

Notes/Goals:

**Nutrition and Dietetics
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Healthy Eating Following a Stroke

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Useful organisations:

Stroke Association

Stroke Helpline: 0303 3033 100

Website: stroke.org.uk

Email: info@stroke.org.uk

Contact us for information about stroke, emotional support and details of local services and support groups.

www.nhs.uk/livewell/5aday

The NHS Choices 5 A Day website tells you about the benefits of eating at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day.

www.nhs.uk/Change4Life/

The NHS Choices Change 4 Life website supports families to make lifestyle changes. There are recipes and hints and tips on how to eat well and get active.

British Dietetic Association

Tel: 0121 200 8080

Website: www.bda.uk.com

They provide factsheet on various aspects of diet and nutrition.

British Heart Foundation

Customer Service Centre: 0300 330 3311

Website: www.bhf.org.uk

They provide information and advice on heart disease.

Exercise

Regular exercise helps to reduce blood cholesterol, reduces high blood pressure and helps with weight control. Exercise does not have to be exhausting or boring to be good for you. Find activities that you enjoy and are convenient for you. As a guide try to do 30 minutes or more every day. Two fifteen minute or three 10 minute sessions can be as beneficial as one 30 minute session.

For example:

- ◆ Do housework, mow the lawn or gardening.
- ◆ Walk instead of taking a bus or car, especially for journeys that take less than 5 minutes to drive.
- ◆ Use the stairs instead of the lift.
- ◆ Take up dancing, team sports, tennis, swimming, go hiking or cycling at the weekends.
- ◆ Do some chair exercises if general mobility is difficult.
- ◆ Try to do some exercises, such as using a mini-stepper or exercise bike whilst watching television.



Introduction

Following a stroke there is an increased risk of having a further stroke.

Small changes can make a big difference.

There are a number of lifestyle factors that can be changed to reduce this risk.

These include:

- ◆ Stop smoking
- ◆ Follow a healthy well balanced diet
- ◆ Aim for a healthy weight—this helps with managing high blood pressure.
- ◆ Avoid excess alcohol
- ◆ Take enough exercise.

This booklet provides advice to help you make the best dietary choices that are known to reduce your overall risk.

N.B. Family history. Stroke is not hereditary but some of the risk factors e.g. diabetes or high blood pressure may be.

Take note: It is important to start **very slowly** and gradually build up the amount of exercise you do, especially if you are not used to being physically active.

Check with your GP before starting a new exercise programme.

Your GP/Consultant can advise you if it is safe to become more active again if you have had a period of illness or surgery, and which types of exercise would be best for you.

Main Points

Each point is explained in more detail as you go through the booklet.

1. Reduce your fat intake.
2. Eat fish at least twice a week, one of which should be oily.
3. Eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day.
4. If you are overweight try to lose weight.
5. Consider eating more starchy and high fibre foods, such as wholegrain varieties, pulses, and oats
6. Limit salt intake.
7. Limit alcohol intake.
8. Read labels carefully.
9. Regular gentle exercise, start slowly and build up exercise levels.

Reading the label

When shopping look at the label to help you make a healthier choice. Compare similar products and choose ones with less fat, saturated fat, sugars and salt.

For foods you eat in large amounts, like ready-made meals, look at the “amount per serving” column. For snacks and other foods you eat in smaller amounts, look at the “per 100g” information.

Many foods are now labeled with ‘traffic light colours’ - HIGH (red), MEDIUM (amber), LOW (green).

Check claims such as “low in fat” carefully. Look at the actual fat content on the back of the packet. Remember a bag of crisps that claims to contain 25% less fat than normal crisps, still contains a lot of fat!

