

Eating for improved health & wellbeing

for anyone living with (or without) epilepsy

Our choice of food, how much we eat and how often we eat, can have an enormous impact on how we feel from day to day. Relatively simple adjustments can really make a difference, leading to enhanced energy levels, improved weight control and enabling us to feel better equipped to cope with the everyday challenges of life. If you are looking to explore changes, but are not quite sure where to start, then please read on for some tips. Time-wise, it's worth planning moderate and sustainable meal changes over a period of weeks and months. Quick fix diet changes, rarely adjust our comfortable old habits for long.

For further guidance on making changes that really matter to you, please also refer to Balance by Soul Nutrition as well as the Soul Nutrition - www.soulnutrition.org. We would also recommend that you watch the online tutorials on how to use the Soul Nutrition website and you will find them via the above link.

Where do I start?

Start with where you are right now. Try keeping a diary of **what and when** you eat for a typical week. It is really worth making the effort to do this as it can produce some real surprises. You may find it helpful to take the time to review your diary alongside the following 'checks' and choose one set of changes before going on to the next. Try to focus on the positive; thinking about the types of foods you **want** to eat more frequently rather than what foods to avoid. By planning changes to your food choices and meal patterns in a series of small steps, you are more likely to achieve longer term improvements that matter to YOU.

CHECK 1 - REGULARITY

Are you eating regularly or do you grab a meal or snack when you can? There's no rocket science here; we tend to function more efficiently and effectively if we are presented with fuel and nutrients on a regular basis. Most of us do well on three moderate meals, starting with a breakfast, and perhaps including the odd small snack. The pace of life can sometimes mean that some of our meals are more easily overlooked than others. If meal planning for regularity is a concern for you then it may be most helpful to explore practical ways to manage your meal gaps **before** anything else.

CHECK 2 – VARIETY

Are you eating a mix of nutrient rich foods at most meals? Each food we eat carries its own range of nutrients so this is why we need to eat a variety of foods from the different food groups each day. If you have a whole food group missing from your regular food choices— try to find foods in that group that you enjoy and eat them more often.

- **PROTEIN CHOICES from :**
Animal sources such as meats, fish (white and oily), eggs, cheese, milk,
Vegetable sources such as beans, lentils, nuts and seeds.
Most of us eat sufficient protein but perhaps limit our range of sources. Try to include a protein choice at each meal.
- **CARBOHYDRATE CHOICES from:**
Vegetables and fruits. Most of us have too few of these. Go for generous portions vegetables and salads with moderate amounts whole fruits and only small amounts of juices. Choose a rainbow of colours for nutrient value and eye appeal.
Grains and white potatoes; eg bread, breakfast cereals, pasta, rice, potato etc. Most of us have very generous portions of these. Try choosing the less processed options more often, broaden your variety and consider your portion sizes.

- **FATS & OILS from:**

Vegetable sources such as olive oil, nuts, seeds and their oils and avocados.

Animal sources such as butter, egg yolks, oily fish, meats.

We all need to include some good quality fats and oils in our meals, they are essential for health.

CHECK 3 = STABILITY

Are you helping your body to keep blood glucose levels stable? Consider your food combinations at meals and snacks. By choosing **more moderate portions of carbohydrates** and teaming these up with a source of protein and some fats or oils we can help to slow down the release of glucose into the bloodstream. This is readily described as lowering the glycaemic load (Lower GL) and **may** provide us with better blood sugar and weight control, improved blood lipid profiles and more sustained energy levels.

The following meal building suggestions may start you thinking of new foods or meal combinations you may like to try. Keep things simple and explore changes, one at a time.

Building meals to moderate carbohydrate absorption and balance blood glucose levels.	
BREAKFAST	<p>Choose a good PROTEIN CHOICE e.g. eggs, beans, bacon, ham, mackerel or nut butters.</p> <p>Include VEGETABLE CHOICES such as tomatoes, mushrooms or salads to give colour, crunch and a nutrient boost. Cook or dress these with your favourite oils.</p> <p>Include a moderate portion of a LOWER GL CARBOHYDRATE CHOICE such as wholegrain granary bread, stoneground wholemeal bread with whole seeds or sourdough breads...with butter.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>For a cereal option, try LOWER GL CARBOHYDRATE CHOICES based on wholegrain oats e.g. porridge</p> <p>Moderate the cereal portion and boost the protein, fat and nutrient value by adding nuts, seeds, unsweetened yogurt or milk. Add moderate portions of fruit (eg berries) to sweeten and boost nutrient variety further.</p>
MEAL MIX	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vary your PROTEIN CHOICES: meats or white fish or oily fish or beans or eggs or cheese • Add VEGETABLE CHOICES. Experiment with colour variety and texture; crunchy vegetable sticks, rainbow salads, chunky vegetable soups, stir fries and roasted vegetable mixes. Cook or dress these with your favourite oils. • Add a LOWER GL CARBOHYDRATE CHOICE: e.g. pasta, noodles, brown basmati rice, sweet potatoes, wholegrain granary / seedy type or stoneground wholemeal or sourdough breads or oatcakes. • DESSERT: choose fresh fruit and whole milk yogurts more often
SNACK MIX	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh fruits including berries • Nuts and seeds • Yogurts (preferably whole milk based and unsweetened) • Oatcakes with cheese • Vegetable sticks with houmous, yogurt based dips or pate • Plain dark or milk chocolate - in moderation!
DRINKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water (try adding citrus slices/ cucumber and mint leaves to ring the changes). • Tea, coffee, herbal / fruit teas (no added sugar) • Unsweetened milk (dairy, soya, nut milks etc.) • Sugar free flavoured squashes / waters etc.

NOTE: If you are a diabetic on insulin or taking medications to help lower your blood glucose levels, please have a word with your medical team before making significant changes to your glycaemic load. Your medicine doses may need adjustment.

Following are a few practical and inspiring cookbooks and recipe websites. There are many more out there; have a look around and choose the ones that look appealing to you.

BOOKS eg:

- **The Low – GL Diet Made Easy** by Patrick Holford
Practical guidance – explains principles and provides lots of meal ideas.
- **Cook. Nourish, Glow** by Amelia Freer
- **The Art of Eating Well and Good + Simple** by Hemsley & Hemsley

RECIPE WEBSITES eg:

- <http://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/collection/low-gi>.
- <http://deliciouslyella.com/category/recipes/>



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