

Food News

Volume 11, issue 5

September 2025

Welcome to Food News In this quarter's edition we are looking at the key findings from the most recent National Diet and Nutrition Survey. Specifically, key nutrients we may need to increase in our diets. Then we will explore some simple tips on how to manage fussy eating. As always, we will look at what fruit and vegetables are in season with a recipe for you to try.

In addition, we have updates from Healthy Weight Warwickshire and Kind Communities, Kind Food events happening near you!

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Food News is produced by the education & choice sub-group of Warwickshire Food forum.

The forum is a multi-agency partnership aiming to improve food choices for people in Warwickshire.

The focus is on making food affordable, sustainable and providing information to help people make healthy choices. The group will also ensure that there is Warwickshire wide help for people who have difficulty affording food.

Key Findings into the nation's health

Official Statistics: **National Diet and Nutrition Survey 2019 to 2023: report**: Published 11 June 2025

The key findings highlight that UK diets are not meeting dietary recommendations. Overall, our adult population are consuming too much sugar and saturated fat. People are not consuming enough vitamins and minerals (folate, vitamin D or iodine) and there is a lack of fruit, vegetable and fibre consumption.

The table below, by Swan (2025), published in Nutrition Bulletin, shows that on average people are consuming 3.3 portions of fruit and vegetables a day and not the recommended 5 a day, unfortunately this is also a reduction in consumption from previous surveys too. Saturated fat is higher at 12.4% instead of less than or equal to 10% of total energy intake. Free sugar (sugar added to foods and not naturally occurring) is 10.4% instead of less than or equal to 5%, and fibre consumption is only 16.4 grams a day instead of more than or equal to 30 grams a day. We have work to do! But we can make daily choices to improve this.

TABLE 1 | Mean intake of key nutrients and foods compared with UK dietary recommendations NDNS 2019–2023.

Nutrient	Recommendation	Mean intake			
		1.5–3 years	4–10 years	11–18 years	19–64 years
Fruit and vegetables (portions/day)	At least 5 portions/day	N/A	N/A	2.8	3.3
Red and processed meat g/day	Average no more than 70 g/day	27	40	51	52
Total fat (% energy)	≤ 35% energy ^a	32.9	32.4	33.4	34.5
Saturated fat (% energy)	≤ 10% energy ^a	13.4 ^b	12.4	12.3	12.4
Total carbohydrate (% energy)	≥ 50% energy ^a	49.2	50.2	48.9	46.0
Free sugars (% energy)	≤ 5% energy ^a	8.1	10.2	11.4	10.4
Fibre grams/day	2–4 years ≥ 15 g/day	12.5			
	5–10 years ≥ 20 g/day		14.5		
	11–15 years ≥ 25 g/day			15.4	
	16+ years ≥ 30 g/day				16.4

Note: Portion size not set for these age groups.

Abbreviation: N/A, not applicable.

^aRecommendations and intakes for fats and carbohydrates are expressed as a percentage of energy excluding ethanol (alcohol) (SACN 2025).

^bSaturated fat recommendation does not apply to children under 2 years.

Nutrition Bulletin 

Sugar-sweetened soft drinks: The highest average consumption of sugar sweetened soft drinks was by children aged 11 to 18 years. Moving forward, the government is consulting on a ban of the sale of high-caffeine energy drinks to under-16s in England according to the Department of Health and Social Care (2025). In addition to being high in caffeine, they can contain high levels of sugar, which is known to be linked with obesity and dental decay. Evidence also links the drinks to negative impacts on children's physical and mental health, sleep quality and educational outcomes (DHSC, 2025).

Keep reading for ways we can improve some of our other results.

Folate / folic acid and Vit D

Folate, or the synthetic form: Folic acid, is a water-soluble B vitamin which is vital for the formation of red blood cells. It supports growth and cell division in the body.

Because it is a water-soluble vitamin, cooking can leach out some nutrients. To minimize this, steam or microwave your vegetables. **Many foods naturally contain folate** and some good food sources are:

- Spinach, kale, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, broccoli
- Beans and legumes (e.g. chickpeas, lentils, blackeye beans, kidney beans)
- Fortified foods (e.g. some brands of breakfast cereals – check the label)
- Nuts and seeds
- Yeast and beef extracts
- Oranges and orange juice
- Wheat bran and other wholegrain foods
- Eggs
- Poultry, pork, shellfish and liver



(BDA, 2023)

★ **It has been announced that non-wholemeal wheat flour will now be fortified with folic acid from the end of 2026.**

Vitamin D, is a fat-soluble vitamin which helps to keep our bones, teeth and muscles healthy, as well as supporting our immune system. A deficiency in adults can lead to soft bones (osteomalacia) and weak bones (osteoporosis), which can easily break (fracture) (BDA, 2025).