	A Lot (per 100g)	Some (per 100g)	A Little (per 100g)
Sugars	10.0g	5.0g	2.0g
Fat	20.0g	10.g	3.0g
Saturates	5.0g	3.0g	1.5g
Fibre	3.0g	2.0g	0.5g
Sodium	0.5g	0.3g	0.1g
Salt	1.25g	0.75g	0.25g

Poor Appetite

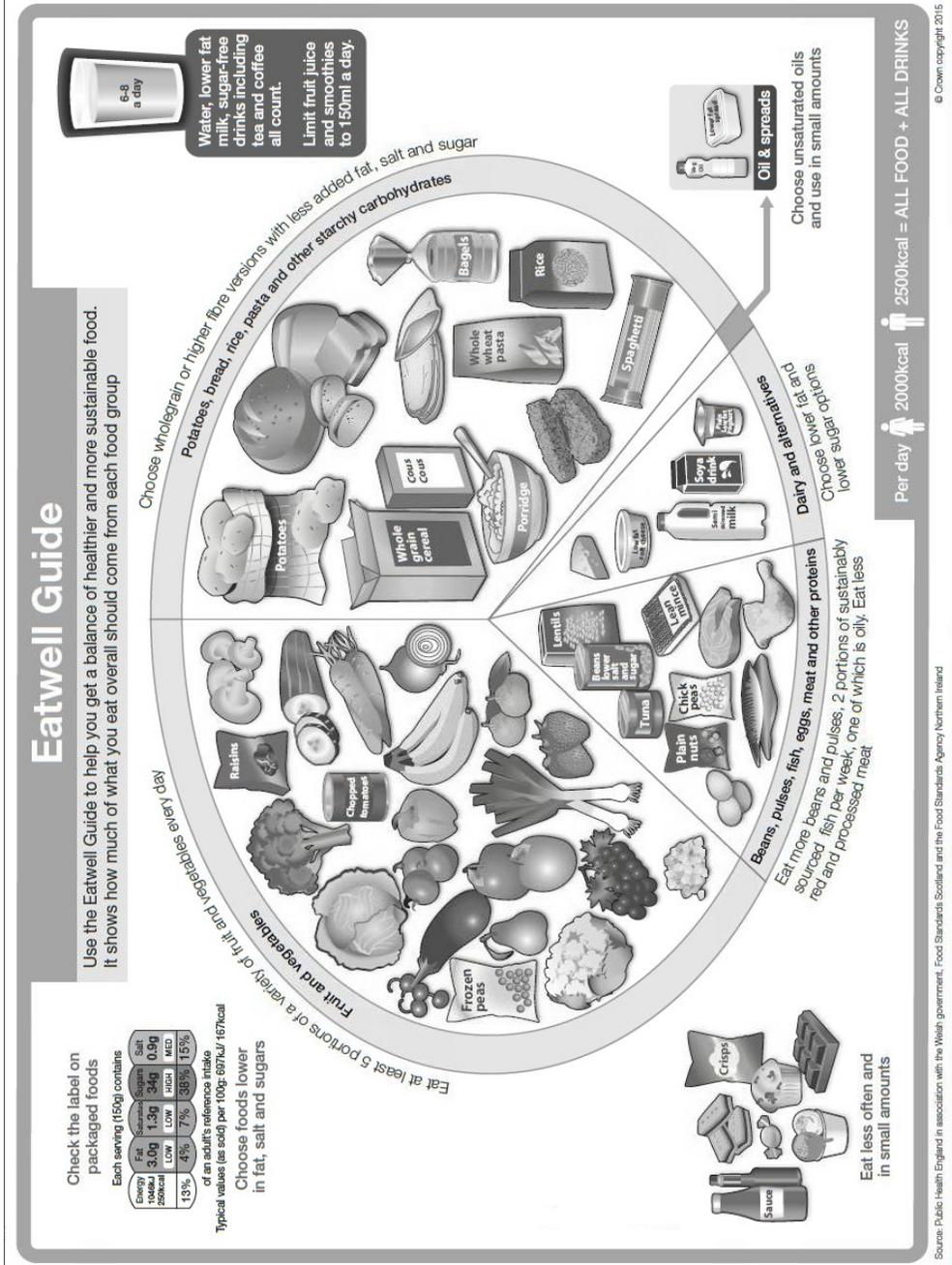
A poor appetite can be a side effect of a stroke. Being stressed or anxious can also affect your appetite.

Sometimes a poor appetite is caused by depression and is likely to improve after depression is treated.

