's not to say it's an uphill battle, but there are some ways you can help to make it a bit easier for yourself. Many of these things involve a little planning ahead or thinking about things differently. They all help you feel more in control of what you are trying to achieve. For a lot of people these 'behaviour modifications' are the key to successful and permanent weight loss.

The list below shows some simple actions which people have found helpful. Tick those which you do:

- Do nothing else while eating
(Don't waste the calories - taste and enjoy them)
- Eat at regular times
- Eat sitting down
- Pause during meals and put your knife and fork down between mouthfuls
- Aim to be the last to finish
- Shop on a full stomach
- Write a shopping list and stick to it
- Keep healthy snacks easily to hand (eg fresh fruit in a bowl, chopped salad/vegetables in the fridge)
- Clean your teeth after a meal or when you get the urge to overeat
- Serve your meal straight on to a plate and remove serving dishes from the table so you're less tempted to eat too much.
- Wait at least five minutes after finishing your meal before deciding whether to have second helpings
- Practice refusing offers to overeat. Learn to say 'no thank you', politely but firmly and convincingly.

As well as things you can do differently, there are also ways you can teach yourself to *think* differently. To understand more about your eating habits, you may find it helpful to keep a food diary, recording what you eat each day. You could also note when you ate, where and how you were feeling at the time. You will probably find you glean a lot of useful information from your food diary. Use that information to plan your coping strategies. Along with your food diary, using the suggestions below can help you get your 'mind over matter' and feel more in control of your weight loss plans.

Understanding patterns

Plan for the times of day when you know you are more likely to want to eat. For example, save some bread or cereal to have at 10pm if you know evenings are a danger time for you.

Real hunger?

Before you eat, check that you're really hungry (in your stomach) rather than just eating at a certain time or occasion out of habit.

Feelings

Be aware of how your feelings affect what you want to eat. For example do you eat more when you're feeling angry, upset, lonely or bored? Noticing a pattern can help you plan how to cope.



A lapse is not a collapse. If you break your plan for a few hours or days, it's not the end of the world!

Triggers

Be aware of triggers which are likely to lead you to overeat. For example, being at home alone, watching a cookery programme on TV, driving past a fast food restaurant, preparing a snack for your children or grandchildren. Planning ahead may help you cope.

Events

Plan ahead for special occasions when you know you'll be tempted. For example, eat a little less during the week when you're going to a party at the weekend, so you can indulge in a special dessert.

Distractions

Use distractions to help control your eating. For example, go for a walk, phone a friend, buy a magazine, flip through your photo albums.

Don't be hard on yourself

A lapse is not a collapse. If you break your plan for a few hours or days, it's not the end of the world! Try not to see your goals as 'all or nothing'. Try to learn from what went wrong and get back on track as soon as you feel ready.



Gradual weight loss really is the safest and most effective way.



Your questions answered

Food combining seems popular. Does it work?

At the end of the day, people who successfully lose weight on this diet seem to have done so simply because their calorie intake is restricted. Food combining involves eating foods containing protein, fat and carbohydrate in very strict combinations and sequences. Some people say it has worked for them and it certainly involves eating plenty of fruit and vegetables. But it does have drawbacks as it means careful planning. For example, a sandwich (carbohydrate) cannot include a protein filling like chicken, tuna or egg - only

salad or fruit such as mashed banana. At other times meals must exclude carbohydrate, which means a roast dinner without potatoes or an Italian meal without the pasta or bread. This sort of food combining bans high calorie foods containing a combination of fat and carbohydrate which rules out all 'fatty and sugary foods' like chocolate, cakes, crisps, puddings and pastries. It is quite restrictive so difficult to keep up especially when eating out or at someone else's house.

What about 'high protein, low carbohydrate' diets like the Atkins diet?