The best source of vitamin D is sunlight. In the UK, between April and September you can make all your vitamin D from sunlight on your skin (however spending too long in the sun can increase your risk of skin cancer). A 10 micrograms supplement is advised during autumn and winter for adults and children over 4 years, and at risk groups. See links for recommendations for babies and children (p15).

Some foods contain a small amount of vitamin D and are good to include in the diet as well:

- oily fish such as salmon, sardines, herring, and mackerel
- egg yolks
- red meat
- liver
- some mushrooms
- infant formula
- foods fortified with vitamin D, such as breakfast cereals, fat spreads, and unsweetened soya 'milk'

(BDA, 2025)



Iodine deficiency in the UK and its effects

Iodine is a mineral that is important for health. It is needed to make the thyroid hormones.

These hormones are needed for many body processes including growth, regulating metabolism and for the development of a baby's brain during pregnancy and early life.

For many years iodine intake in the UK was thought to be more than adequate but recent research has shown mild to moderate iodine deficiency in schoolgirls and pregnant women. There is now concern that many adult women may not be getting enough iodine, particularly in pregnancy.

Who is at risk of iodine deficiency?

Anyone who avoids fish or dairy products due to allergy, intolerance, or lifestyle choices such as vegetarians and vegans, could be at risk of iodine deficiency.

Evidence shows all females of child bearing age are at risk.



Before and during pregnancy and breastfeeding

As iodine is required from the early stages of pregnancy, you should make sure you have been having enough iodine in your diet for several months before you get pregnant. This is because you can build up good stores of iodine in your thyroid before you become pregnant which helps it to function well during pregnancy.

Therefore, if you are of childbearing age, and especially if you are planning a pregnancy, you should ensure that you meet the adult requirement for iodine. During pregnancy, the amount of iodine you need increases. This is because you have to make sufficient thyroid hormones to transfer to your baby to help its brain develop correctly. You also have to supply all the iodine that the baby needs. Iodine deficiency in pregnancy may have serious consequences for your child so it is very important that you meet the higher iodine requirement if you are pregnant. Breastfeeding mums still need a higher amount of iodine, so their breast milk has enough iodine for their baby. This is because the brain is still developing at that early stage.

During pregnancy and lactation, the requirement for iodine rises from 150 to 250 µg of iodine per day.

It is likely that having too little iodine in your diet may lead to low levels of thyroid hormones. If you have a deficiency of iodine when you are pregnant, your baby's brain may not develop as well as it could and this could affect your child's ability to learn in later years, for instance, lower IQ or poorer reading ability.

(BDA, 2019)



How to increase fibre

Fibre plays an important role in our bowel health. Fibre is plant-based carbohydrate that is neither digested or absorbed in the small intestine. Fibre passes through the gastrointestinal tract into the colon and forms the bulk of the stool after being partially or completely broken down by bacteria. The recommended target for fibre intake in the UK is 30g or more.

There are different types of fibre. **Soluble fibre** draws water into the stool forming a gel-like substance, which softens and eases the passage through the bowel, reducing the time it takes to empty the bowel. Foods containing soluble fibre are less likely to cause bloating than insoluble fibre.

Examples of soluble fibre: oats, fruit (especially with skins or seeds), dried fruit, vegetables, beans, peas, lentils, barley, psyllium.

Insoluble fibre does not dissolve in water but adds bulk to the stool. It therefore needs to be consumed with plenty of water to prevent stools becoming dry and hard.

Examples of insoluble fibre: wholemeal bread/pitta bread, rye bread, wholegrain bread and cereal, brown bread, wholemeal pasta, potatoes with skins on, brown rice, wheat bran and corn bran, vegetables (cabbage, carrots, Brussel sprouts), legumes, small seeds (strawberries).



Tips:

- Regularly eat fruit, vegetables, wholegrains, beans and pulses - these can be fresh, frozen or tinned.
- Leave skins on fruits, vegetables and potatoes to increase the fibre content
- Opt for wholegrain/brown variations of pasta, rice, bread, chapattis and wraps.
- Swap cakes and biscuits for oat bars, malt loaf, fig rolls or snack on a portion of unsalted nuts, fresh or dried fruit, rye crackers or oat cakes.
- Add lentils and chickpeas to curries, pasta sauces and casseroles.
- Choose wholegrain cereals like branflakes, wheat biscuits, porridge and fruit and fibre instead of white cereals.
- Stay hydrated, drink at least 1.5-2L fluid per day
- Regular physical activity.



