

Managing a patient's dietary needs
by Marie McCullagh & Ros Wright**A Pre-reading**

1. Think about what you have eaten over the last week. What factors have influenced your food choices?
For example, *I was invited to a party.*
2. Share your thoughts with a partner. To what extent were your choices healthy options?

B Comprehension check

Read the article and find the best answer to each question below.

1. The 'plate model' ...
 - a. ... is used to promote the UK Department of Health.
 - b. ... shows the proportions of a healthy diet.
 - c. ... shows a typical diet for a teenager.
2. An energy-dense diet ...
 - a. ... may be appropriate for someone in ill-health.
 - b. ... includes predominantly complex carbohydrates.
 - c. ... should be avoided by women during pregnancy.
3. Our food preferences ...
 - a. ... can develop over time.
 - b. ... change on a daily basis.
 - c. ... are solely determined by our parents.
4. Someone who is overweight has a BMI of...
 - a. ... more than 32.
 - b. ... less than 23.
 - c. ... over 24.9.
5. Metabolism is ...
 - a. ... affected by age.
 - b. ... used to reduce the patient's weight.
 - c. ... a disease suffered by obese people.
6. Obesity management ...
 - a. ... is often unsuccessful.
 - b. ... should be individualised.
 - c. ... aims to maintain the patient's weight.

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Managing a Patient's Dietary Needs

What is a healthy diet?

Concepts of a 'healthy diet' have steadily altered across time in response to beliefs and research, and at no other time in history have we had access to so much evidence of the impact of food on the human body. Despite considerable 'hype' from those with vested interests and frivolous speculation from irresponsible journalism, there is now a clear consensus about what a 'healthy diet' consists of, which has remained relatively consistent over the past few years. The UK Department of Health's guidelines for a healthy diet are represented in the health promotion tool, the 'plate model' below, which shows the five major food groups and the proportion each should contribute to the dietary intake.



Tips for eating well

- Base your meals on starchy foods
- Eat lots of fruit and veg
- 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
- Don't skip breakfast

Source: Food Standards Agency (2005)

Additionally, it is recommended that each individual eat five or more portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables a day. However, people who are unwell often require a more energy-dense diet in order to obtain sufficient nutrients to meet their needs and therefore adherence to healthy eating guidelines may not be appropriate. In addition, some people are prescribed a therapeutic diet for a particular medical condition and are required to avoid certain types of food. The type of diet outlined above is not suitable for those under five years of age.

Appetite and choices

There are many factors regarding food choices. For example we consume food because of its perceived benefits or for its own sake, because it tastes good or for comfort. By the same token we avoid foods because of their dangerous properties ('bread is fattening', 'eggs are binding'), because of our intolerance or allergy to them, or because of dislike or unfamiliarity. Social factors are important in determining how we come to like or dislike certain foods. Parental choice can, for

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example, influence children one way or the other. People can develop long-term food preferences that are stable over long periods of time and unaffected by changes in their mood or environment; these can be highly resistant to change if a more healthy diet is advised. Some food preferences change from day to day and are more likely to be affected by mood. For example we may choose to eat a bar of chocolate to 'cheer ourselves up', or have a glass of champagne to celebrate an event.

Body Mass Index

Weight in relation to height is considered an accurate way of assessing the degree to which a person is under- or overweight. Body Mass Index (BMI) is commonly used for this reason. This can be calculated as follows:

BMI calculation = weight (kg) / height (m²)

Reference ranges for desirable BMI =

- <18.5 underweight
- 18.5-24.9 normal weight
- 25-29.9 overweight
- >30 obese

Source: International Obesity Task Force (2000)

Obesity

Nearly half of Britain's population is overweight and one in five is clinically obese. The equation is deceptively simple: the energy expended must be balanced by the energy gained. The body's metabolism slows over time, so as people become less active because of age, they need to adjust their intake downwards and try to keep their activity level up.

Obesity can reduce a person's life expectancy, the increased weight relating to conditions such as type II *diabetes mellitus*, osteoarthritis, sleep apnoea and coronary heart disease. The client with obesity may well experience psychological and social penalties too. The treatment of obesity should be individualised and include assessment and goal-setting. It should be based on diet, activity and behavioural change. The initial aim of obesity management is to stabilise weight and prevent further weight gain. Following this, a moderate weight loss can be attempted followed by further weight loss and weight maintenance. If diet, activity and behavioural change are unsuccessful in isolation, surgery or drug therapy may be offered. Prevention is, however, better than cure and currently there are lots of national and local initiatives to try and address the significant public health problem of obesity in this country.

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C Word building

1. Complete columns A and B in the table with words or expressions from the text.

A. Word/phrase	B. Opposite	C. Synonym/alternative
altered	consistent	
	energy gained	
underweight		skinny
	stabilize	
weight gain		

2. Look at the text and check, noting the context in which each is used.
3. Complete column C.

D Vocabulary development

1. Look through the text and find two-word collocations related to the condition obesity. There are ten in total. Put each one into a sentence to help you remember how they are used.

For example: *energy-dense, obesity management*

E Discussion

1. Read the case study.

Case Study

Miss Quinn, aged 82, has progressive dementia and has lived in a residential care home for two years. She wanders restlessly all round the clock and rarely spends more than a few minutes at anything. The staff are concerned she appears to be losing weight.

In pairs, discuss what steps can be taken to ensure weight loss does not become a problem. Then present your ideas to the rest of the group.

F Follow-up

Research national initiatives being employed to combat the public health issue of obesity in an English-speaking country of your choice. Keep a record of where you found the information.

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ANSWER KEY

A Pre-reading

1. There are many factors that determine the choices we make in terms of what we eat. Here are some examples: social events (birthdays, etc.), temperature or climate, allergies, changes of mood, economic factors, availability of certain foods (seasonal, location, etc.).

B Comprehension check

1. b
2. a
3. a
4. c
5. a
6. b

C Word building

A. Word/phrase	B. Opposite	C. Synonym/alternative
altered	consistent	<i>changed</i>
<i>energy expended</i>	energy gained	<i>burn energy</i>
underweight	<i>overweight</i>	skinny
<i>fluctuate</i>	stabilize	<i>vary</i>
weight gain	<i>weight loss</i>	<i>put on weight</i>

D Vocabulary development

Possible answers:

energy-dense, clinically obese, activity level, life expectancy, goal-setting, behavioural change, weight loss, weight maintenance, obesity management, weight gain

E Discussion

Suggested answer:

The patient should avoid wasting time by eating and drinking low-energy fillers. Take advantage of every mouthful.

Take advantage of the fact she has limited memory and encourage her to eat nutritious snacks around the clock instead of expecting her to concentrate on a full meal.

Coffee should be made with full-cream milk instead of water with added sugar and served with a biscuit, small cake or sandwich.

Prescribe food supplements.

Ensure chocolates, fruit and crisps are available in her room.

Enrich her meals with butter, cream or sugar to enhance the energy count.