

# How to eat a balanced diet over a week

October 3 2012

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Nutritionists at the University of Glasgow have served up a menu showing what a balanced diet over a week looks like.

The eatwell week menu was commissioned by the Food Standards Agency in Scotland to provide a practical example of what a balanced – and affordable – diet over a week would look like and to help individuals make healthier [food choices](#).

Dr Wilma Leslie, researcher in [Human Nutrition](#) at the University of Glasgow, who helped develop the menu, said: "There is lots of information available to the public about the importance of a balanced diet but people still have difficulty in putting this into practice.

"We tried to make this menu as realistic and achievable as possible, so the [portion sizes](#) are typical, the nutrients are close to the limits of the daily recommended values so that changes for individuals from their actual diet wouldn't be too demanding, and there are some treats such as crisps and chocolate in there too.

"The other important thing we wanted to do was make sure the menu was affordable and required only basic cooking skills. We also aimed to limit [food waste](#) by using tinned and frozen food where possible."

The researchers used market research data which showed what meals and snacks were most commonly eaten by people in the UK to help guide the choice of foods on the menu and address barriers to [acceptability](#).

The menu, which includes meals such as beef curry, spaghetti Bolognese and beans on toast, was designed to meet the [energy requirements](#) of a normal-weight adult woman with light physical activity patterns which are just over 2,000kcal a day.

The meals within the week are interchangeable to allow [individual choice](#) and flexibility but the menu was not designed to provide examples for young children, vegetarians or [vegans](#) or ethnic eating patterns.

The menu meets the requirements for minerals such as vitamin C, calcium and iron; recommendations around consumption of [red meat](#) and the five-a-day fruit and vegetable guidelines; as well as the guidance on eating two portions of fish a week.

The calorie provision from each day varies between 1,833kcal to 2181kcal, averaging out across the week at 2,050kcal a day. Average salt level was below the maximum recommended intake of no more than 6g/day.

Dr Fiona Comrie, diet & nutrition advisor, Food Standards Agency in Scotland said: "What the researchers have done is demonstrate that is it possible to develop a menu, incorporating foods that are popular and widely consumed by British adults, which meet dietary recommendations and targets. The menu is not dependent on any single food item, or any unusual or expensive pattern of eating, to meet nutritional requirements."

The FSA in Scotland, which currently provides guidance on a [balanced diet](#) through its eatwell plate guide, plans to launch new eatwell resources, based on the eatwell week project carried out by the University of Glasgow.

Recipes for the eatwell week will be included in the resource to

encourage cooking, from raw ingredients. To enable consumers to adjust the eatwell week to suit their own needs, information on how to increase or decrease the energy intake and substitute some foods is also provided. The resource will be available online from summer 2013.

A research paper, 'Designing the eatwell week: the application of eatwell plate advice to weekly food intake', is published in the journal *Public Health Nutrition*.

**More information:** [www.gla.ac.uk/media/media\\_242390\\_en.jpg](http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_242390_en.jpg)

Provided by University of Glasgow

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