How to increase fibre

Dietary fibre and wholegrains offer numerous health benefits, including good digestive health. Diet surveys over the years have repeatedly shown that in the UK our fibre intakes are considerably lower than recommended, and they have decreased again according to the newest report.

And what are the fibre recommendations for the family?

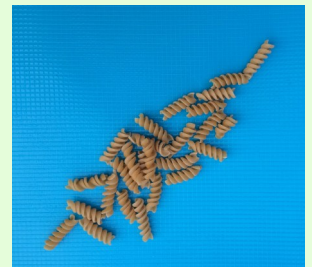
Age	Recommended amount
2 to 5 years	15g per day
5 to 11 years	20g per day
11 to 16 years	25g per day
16 years and older	30g per day



(SACN, 2015)

So how can you increase your dietary fibre intake? Firstly, **it is wise to increase fibre gradually and drink plenty of fluids** so that your gut can get used to the change. Secondly, to achieve recommended amounts of fibre you will need to **increase the wholegrains in your daily diet**.

- Choose whole grain cereals. If children are currently eating lower fibre cereal choices start by mixing high fibre and low fibre. Adding a handful of fruit is also a great way to increase fibre.
- Choose wholemeal, granary, seeded or 50:50 breads. Add mashed banana for an extra fibre boost!
- At meal times instead of white rice and pasta opt for whole wheat pasta or 50:50 pasta, brown or wild rice, and quinoa.
- For snacks choose vegetable sticks, fresh fruit, nuts, seeds, dried fruit, oat cakes, whole wheat crackers and popcorn. Be aware that nuts and seeds pose a choking risk for children under the age of 5 years so choose ground nuts and nut butters.
- Keep skins on potatoes and root vegetables.
- Add lentils and beans to dishes such as spaghetti Bolognese, chilli or curry.
- If you are used to looking at food labels, look for high fibre varieties; over 6g of fibre per 100g.



Start today!

One slice of thick wholemeal bread with sliced banana **provides 5g fibre**.

One medium jacket potato with low salt and low sugar baked beans **provides 8g fibre**.

Mix it up. **Getting fibre from a variety of sources is best for your gut.**

Fussy eating is just a phase?

Is your child's refusal of certain foods causing you to worry and wonder if they will ever 'grow out of it'? This article aims to explore this and provide simple tips on how to manage fussy eating.

What is fussy eating?

Fussy eating is very common among children, and it is a normal part of development which most children grow out of. Interestingly, fussy eating can often be an expression of a child's independence in making food choices, and is a normal part of growing up.



Signs of fussy eating:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Strong preferences for a small number of foods | Unwillingness to try new foods |
| Limited variety of foods eaten | Unwillingness to eat familiar foods |

Tips to help manage fussy eating

Patience is required as it can take up to 15 attempts before a child will accept a new food. Aim for mealtimes to be enjoyable as your child needs to develop a positive relationship with food.

- **Try to establish a regular meal pattern and routine** with 3 main meals and snacks in between. Meals should be no more than 30 minutes and snacks should be at set times.
- **Drinks are best offered after meals.** Sometimes children will fill up on drinks, reducing their appetite for food.
- **Get your child cooking** –learning basic cooking skills can increase their confidence with food
- **Eat together as a family**– it makes the meal more interesting for the child and it may encourage them to eat when they see parents and siblings eating. It also takes the focus away from the child.
- **Reduce distractions.** If possible eat at a table, away from the television, mobile phones and computers.
- **Never force a child to eat** – Keep mealtimes relaxed. 'Anxiety' is an appetite suppressant. Instead try to make the mealtime a pleasant time to be together, discussing subjects such as holidays, sports and friends.
- **Be positive and praise your child.** Make use of reward charts when a new food is eaten.

Remember: Children learn from adults and it is important not to override a child's cue when they indicate they have had enough.

