



Congratulations on taking your first steps towards reducing your body weight. At Sharmans Pharmacy, we are here to provide everything you need to support your new, healthier lifestyle.

**Remember**, weight loss can be challenging and is a unique journey for everyone. Don't get discouraged if you encounter roadblocks or if things don't always go as planned. Be proud of every effort you're making towards achieving a healthier you.

Our pharmacists have developed this handbook to ensure you receive safe and reliable advice you can trust. We're also available for any further advice or information you may need.

Now, let's get started! We're excited to see you achieve and surpass your weight loss goals.



### Why a healthy body matters

There's truth to the saying "a healthy body is a healthy mind". Because having a healthy body does actually improve your mental health. So by losing weight, you'll not only feel better physically but also mentally.

### The physical benefits (good for the body)

Losing weight leads to improvements in your cardiovascular system, a reduction in body fat, and an increase in muscle mass. Losing body fat and building muscle mass also improves your metabolism and reduces your risk of cardiovascular diseases like high blood pressure and diabetes. Moreover, weight loss can also relieve stress on joints, which reduces pain and inflammation and increases your physical performance.



### The psychological benefits (good for the brain)

It's been proven that losing weight leads to psychological benefits. For example, when you have a healthy diet and exercise regularly, you get better sleep and feel less stressed. This is because your body finds it easier to reduce stress hormones. On top of this, weight loss can also boost your self-confidence and body image, making you feel happier as well as healthier. You'll also find that you have more energy throughout the day, which usually leads to a happier, fuller lifestyle.

# Setting goals: step by step to success

Great news! You've already taken the first steps of your weight loss journey just by being here. Every step from now on will take you closer to achieving your goals. But what are they? And what was your goal when you first set out to lose weight? Keeping your goals in mind and remembering why you're doing this will help you keep going no matter what. Write your goals down, and hang them somewhere visible. Whenever you're finding things tough, look at your goals, and you'll get through it. Those goals are why you're doing this and why you're going to succeed.

## 1. Set achievable targets

No one conquered Mount Everest in a day. It takes work, training and time. That's why it helps to focus on small goals rather than getting too focused on the big picture. It's much more realistic to focus on the next step of your journey than the final destination.

## 2. What motivates you, what stops you?

On every path there are hurdles to overcome. And there are also things or people around us that motivate us to keep going. Knowing our hurdles and motivators can help us stay on track, especially when things get tough.



## 3. Are you on track?

Adjusting to a new diet is a lot of work, especially in the beginning. To stay on track, it helps to document what you eat, how much you drink, how you feel, and whether you get any side effects. To make this easier, we've prepared a food log to record your meals! This will give you a clear visual of your diet and how it's affecting your progress. You can also use our weight tracker to record your measurements daily to see how quickly you achieve your goals.