It is not recommended. The Atkins diet is the best-selling diet book in popular bookshops and has been widely promoted by celebrities for whom it seems to have worked - at least in the short term. It is based on high intakes of protein foods like meat, cheese and eggs and high fat foods like cream and butter. It severely restricts carbohydrate foods - not only chocolate, cakes and puddings but also bread, potatoes, pasta, rice and cereals. It even restricts many fruits and some vegetables because of their carbohydrate content.

Although people seem to lose weight very quickly in the short term on this type of diet, it does not fit with the requirements for a balanced diet as set out in The Balance of Good Health. It has not been tested for long-term safety and there is no guarantee that it does not cause damage to health, especially if people follow it long term. A quick fix is not a permanent solution to weight control.



Features of the Atkins diet	What it means	Why it can be a problem
High in protein	The kidneys have to work extra hard to break down protein in the body.	This protein burden may damage the kidneys especially in people who, unknowingly, have kidneys not working as well as they could. There may also be a risk of kidney stones.
Low in carbohydrate, high in fat	Restricting the very foods we should eat 'plenty of': Butter and cream can be eaten freely possibly affecting blood cholesterol levels, especially in the weight maintenance phase.	Restricting foods such as fruit and vegetables and wholegrain cereals - which we know have been associated with preventing coronary heart disease and diabetes is cause for concern. Low intakes of cereal and fibre can also cause constipation and other bowel problems.

Would it help to become a vegetarian?

A diet based heavily on vegetables, fruit and cereals/grains is a very healthy way to eat. But a vegetarian diet is *not* automatically a weight loss plan. It can be quite high in calories because butter, oil, cheese and pastries tend to be popular with vegetarians. Fried vegetable dishes such as vegetable samosa, spring rolls and cheese and onion pasties are all high in calories.

If you don't eat meat, make sure you choose some healthy alternatives from the 'Meat, fish and alternatives' food group, such as eggs, nuts, beans, peas and lentils. These foods are essential for the iron they provide which in turn helps carry oxygen around the body. Interestingly, research suggests that fish eaters (who just avoid meat and poultry) and vegans (who avoid milk and dairy foods as well as meat and fish) have less coronary heart disease than meat eaters or vegetarians. Vegans, however, have to be especially careful not to become 'deficient' in important minerals and vitamins such as calcium, iron and vitamin B12.

Quick weight loss - isn't it more rewarding?

Many people want to lose weight quickly in just a few weeks ready for a special event or a holiday. Unfortunately our body rebels against this kind of crash dieting in a number of ways. Firstly, eating so little means feeling hungry, listless and sometimes faint so it is difficult to sustain for long. It also means the body is unlikely to be adequately nourished as such a small food intake can't provide enough vitamins and minerals for good health. Secondly, losing weight quickly involves losing essential water and muscle as well as fat. So, although the scales may read less, your body has not lost much fat! Thirdly, your metabolic rate slows down and it becomes even harder to lose weight. Gradual weight loss really is the safest and most effective way.



A vegetarian diet is not automatically a weight loss plan. It can be quite high in calories.

Meal ideas

Of course, your weight loss plan will mean making changes, but that doesn't mean you have to stop eating your favourite meals. Neither does it mean you have to spend hours in the kitchen preparing special foods. In fact many meals are easy to prepare. What could be quicker than baking fish dishes, boiling some pasta or stir-frying a mixture of chopped vegetables with thin strips of meat for flavour?

Cost and convenience may also matter to you. Choose wisely and you'll find that foods like fish fingers (grilled), low-fat ready-made cooking sauces, and 'ready meals' can all be included in your weight loss plan. If you have a microwave oven use it to speed up cooking time as well as cutting out the fat. Cut your shopping bill by buying smaller amounts of lean meat and chicken and bulk it out with fillers like baked beans, chick peas or red kidney beans.

Support

Many people like the idea of support with their weight loss plan, from someone they know well, like a friend, relative or colleague or by going to a group. If you know someone else who is wanting to lose weight you could ask them to be your 'buddy'. You can then help keep track on each others progress and offer support when things aren't going so well. At the British Heart Foundation we believe this could really make a difference to your chances of success.