Useful Tips:

- ◆ Eat regularly throughout the day, even if you do not feel hungry. Aim for 'little and often', having regular small meals and snacks.
- ◆ If your appetite is better at certain times of the day take advantage of this and try to eat a little more.
- ◆ Attractive, tasty, pleasant-smelling foods may enhance your appetite.
- ◆ Avoid serving large portions of food to prevent feeling overwhelmed or use a smaller plate. You can always go back for more!
- ◆ Try drinking nourishing fluids between meals as having them with meals may fill you up.
- ◆ Fresh air and gentle physical exercise e.g. walking can help to stimulate your appetite.

If you have problems swallowing or chewing speak to your GP. You may need further advice from a Dietitian or Speech and Language Therapist.



The Eatwell Guide

Healthy eating will help you manage your weight and blood pressure. Both are important in order to reduce the risk of another stroke.

The Eatwell Guide applies to most people whether they are a healthy weight or overweight, whether they eat meat or are vegetarian.

The Eatwell Guide can help you make healthier choices. It shows the different types of food we need to eat, and in what proportions, to have a healthy well balanced diet.

It is a good idea to try to get this balance right every day but not necessarily at every meal.

The food we eat has been divided into five food groups:

- Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta (and other starchy foods)
- Milk and dairy foods
- Food and drinks high in sugar and fat
- Meat, fish, eggs, beans, (and other non-dairy sources of protein)
- Fruit and vegetables.

Try to choose a variety of different food from each of the food groups **apart** from the 'Foods and drinks **high in fat and/or sugar**'.

Although it is important to have some fat in your diet you do not need to eat any of the foods from this group to eat a healthy balanced diet.

Food	Go ahead	Eat in moderation	Limit
Vegetables	All frozen, fresh, tinned vegetables that are boiled, micro waved, dry-fried or grilled.	Avocado pears, olives, reduced fat coleslaw.	Vegetables cooked in oil or served with butter.
Salads	Undressed salads or those with low fat dressing.		Coleslaw.
Fruit	All fresh, frozen, dried or tinned in juice.	Fruit canned in syrup (drain syrup first).	Fritters e.g. banana fritters.
Breads and cereals	Granary, wholemeal, pittas, bagels, rolls, chapattis without fat, wholegrain breakfast cereals.	Naan bread, chapattis. Sugar coated cereals.	Shop bought garlic bread.
Pasta, rice and noodles	Boiled pasta/rice/noodles with tomato based sauce.		Fried rice. Pasta in creamy sauces.
Potatoes	Boiled, dry-roasted, mashed with a little suitable milk/margarine.	Roasted in suitable oil (once a week). Oven chips.	Those cooked in lots of oil. Potato salad.
Milk	Skimmed or semi skimmed. Soya.		Full fat. Condensed.
Cheeses	Cottage cheese, extra light soft or cream cheese, quark.	Half fat cheddar, small amounts strong cheese	High fat cheese e.g. cheddar, stilton, brie
Yoghurts, cream	Low fat / diet yoghurts or fromage frais. Soya yoghurt.	Full fat yoghurts. Half fat crème fraiche or Greek yoghurt.	Full fat Greek yoghurt, cream, sour cream, crème fraiche
Meat, poultry-	Grilled, casseroled or roasted lean	Lean bacon, low fat sau-	Fatty meat, sausages,

try, meat alternatives	meat, turkey or chicken with no skin. Quorn, Tofu, TVP.	sages and pates. Chicken in breadcrumbs.	streaky bacon, pates, duck, poultry with skin. Meat products in pastry.
Fish	All fresh or frozen, tinned in brine or tomato sauce.	Crab, lobster, prawns, mussels.	Deep fried, canned in oil, fish roe.
Eggs	Boiled, poached, fried in teaspoon of oil, egg whites		Fried in unsuitable oil, scotch eggs.
Nuts and seeds	Chestnuts. 1oz of other nuts a day.		Coconut, salted nuts.
Fat spreads	Low fat unsaturated spread (olive / rapeseed / sunflower based).	Unsaturated spread (olive / rapeseed / sunflower based).	Butter, lard, ghee, suet, hydrogenated spreads.
Oils	Olive, rapeseed, sunflower oils.		Palm, coconut oils.
Dressings and pre-serves	Low fat, extra light dressings. Marmite, Bovril.	Lower fat dressings. Honey, marmalade, jam, peanut butter (small portion).	Most commercial full fat dressings, chocolate spread.
Biscuits, cakes, sweets	Sugar free jelly, sorbets, homemade cakes or biscuits made using suitable fats.	Meringues, teacakes, scones, lower fat biscuits.	Croissants, pastries, biscuits, doughnuts, ice-cream, toffee.
Drinks	Tea, coffee, low calorie squash, diet fizzy drinks, malted or chocolate drinks made with skimmed milk.	Alcohol.	Drinks made with whole milk. Cream based liqueurs.
Misc.	Pepper, herbs, spices, lemon juice, vinegar, sweeteners.	Sugar.	Salt.