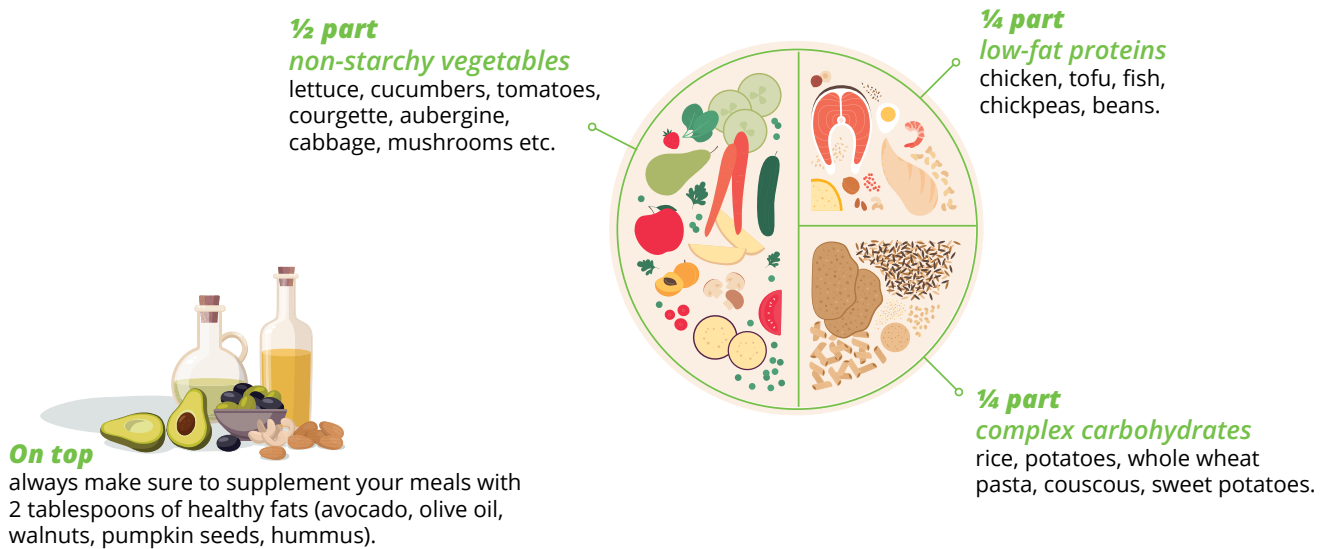
Weight Loss Tracker ↓

Food Diary ↓

# Nourish yourself!

A long-term healthy lifestyle is not about counting calories forever. Rather, it is important to eat enough and, above all, in a balanced way. Because that's the only way your body gets all the nutrients it needs.

**Looking at your plate, a balanced meal might look something like this:**



## The term “balanced diet” actually says it all...

Your daily menu plan should include a little bit of everything:

Fruits and vegetables, grains, healthy fats, dairy products or dairy alternatives - and all in the right proportions. The NHS has a clear outline of a balanced diet on its [website](#).

## What if I do not feel hungry?

If you're not feeling hungry during your weight loss journey, then make sure to eat foods that are as nutrient-dense as possible. This way, you will absorb lots of nutrients, even if you eat a small amount.

**Try to focus on high-protein, low-sugar and high-fibre foods. For example:**

- Unsalted nuts and seeds (walnuts, almonds, pumpkin and sunflower seeds)
- Avocados
- Yoghurt, such as skyr or kefir
- Protein shakes
- Homemade smoothies
- Potatoes and whole grain bread
- Eggs
- A little cheese
- Fatty fish, like salmon or mackerel
- Tofu
- Legumes, such as chickpeas or beans
- High-quality vegetable oils, such as olive or canola oil

### Extra tip

*You might not believe us, but you should try to eat even if you feel sick. Nausea often comes from having nothing in your stomach. A small snack can help deal with this.*

# Nutrients: Eat the rainbow!

Our plates should be as colourful and varied as possible for a balanced diet. This ensures that we take in plenty of nutrients, which guarantees that our metabolism, organs, muscles and cells are getting everything they need.

To give our bodies energy, we need 'macronutrients'. These include:

## Carbohydrates



flour, rice or potatoes and simple sugars such as glucose or fructose.

*These are your number 1 source of energy. Our bodies can use these easily, making them available to our cells straight away as fuel. Anything that we don't need is converted to fat and stored*

## Fats



from plants or animals.

*In addition to their function as an energy reserve, fats are important building blocks for cell membranes. We also need them for our vitamin metabolism, messenger substances and nerves.*

## Proteins



from animals such as meat, dairy products or eggs, as well as vegetables (like legumes).

*Proteins are not primarily used for energy but are essential for building our DNA and enzymes that our bodies need for a healthy metabolism. They function as an energy source when we don't get enough energy from carbohydrates.*

## Small but mighty: micronutrients

Micronutrients are vital. They play an important role in cell renewal, organ function and maintaining our general health. Micronutrients include vitamins, minerals, trace elements, secondary plant compounds, amino acids and omega fatty acids. They are found in plenty of foods, such as fruits and vegetables, grains, legumes, and meat and dairy products.

## What is dietary fibre?

Dietary fibre is a kind of "filler" that keeps us full for a long time while providing a few calories. Studies have shown that these macronutrients can protect against colon cancer and help lower blood sugar levels in diabetics, as they delay the absorption of carbohydrates from the intestine into the blood.