Here are a few ideas:

Baked beans on toast

Baked potato with a chicken portion, barbecue sauce, peas and sweetcorn

Smoked mackerel risotto with a large green salad

Fish fingers with mashed potato and mixed frozen vegetables

Sliced ham with lettuce, beetroot, tomato, grated carrot and warm crusty bread

Potato and bean curry on a bed of rice, with sliced banana and grated cucumber

Strips of cooked chicken with red kidney beans and sweetcorn on a large bed of mixed salad.

Serve with granary bread roll.

Beef and vegetable casserole with boiled potatoes, mashed swede and carrot

Pasta quills with tomato and mushroom sauce.



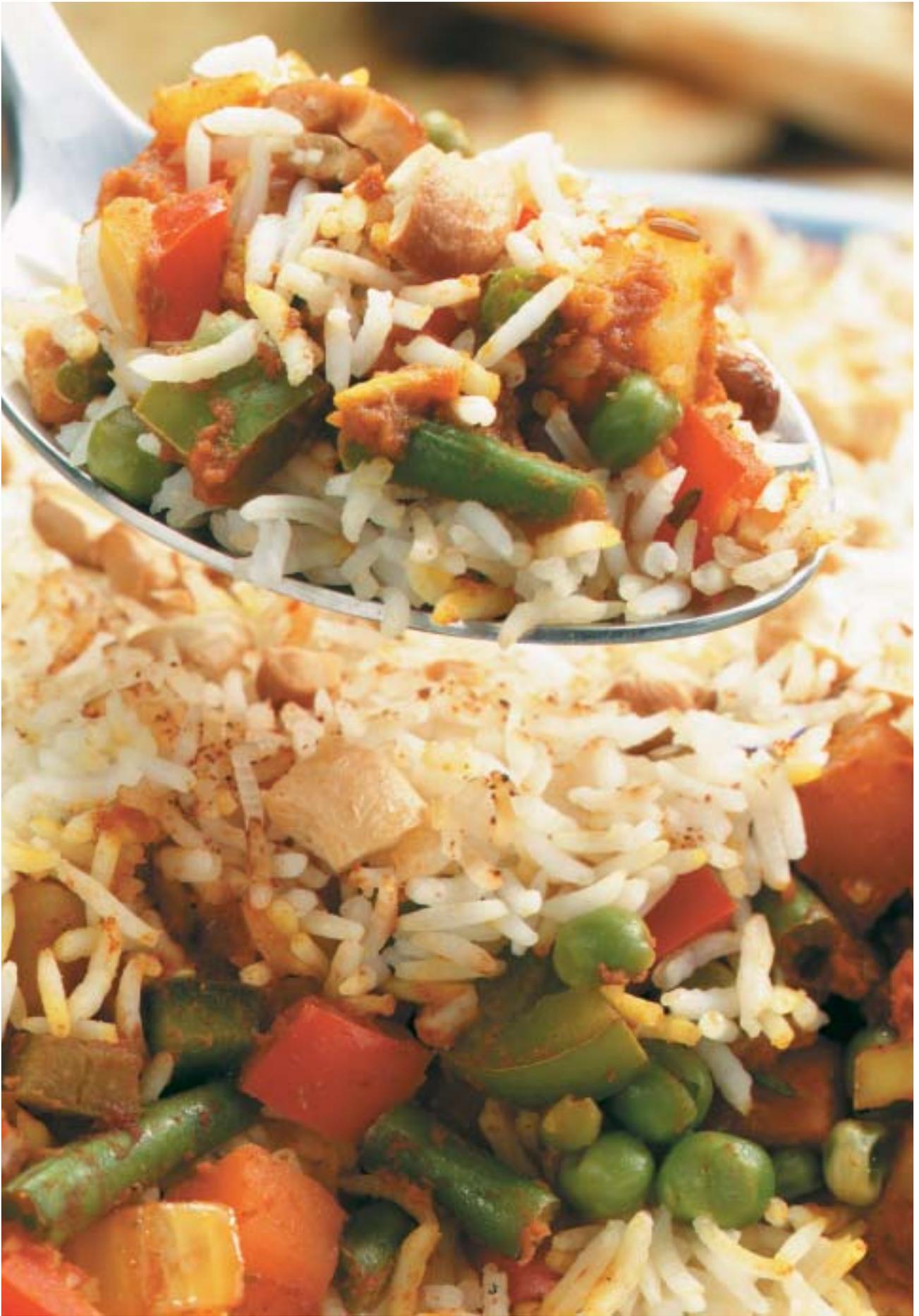
When watching your weight, you also have to plan the amounts of food you eat. It's not just the quality - the quantity matters too.



