



## Clean Eating: How far is too far?

“Clean eating” at its broadest is no different from healthy eating. The idea is to choose the more healthy foods from each food group in preference to the less healthy choices. For example, choosing wholemeal bread rather than white bread, or natural yogurt instead of sweetened, flavoured yogurt, or grilled mackerel instead of cod fried in batter. Like healthy eating advice the world over, it promotes a diet high in vegetables, fruit, fish, nuts, seeds and whole grain cereals, with less of foods high in sugar, fat, and salt, and of course not too much alcohol. In practice, this means less processed food, as it is often high in sugar, fat and salt, and more food in a more natural state.

*These ideas, like any set of beliefs, can be taken too far, and become so rigid and extreme that, far from promoting health, they damage it.*

Sensible healthy eating with a basis of scientific evidence	Extreme and unsound beliefs that can be damaging to health	Reality
Choose wholegrain cereals in preference to refined cereal foods	Refined cereal foods are harmful and you should never eat them	Refined flour and cereal foods such as white bread contain less fibre, and less of some vitamins and minerals, but are still good foods for providing protein, energy, and fibre. In the UK all these foods have added iron, calcium and B vitamins. They are nutritious foods that won't cause harm.
Have at least 5 servings of vegetables and fruit a day	Most of what you eat should be vegetables	Vegetables and fruit provide many essential vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and other nutrients. It is healthy to include a wide variety of them every day. Excessive intake of vegetables may mean you feel so full and bloated that you can't eat enough of all the other foods you need. You may even find your skin turns yellow from excessive carotene.
Avoid gluten if you have coeliac disease or other properly-diagnosed gluten sensitivity.	Gluten is harmful and you should avoid any food that contains it.	Gluten is a healthy plant protein and a very significant source of protein in most UK diets. Some people are sensitive to it, and need to avoid it, but it is of no benefit to anyone else to avoid it
Include raw fruit and salad vegetables	Cooking damages food and you should have only raw food.	Cooking damages vitamin C and some B vitamins, so it's good to have some uncooked fruit and vegetables. Other nutrients are absorbed better from cooked foods, and some foods are not safe to eat raw (such as fish, potatoes and chicken). Some foods are difficult to digest or completely inedible raw, such as potatoes, sweet potatoes and rice.

<p>Limit saturated fat, which mostly comes from dairy foods.</p> <p>If you have properly diagnosed lactose intolerance, it is sensible to limit lactose, it is not necessary to avoid it completely.</p> <p>If you have a cows' milk allergy, use a nutritionally equivalent product, usually sweetened soya milk with added calcium.</p> <p>If you find milk causes stomach discomfort, it may be helpful to try A2 milk.</p>	<p>Avoid all dairy foods as they are not natural for adults.</p>	<p>Milk and milk products are very important sources of protein and calcium, and it is difficult to replace these with other foods. In parts of the world where milk is a traditional part of the diet, most adults digest it well. This ability has evolved to take advantage of this nutritious food.</p> <p>If you really need an alternative to dairy milk, choose one with the same protein and calcium as cows' milk, usually sweetened soya milk with added calcium is best, it has the same calories as semi-skimmed milk.</p> <p>"Milks" based on oats, rice, or nuts are not nutritionally adequate, and making them tends to be wasteful of a valuable resource.</p>
<p>Limit processed foods as they are often high in sugar, fat and salt.</p>	<p>Never eat any processed food</p>	<p>Some processing is just cooking done by someone else. For instance frozen vegetables or soup in a carton or a tin can be as healthy as anything you would prepare at home. Small amounts of processed foods, such as an occasional ready meal, can enable you to eat a healthy meal at times when you can't cook, or to share a meal with friends, or if you occasionally enjoy comfort food like tinned rice pudding or a digestive biscuit.</p>
<p>Eat a variety of foods from all the food groups.</p>	<p>A vegan diet is healthiest.</p>	<p>Humans have not evolved to eat a vegan diet. Even with a great deal of thought and care, vegan diets tend to be low in iron and calcium, and essential fatty acids. Vegans always need supplements of vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, and usually also vitamin D. Vegan diets can make social eating and eating out very challenging.</p>
<p>Don't have more than 14 units of alcohol a week, spread over at least 3 days, and have some days without alcohol</p>	<p>Alcohol is poison, never have it.</p>	<p>Some people are very happy without ever drinking alcohol and that is fine. Many people find that it is difficult to make friends and socialise if they are very strict about avoiding alcohol, and they may feel lonely and isolated from their peer group.</p>
<p>Some foods are rich in essential nutrients, and can make a useful contribution to a healthy diet.</p>	<p>"Superfoods" are essential for a really healthy diet.</p>	<p>There is really no such thing as a "superfood". Many foods are particularly high in one or two nutrients, but it is no better to take a concentrated amount in one food than to spread intake of nutrients over the day. We all need a wide variety of all essential nutrients, and that can only come from a wide variety of foods.</p>

<p>Non-food substances have been added to food for centuries to help preserve it or improve flavour. More recently, this has developed for less essential functions such as adding colour and maintaining texture.</p> <p>All additives used in UK food have been tested rigorously, though we cannot always be sure of the effects of a high intake of a mixture of them over many years. Some individuals are sensitive to some additives.</p>	<p>Additives are poison; never eat any food that contains them.</p>	<p>Preservatives keep us safe by preventing the growth of harmful organisms, and reduce food waste by preventing spoilage. Some additives are not essential, for example colours, and you may prefer to avoid them when you can.</p> <p>For most people, excessively strict avoidance of additives is of no benefit, and can interfere with normal family and social eating.</p>
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Very strictly avoiding any foods that are easily available can eventually leave you feeling deprived and miserable, unable to eat with friends and family, and can even trigger binge eating. These things are definitely not healthy!