# Alcohol, sugar, and good health: is it possible?

Eating too much or too much of the wrong food can be one of the reasons for obesity. But there are often two other culprits at the root of the problem... Sugary drinks and alcohol.

## The facts

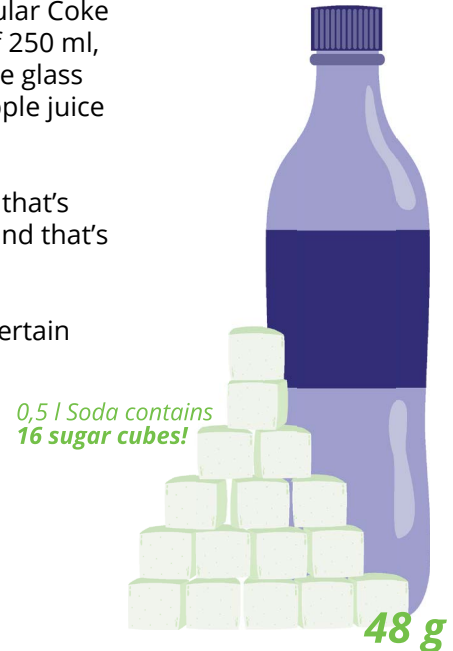
It's hard to believe, but unfortunately, it's true: with every sip of regular Coke you drink, you consume a whole teaspoon of sugar. In a full glass of 250 ml, that's about 8 teaspoons. Other drinks are just as guilty, with a single glass of iced tea containing 7-8 teaspoons of sugar and a glass of plain apple juice being up to 9 teaspoons.

The NHS recommends a maximum intake of 30 g of sugar per day - that's about 10 teaspoons in total. One glass of Coke is nearly all of that, and that's before you've even started eating.

If you are unsure of how much sugar is in a drink or a portion of a certain food, this should help:

**3 g sugar = 1 teaspoon = 1 sugar cube.**

**Check how many grams of sugar are shown on the label of your drink or meal, and use this to build a realistic picture of how much sugar you're having.**



## “But water just tastes bland...”

We know that a glass of water with a squeeze of lemon isn't going to replace a glass of Coke. Nevertheless, giving up soft drinks and juices is one of the easiest ways to cut down on sugar.

### **By the way**

*'Zero' and 'diet' drinks with artificial sweeteners are not a good alternative. Studies show that sweeteners disrupt the body. The sweet taste stimulates insulin release, which messes with your metabolism. This can stimulate your appetite, making you want to eat more.*

## And what about alcohol?

A fair question. Regularly drinking alcohol can lead to obesity or become a barrier to losing weight. On top of this, alcohol acts as a cytotoxin, which can affect your metabolism, making your body take longer to break down fat. So, before you have a drink, remember that it will affect your weight loss and your long term health.

# And what can I eat now? Food swaps!

We talk about the foods that are “bad” or “unhealthy” so much of the time that we often forget to say which foods we should be eating. We understand that navigating the nutritional jungle that is our diets can be anything but easy, but these tips and suggestions should help...

## Healthier alternatives to switch to:

### Breakfast

- Nutella toast *Rye bread with unsweetened porridge*
- Cereals *Porridge with fruit*
- Fried egg *Boiled egg*

### Lunch & Dinner

- Ham and mayo white bread sandwich *Whole wheat wrap with lettuce, chicken and cream cheese*
- Pizza *Homemade whole wheat pizza, vegetables and a little cheese*
- Lasagna *Vegetarian spaghetti bolognese or pasta with garlic and olive oil*
- Burgers with fries *Homemade burgers with oven vegetables and potato wedges*
- Fish & Chips *Salmon with homemade mashed potatoes*

### Snacks

- Crisps *Unsweetened popcorn*
- Ice cream *Sorbet / frozen yoghurt*
- Cereal bar *All-natural trail mix*
- Cookies *Rice cake with melted dark chocolate*
- Cake *Fruit cake*