Tracking progress

You may find it useful to fill in a record chart to keep track of your weight loss. Weigh yourself on the same scales and at the same time of day, without clothes if possible. Don't be tempted to weigh yourself more than once a week. The chart on page 33 is to help you do this and to monitor your progress in other ways. Set your own goals and try to be realistic! For example, there may be a favourite item of clothing you could aim to fit into or an activity you would like to be able to do such as a 10 minute walk. Or your goals may be about your feelings of self-confidence. Very specific goals such as 'eating 3 pieces of fruit each day' or 'stop eating chocolate' are helpful, as they

are easy to measure and you will definitely know whether you have achieved them or not. We think rewards are also a good idea, to keep you going when it gets tough, and to give yourself a pat on the back when you get there. Rewards should be non-food based and you can earn them for reaching 'behaviour' goals not just weight goals. Buying a new book or going to see a film are ideas. The best rewards are those which really would be a treat for **you**. Decide in advance what your GOALS and REWARDS will be and fill in these columns at the start. Record your ACHIEVEMENTS after each week or month, whichever you prefer.



The chart is only for 12 weeks (3 months) but you can draw out another one for your new goals over the next 12 weeks on a separate sheet of paper if you wish.

Progress Chart

Week	Date	Goals		Rewards	Achievements	
		Weight	Behaviours/ activities		Weight	Behaviours/ activities
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						

Finally..... Keeping at it

Some people say losing weight is not too difficult. It's keeping it off that's the hard bit. If you have a tendency to gain weight, it's true that you'll always have to keep an eye on your weight. Remember, we said at the start, this is a **weight loss plan for life**.

To keep your weight healthy, or to prevent weight gain, keep following the rules of 'The Balance of Good Health' as we've described throughout this booklet. You may find that it becomes easier over time and that filling up on foods from the main four food groups leaves you with less space for the calorific 'Fatty and sugary foods'. Think of yourself as someone who isn't a big eater and practice saying 'no' when people offer you bigger portions or second helpings. Remind yourself how good it feels to have reached some of your goals. If your weight goes up a bit, don't despair. We're all human. You may well be able to learn something from your lapse. By reassessing things, making a few small changes, and getting support, you will start to lose a few pounds again.

More help?

If you would like help from someone who can talk through your weight loss plan personally, ask your doctor to refer you to a dietitian or the practice nurse.

You may also like to think about getting support from others. Look in the yellow pages for local leisure centres and health clubs or ask at your local library who may know of 'weight watching' or 'slimming' groups or classes in the area.



Further Information

The British Heart Foundation (BHF) also produces other educational materials that may be of interest. To find out about these or to order your Publications and videos catalogue please go to bhf.org.uk/publications or call the BHF Orderline on **0870 600 6566** or email orderline@bhf.org.uk. Many of our publications are downloadable from bhf.org.uk/publications.

Give something back

We do not charge for our educational materials, but a donation will help us to help others.

Have your say

We would welcome your comments to help us produce the best information for you. Why not let us know what you think? Contact us through our website at bhf.org.uk/yoursay.

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