Reducing fat intake

Eating less fat is an important part of healthy eating, heart protection and weight management

Suggestions for reducing fat:

- ◆ Choose cooking methods which do not involve adding fats or oils. Try stewing, casseroles, grilling, steaming, poaching, dry roasting or microwaving instead of frying. Remember to drain off any excess fat after cooking. If you need to fry, use no more than one teaspoon of mono-unsaturated fat per person e.g. olive oil, rapeseed oil.
- ◆ Use lean cuts of meat, trim any visible fat and remove skin from chicken before cooking.
- ◆ Thicken sauces with corn flour rather than fat and flour.
- ◆ Avoid adding fats to foods, e.g. butter on vegetables.
- ◆ Avoid full fat mayonnaise, salad cream and salad dressings. Try lemon juice, vinegar or plain yoghurt with fresh herbs.
- ◆ Use semi-skimmed or skimmed milk.
- ◆ Instead of cream, use plain yoghurt, low fat fromage frais or crème fraiche light.
- ◆ Choose lower fat cheeses such as cottage cheese, quark, camembert or reduced fat versions, e.g. half fat cheddar and light cream cheeses.
- ◆ Read labels carefully as they can be misleading. (see page 21).

Dietary Cholesterol – Although certain foods such as eggs, liver, liver products and shellfish contain dietary cholesterol, these do not affect blood cholesterol as much as saturated fats do and therefore are not restricted.



Plant sterols and stanols

Some products such as Benecol and Flora Proactive spreads, milks, yoghurts and yoghurt drinks contain sterols / stanols. These can help lower your cholesterol by 10-15%. For effective use you need to consume 2g of the active ingredient (sterol / stanol) daily.

To ensure you consume sufficient amounts make sure you read the packaging carefully and follow the product guidelines. You are likely to require 3 servings per day. If you struggle to achieve this every day you can use the plant sterol / stanol yoghurt drinks which provide your whole daily 2g requirement in one small bottle.

Although expensive, if used properly, they can be useful in addition to other dietary changes and medication to reduce your blood cholesterol.

It has been suggested that sterols and stanols have an enhanced cholesterol-lowering effect if the dose is divided over the day, or taken with the lunch or evening meal rather than in the morning.

Too Tired to Eat or Cook

After a stroke planning ahead can help you eat well, which will aid your recovery.

Preparing food and drink, cooking and shopping may become more of an effort, which can lead to you eating less.

Useful Tips:

- ◆ Eat your main meal earlier in the day and have a light meal later in the day e.g. sandwich or breakfast cereal.
- ◆ If cooking and eating three meals a day is too much effort, eat six small meals a day.
- ◆ Think about easy to make snacks rather than big meals, e.g. something on toast or an omelette.
- ◆ Accept offers of help with cooking and shopping from family and friends. These foods can be stored in the freezer or refrigerator.
- ◆ Have a range of ready prepared foods and snacks on hand e.g. tinned, frozen or packet foods.
- ◆ There are companies that deliver ready made meals to your door or many communities offer "Meals on Wheels".

If you feel you need more help, speak to you GP or health care professional.

Alcohol

Reducing your alcohol intake can help reduce blood pressure, one of the contributory factors to stroke.

All alcoholic drinks are high in calories and should be restricted if you are overweight.

For men and women:

- To keep health risks from drinking alcohol to a low level you are safest not regularly drinking more than 14 units per week.
- If you do drink as much as 14 units per week, it is best to spread this evenly over three days or more.

How much is a unit?



OR



OR



½ pint standard strength beer, lager or cider

Small glass (80ml) of wine

Single pub measure (25ml) of spirits

Beware of low alcohol drinks as they still contain alcohol and are high in calories.