### Spices & Dips

- White processed sugar *Date syrup, coconut blossom sugar, dark maple syrup*
- Sour cream *Low fat greek yoghurt*
- Mayonnaise *Mustard or hummus*
- Salt *Fresh herbs*

### Drinks

- Frozen or specialty coffee *Cold brew or hot/iced coffee*
- Fruit juice *Real fruit*
- Soda/Soft drinks *Sparkling water with your favourite slice of fruit*
- Store-bought smoothie *Homemade smoothies*
- Energy drinks or Ice tea *Unsweetened black tea/ green tea / Komboocha*

### Need more inspiration?

No one needs to reinvent the wheel! The NHS has a huge [recipe collection](#) on their website with many recommendations and inspirations for healthy meals.

# Food & Psyche

Food affects how we're feeling, and the foods we want to eat change when we feel certain ways. Everyone's experienced feeling 'hangry' or eating a treat to celebrate and feeling even happier. It's also very common to eat more when you're stressed because doing so relieves stress. Understanding how foods affect our emotions is vital when planning a change to your diet.

## Intuitive eating: The art of listening to your body

In order to lose weight or maintain a healthy body weight, we need to understand that our brains have a significant influence on our eating behaviour. This means we can actually learn to listen to our bodies and understand what it needs. This is called intuitive eating.

- Many of our eating habits are learned. As children, we're often told things like "You need to completely clean your plate" or "You can't have dessert until you've eaten all of your main course". This can lead to unhealthy eating habits later in life. Instead, try to think of things this way

### Listen critically to yourself:



- Drink a big glass of water before snacking. Are you still hungry?
- And if you are hungry: Eat, even if you have just eaten! Don't wait until the next meal just because it's not lunch or dinner time yet.
- Techniques from cognitive behavioral therapy such as meditation or mindfulness can help you become more in tune with your own body. You can find these, for example, in meditation apps like Headspace or Calm.
- Give yourself more attention, especially on challenging or stressful days. Still, give yourself 5 minutes of quiet time, take a bath at the end of the day, or watch an episode of your favorite show.

### Disclaimer!

Are you struggling with your mental health? Do not hesitate to seek help if you are. Binge eating can be caused by emotional issues that need professional support. So if you are concerned for yourself or someone else, please speak to your doctor. They'll be able to provide you with the support you need.