Occasionally a child will have a more serious case of food refusal, and advice should be sought on how to manage this most effectively. **Please seek advice from your GP or dietitian if:**

Your child drops two centiles on their growth chart or has been identified as having faltering growth by a health professional. Your child is frequently ill, lethargic and inactive or has poor concentration. Your child has been diagnosed with a vitamin or mineral deficiency. Finally if your child is eating less than 10 foods which do not cover all food groups please seek advice (Refer to Eatwell Guide in further reading section)

10 Steps Towards Food Acceptance



Step 1: Choose a new food. Put a tiny amount (size of fingernail or less) of the new food on to your child's plate in the same place each time. Use a separate plate if your child gets upset when this food is put on the same plate as accepted foods.



Step 2: Encourage your child to smell the new food. Get involved by smelling the food too – your child may copy.



Step 3: Encourage your child to pick up the new food with a fork or spoon. Your child will not usually try to eat the food at this stage.



Step 4: Encourage your child to touch the new food with their fingers.



Step 5: Then encourage your child to pick up the new food with their fingers.



Step 6: Encourage your child to touch the food to their face then to their lips ('kiss the food') and then to their tongue. Do this at a rate that suits your child. Some children may do all steps at one mealtime, others may take several attempts.



Step 7: Encourage your child to lick the new food then put in their mouth (they can remove without chewing and swallowing – this step allows them to experience the sensation of food in their mouth).



Step 8: Encourage your child to bite, chew and then swallow a very small amount of the food.



Step 9: Gradually increase the amount of the food eaten, but to no more than a "normal" portion.



Step 10: Well done! Your child has accepted a new food. Start the process all over again with another food



What's in Season?

Here is a list of what fruit and veg are in season in September in the UK

Fruit	Vegetables
Blackberries, Damsons, Pears, Plums, Raspberries, Rhubarb, Strawberries	Aubergine, Beetroot, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Butternut Squash, Carrots, Cauliflower, Celery, Courgettes, Chicory, Chillies, Cucumber, Garlic, Kale, Kohlrabi, Leeks, Lettuce, Mangetout, Marrow, Onions, Parsnips, Peas, Peppers, Potatoes, Pumpkin, Radishes, Rocket, Runner Beans, Samphire, Sorrel, Spinach, Spring Greens, Spring Onions, Summer Squash, Sweetcorn, Swiss Chard, Tomatoes, Turnips, Watercress, Wild Mushrooms

Cooking in season You'll notice these ingredients are more abundant in supermarkets and market stalls this month, so here is a tasty seasonal recipe to try.

Quinoa and Chia Seed Porridge

Preparation 5 mins, Cooking 25 mins

Serves 2

Egg-Free, Nut-Free, Wheat-Free

Ingredients:

- * 50g quinoa
- * 2 tbsp chia seeds
- * 240ml cold water
- * 240ml dairy milk, or soya milk, plus 50-100 ml to finish
- * ¼ tsp ground cardamom
- * 100g oats
- * 1 tbsp honey, maple or agave syrup

Method:

1. In a small saucepan, mix the quinoa, chia seeds, milk, and half of the water. Add a large pinch of the cardamom.
2. Bring to the boil on a medium heat. Turn the heat to low and simmer for 15 minutes. Stir regularly, adding more water if the porridge becomes very thick or starts to stick to the pan.
3. Add the remaining water, oats and honey. Stir well and continue to cook whilst stirring regularly on a low heat for 8-10 minutes, until thick and all the liquid has been absorbed. If the porridge becomes too thick or starts to stick to the pan, add a little extra water or milk.
4. Stir in the remaining cardamom.
5. Add a splash more milk if a thinner consistency is required.
6. Serve immediately and with *optional* garnish: pear, plum or mango, blackberries, raspberries or strawberries, chia seeds and matcha powder.



Quinoa is a complete protein with all 9 essential amino acids!

Healthy Weight Warwickshire

Warwickshire colleagues and partners are working together to support healthy weight by creating healthier places and helping people make positive changes. This joined-up approach looks at every stage of life, with early efforts focused on maternity, children, and young people.

A Healthy Weight Workshop, held in May, brought people together to celebrate the great work already happening. It was a chance to share ideas, learn from each other and help shape a shared healthy weight vision for Warwickshire.

In September, over 50 colleagues and partners from across Warwickshire came together for a second Healthy Weight Warwickshire Workshop. The event focused on building the shared vision and practical action to help people live healthier lives in Warwickshire, now and in the future.



What Happened at the September Workshop

- A shared draft vision for Healthy Weight in Warwickshire was presented, shaped by ideas and feedback from the first workshop.
- At the workshop, conversations and action focused on making healthy choices accessible to all, supporting physical activity, movement and healthy eating in everyday life and giving people and communities the tools and confidence to lead healthier lives.
- Partners at the workshop worked together to co-design actions that can support healthier lifestyles - both now and in the future.
- Everyone was invited to make a personal pledge, showing their commitment and shared responsibility for making change happen.