N.B. Pub measures: a standard large glass of wine (250mls) provides 3 units of alcohol.

Bread, Rice, Potatoes, Pasta and other starchy foods

Try to include at least one starchy food with each of your main meals.

Eating more foods rich in fibre is known to be beneficial to health.

Choosing higher fibre foods that are digested more slowly can help lower cholesterol. A high level of cholesterol may increase the chance of having a stroke.

Foods high in fibre also help to keep bowels regular; you feel fuller for longer, therefore helping with weight control.

- ♦ Choose wholegrain or oat based breakfast cereals, e.g. Shredded Wheat, Weetabix, bran flakes, porridge.
- ♦ Eat the skins of potatoes as this contains most of the fibre.
- ♦ Choose wholegrain, granary or pitta breads instead of white or brown breads



When you eat more high fibre foods it is important to remember to increase the amount of fluid you drink to keep your bowels moving.

Aim for **8-10 cups or glasses of fluid per day** e.g. water, tea, coffee, or sugar free drinks.

Milk and Dairy foods

Try to eat some milk and dairy foods, e.g. cheese, yogurt and fromage frais every day.

These are good sources of protein and vitamins and they are also a good source of calcium which help to keep bones strong.

Some dairy foods can be high in fat and saturated fat, choose a lower fat option or have a small amount of high -fat varieties.



Try to use low fat yogurt or fromage frais instead of cream, soured cream or crème fraiche.

Try switching to lower fat milk e.g. 1% fat milk, try reduced fat cheese instead of full fat varieties.

Food	Portion size	Calcium content (mg)	Fat content (g)
Whole milk	200ml/ 1/3pt	236	7.8
Semi-skimmed milk	200ml/ 1/3pt	240	3.4
Skimmed milk	200ml/ 1/3pt	244	0.4
Cheddar (average)	30g/ 1oz	216	10
Cheddar (reduced fat)	30g/ 1oz	252	4.5
Whole milk yoghurt	175g/ 6oz	350	5.2
Low fat yoghurt	175g/ 6oz	333	1.4

If you do not like or cannot tolerate dairy products use soya alternatives fortified with calcium instead.

Salt

Reducing your salt intake can help lower your blood pressure if it is high and therefore reduce the risk of stroke

Suggestions for lowering salt intake:

- ◆ Use a minimum amount of salt in cooking.
- ◆ Use lemon juice, herbs, spices, garlic or pepper to flavour food.
- ◆ Try not to add salt to your meals, and taste foods first.
- ◆ Limit intake of salty and processed foods e.g. Marmite, bacon, soups, ready meals, crisps and salted nuts.
- ◆ Choose foods labeled “low in salt” or “reduced salt”.
- ◆ Rinse off brine from tinned foods.



It is better to try to change your taste for salt than to use a salt substitute. If you reduce your salt intake your taste buds will eventually adjust and you will start to find foods too salty if you return to a higher salt diet.

N.B. Salt Substitutes e.g. Lo Salt are **NOT** recommended.

Sugar

Sugar is a source of energy, but if sugar is consumed in excessive amounts it is converted into fat and stored in the body causing weight gain.

If you are trying to lose weight, eat less sugar and sweet foods.

Some foods such as cakes, biscuits, sweet pastries, chocolates and puddings are high in fat and sugar and also high in calories.

If you get hungry between meals, try to go for healthier snacks such as fruit, wholemeal toast, low fat yogurt or a few **unsalted** nuts.

Eat at least two portions of fish a week.



It is recommended you have 1 portion of oily fish and 1 portion of non oily fish per week.

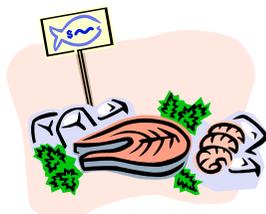
Oily fish includes mackerel, herring, sardines, trout, kippers, whitebait, sprats, anchovies, pilchards, salmon and **fresh** tuna.

Tinned tuna does not count as an oily fish, as oils are lost in the canning process.

Non-oily fish includes cod, haddock, plaice, and tinned tuna.

Suggestions:

- ◆ Try tinned fish in sandwiches.
- ◆ Try fish paté made with tinned fish and low fat fromage frais or Quark.
- ◆ Try roll mop herrings with tomatoes and bread as a quick meal.
- ◆ Sardines or pilchards on toast.