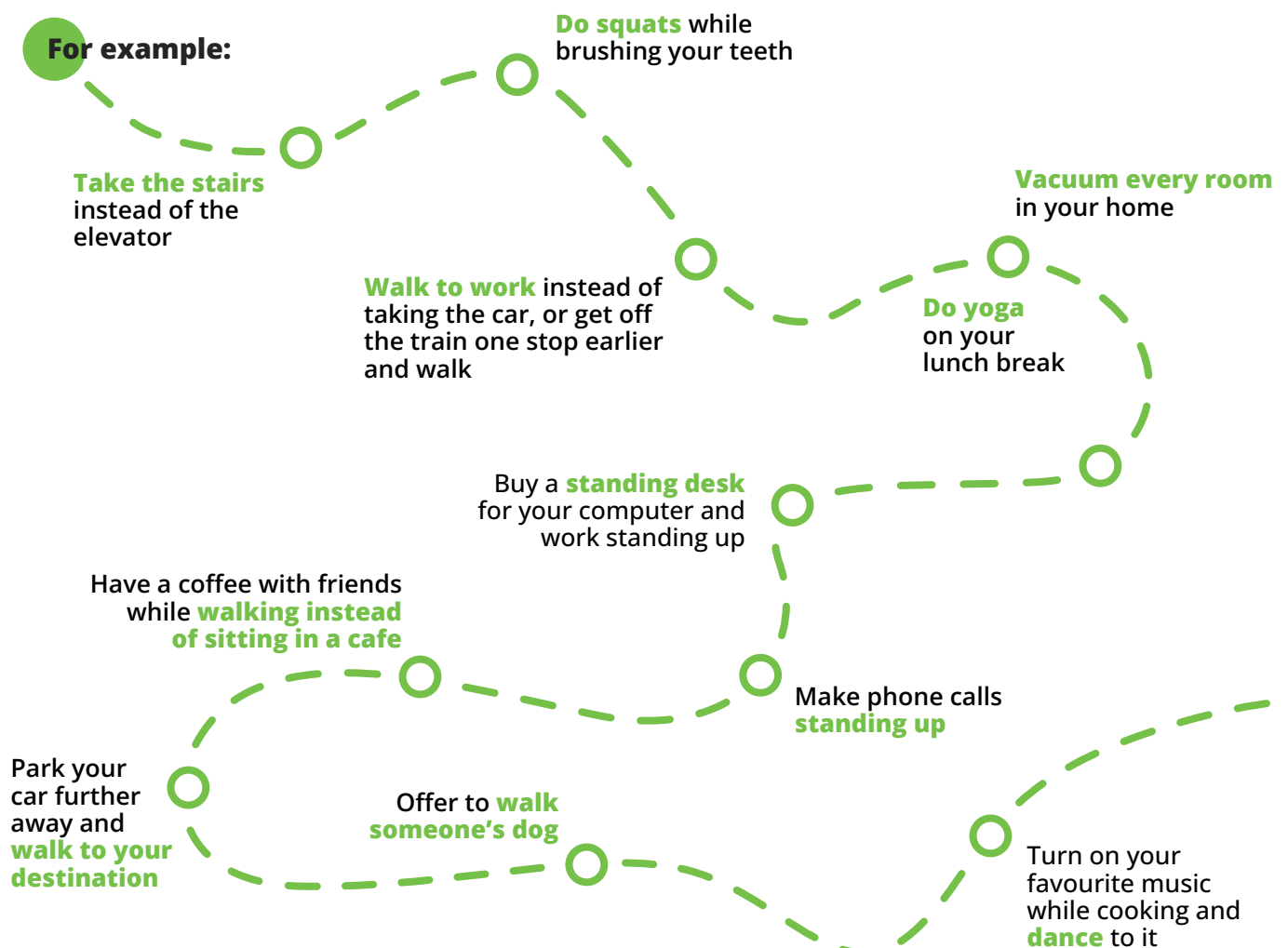
## Get moving!

Exercise is part of a healthy lifestyle. There's no way of getting around it - no matter how much you'd rather avoid it. It also does a lot more than help you lose weight (that's actually just a nice side effect), it also leads to:

- Improved mental health
- Better sleep
- Less (chronic) pain
- Better posture (no round back and no "cell phone neck")
- The prevention of diseases like high blood pressure, diabetes type 2
- Better digestion
- A higher basal metabolic rate (this is because muscles require more energy than fat)

## Every step counts!

If you've already signed up for your next HIIT workout at your gym, that's great! But even small steps are enough to get you going and, most importantly, keep you motivated. Try to incorporate exercise into your daily routine - wherever you can. Even 10 minutes makes a difference.





## Congratulations!

We hope you're still on target and ready to smash your weight loss goals.

We'd like to remind you once again that we are not machines. Weight loss and dieting affect our emotions, and there's a lot more to getting healthy than just changing what you use as fuel.

Always take care of yourself and be proud, because you're doing an amazing job and it takes real courage to start a weight loss journey.

## Finally, here are 10 tips for a healthier everyday life:

- 1 Get 7-8 **hours of sleep**
- 2 **Take regular breaks** from sitting down to move around
- 3 Make time for **daily movement** (even if it's just 10 minutes)
- 4 Eat slowly and **chew at least 20 times**
- 5 Whenever possible **cook food at home**
- 6 Drink **8-10 glasses of water** per day
- 7 **Eat rainbow plates** (the more colours, the better!)
- 8 **Cut out alcohol** or reduce your intake
- 9 Skip the lift and **take the stairs**
- 10 **Do not skip meals** - even if you are not very hungry!

**And do not forget:**  
We are always here  
to support you.

*If you have any questions about your health, weight loss programme or anything else, we're here to help you.*

**Together, we can lose weight  
& start living healthier lives.**

# Weekly Food Diary

Medication: Mounjaro / Wegovy

Dose: .....

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