



SUPPORTING HEALTHY EATING: Tips for parents

Eating a healthy and balanced diet is important for maintaining a healthy weight. It will also provide more energy to take part in favourite activities and help avoid long term health conditions such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease and obesity.



What does a healthy diet comprise of?

A healthy and balanced diet is mainly made up of fruit and vegetables, good proteins, and slow releasing carbohydrates. Dairy products, oils and spreads should only be consumed sometimes, and consumption of sugary and fatty foods should be limited.

What are the effects of not eating a healthy diet?

Eating too much unhealthy food can have a negative effect on the body. It can lead to weight gain, feeling tired and lethargic, and can increase the likelihood of developing long-term health conditions such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease and obesity.

Why is it important for people with Down's syndrome to eat a healthy diet?

People with Down's syndrome have a slower metabolism than people without Down's syndrome, which means they burn the calories they eat 10-15% slower and will burn less calories during exercise. This means that it can be easier for people with Down's syndrome to gain weight, making them more susceptible to the long term health conditions associated with being overweight or obese.

How can I help?

There are many ways you can help support a person with Down's syndrome to eat a healthier diet. People with Down's syndrome can find it hard to think about long-term consequences, so they may not understand the importance of making healthy choices about their diet. People with Down's syndrome often like routine and can struggle with large changes, so making small changes to a person's daily routine regularly will improve their long term eating habits.



HOW YOU CAN HELP?

Top Tips

Eat a rainbow

Planning ahead

Food swaps



Eat a rainbow

It can be difficult to eat enough fruit and vegetables everyday, so why not make it a fun game and try and eat a rainbow. Eat a wide variety of fruit and vegetables, and try and eat one piece of fruit and one vegetable from each colour of the rainbow. For example, red peppers, carrots, sweetcorn, spinach, blueberries and beetroot.

Food swaps

It can be easy to make your favourite meals healthier by swapping some of the ingredients in the meal with healthier alternatives. For example, swapping spaghetti for butternut squash spaghetti, swapping new potatoes for sweet potatoes, swapping chips for kale chips or parsnip chips, or trying a bread-less burger. Making small changes to your favourite meals is a good way to start making positive changes to your meals, and it is less daunting for people with Down's syndrome who may struggle with change.



Planning ahead

Life can get busy for everyone, which can sometimes make eating healthy hard! Sometimes it can be easier to get a take-away or a microwave meal. However, if you plan your meals ahead when you do your food shop this will save you the stress of having to think of a healthy recipe without having the ingredients.

Resources

If you would like more information about Down's syndrome and healthy eating, take a look at the list of resources below:

- NHS Livewell website www.nhs.uk/Livewell
- "The Down syndrome nutrition handbook – A guide to promoting healthy lifestyles." By Joan Medlen. Woobine House, 2002.
- To find out more about DSActive or the Down's Syndrome Association please visit our website www.dsactive.org.uk and www.downs-syndrome.org.uk