What if I do not like fish?

Smaller quantities of omega-3 oils are found naturally in rapeseed oil, flaxseed oil and walnuts or can be found added to omega-3 enriched margarines, breads and eggs.

Fish oil supplements are not routinely recommended.

Omega-3 is sometimes labeled by its scientific names: EPA (eicosapentanoic acid) and DHA (docosahexanoic acid). The ideal amount is 0.5 – 1.0 g (500 – 1000mg) of omega-3 a day. If you have had a heart attack within the last 3 months the ideal amount is 1.0g of omega 3 (EPA and DHA) per day – this can often be prescribed for you.

Fruit and Vegetables

The World Health Organisation recommends that we have at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day. Fruit and vegetables should make up about a third of the food we eat each day.

Fruit and vegetables contain vitamins, minerals, soluble fibre and other substances which may help protect against stroke and heart disease (fresh, frozen, tinned, dried and juiced fruit and vegetables are all included).

Fruit and vegetables are a good source of anti-oxidants which are thought to protect against stroke.

The same benefits are not achieved by using vitamin and mineral supplements.

What is a portion?

A portion is roughly 80g (3 ounces) fresh, tinned or frozen.

Examples include:

- ◆ 1 apple, orange, banana, peach, tomato or other medium fruit
- ◆ 1 large slice melon or pineapple or other large fruit
- ◆ 7 strawberries or cherry tomatoes
- ◆ 10-12 grapes or raspberries
- ◆ 1 tablespoon of raisins or 3 dried apricots
- ◆ 2 plums or satsumas
- ◆ 2-3 tablespoons fresh fruit salad, stewed or canned fruit
- ◆ Small (150ml) glass of fruit juice. (Only 1 glass of juice counts as a portion)
- ◆ 3 tablespoons raw, cooked, frozen or tinned vegetables
- ◆ 3 tablespoons baked beans (only counts as one portion)
- ◆ 1 dessert bowl of salad

Beans and pulses count as one of your 5 a day BUT potatoes do NOT count as one of your 5 a day as they are included in the starchy food group.

Suggestions for 5 a day

- ◆ Make use of fresh, frozen, tinned, dried and juiced fruit and vegetables and aim to spread them through the day.
- ◆ Add extra vegetables, e.g. mushrooms, peppers and tinned tomatoes (including tomato puree) to sauces, casseroles, rice or pasta dishes.
- ◆ Add a banana, berries or dried fruit to breakfast cereals.
- ◆ Have a low fat fruit smoothie or glass of fruit juice at breakfast.
- ◆ Add a tomato or some salad with the filling in a sandwich.
- ◆ Serve at least two portions of vegetables or salad with your main meal.
- ◆ Eat fruit or raw vegetables as a between meal snack.



When cooking or serving fruit and vegetables try to avoid adding:

- ◆ Fat or rich sauces e.g. vegetables roasted in a lot of fat, carrots glazed with butter.
- ◆ Sugar or syrupy dressings e.g. stewed fruit with sugar.

Meat, Fish, Eggs, Beans and other non-dairy sources of protein

As well as being good sources of protein these foods are rich in vitamins and/or minerals.

Some meats are high in fat, particularly saturated fat which contributes to the arteries furring up.

To cut down on fat:

- ◆ Choose lean cuts of meat and choose leaner mince.
- ◆ Cut off visible fat and take the skin off chicken.
- ◆ Grill or oven bake meat and fish instead of frying.
- ◆ Avoid eating too much processed meat e.g. sausages, salami, as these can be high in fat (and/or salt).
- ◆ Limit meat and fish products in pastry, batter or breadcrumbs as these can be high in fat (and/or salt).
- ◆ Boil, poach or scramble eggs rather than frying.
- ◆ Avoid eating too much red meat which is high in saturated fat - choose fish, poultry, game or vegetarian alternatives instead.

Eat more pulses (peas, beans, lentils and chickpeas) these are good alternatives to meat as they are low in fat but high in soluble fibre, protein, vitamins and minerals. Soluble fibre can also help reduce cholesterol levels.

Try baked beans, lentil soup, or add lentils or kidney beans to meat to make casseroles and chilli.