Next Steps for Healthy Weight Warwickshire

- * To make healthy weight everyone's business, partners will be supported through regular updates, shared learning, and collaborative spaces - helping them stay informed, adopt best practice, and celebrate success.

Pledges and ideas will be turned into clear actions, so progress can be tracked to help reduce health inequalities and make healthy weight a shared responsibility and priority across all sectors in Warwickshire.

Want to Get Involved?

If you couldn't attend the workshops but would like to stay updated or get involved, please email phadmin@warwickshire.gov.uk or call 01926 731484. We'd love to hear from you and welcome your support.

Kind Communities - Kind Food



All Warwickshire residents are invited to attend our free 'Kind Communities - Kind Food' events.

From September to March 2026, Warwickshire residents are invited to attend Warwickshire County Council's free Kind Communities Kind Food events across Warwickshire - to find out how to ***eat more healthily***, in ways that are ***affordable and sustainable*** for the environment.

Kind Communities - Kind Food is a County Council-led community engagement programme that provides live cooking demonstrations and free information about how to adopt healthier lifestyles as well as other food-related community support.

The programme of events include:

1. Tuesday 30th September 2025 -11.00 to 3.00) - Mancetter Memorial Hall, Old Farm Rd, Mancetter, Atherstone CV9 1QN
2. Tuesday 28th October 2025 - 11.30 to 3.30) - Stockingford Community Center, Haunchwood Rd, Nuneaton CV10 8DY
3. Saturday 15th November 2025 - 11.00 to 3.00) - Rugby Methodist Church, Rugby Methodist Church, Rüsselsheim Wy, Rugby. CV22 7TB
4. Friday 28th November 2025 - 11.00 to 3.00) - Lillington Food Pantry, Pound Ln, Leamington Spa CV32 7RT
5. Tuesday 20th January 2026 - 10.30 to 2.30) Bishopton Community Centre, Drayton Ave, Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 9PB
6. Saturday 21st February 2026, 11.00 to 3.00) - The Harbour Centre, 12 Congreve Walk, Bedworth CV12 8LY



Kind Communities - Kind Food



Each event is a great opportunity for residents to find out useful information such as **energy-saving advice** and **health and wellbeing support** with a wide range of organisations attending to talk to residents. The event is being supported by [Warwickshire Food Champions](https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/foodchampions) [\[searchout.warwickshire.gov.uk\]](https://searchout.warwickshire.gov.uk), who are all volunteers, and several local groups involved in projects that grow fresh produce, will also be in attendance.

The events will include:

Cooking demonstrations by Warwickshire Food Champions

Free Kind Communities – Kind Food recipe booklets

Free health checks

Free advice on energy saving, health and wellbeing and reducing food waste

Talks and tips on affordability and using slow cookers and air fryers – including free air fryers and slow cookers

Information about becoming a Warwickshire Food champion

Children's activities



Supporting our Immune System

September brings many people back to school and work. Remember, a **balanced diet strengthens the immune system**, helping the body defend against infections and diseases. Also, try to get enough sleep, movement and reduce stress levels.

In addition to the above, ensure you get the correct vaccines.

Vaccines are the most effective way to prevent many infectious diseases (NHS, 2025). See table for upcoming Flu Vaccine clinics for SWFT Staff:

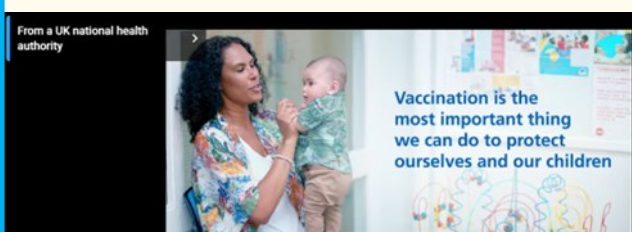
Flu vaccination clinics at SWFT		
Starting from Monday 6 October 2025		
WHEN	LOCATION	TIME
Mondays, Tuesdays, Fridays	Occupational Health Building	8.30 – 3.30
8th, 15th, 16th, 23rd and 29th OCTOBER	Beauchamp Ward (breast clinic)	8.30 – 3.30
9th OCTOBER	Stratford Hospital (Main building)	AM & PM
30th OCTOBER	Southam Clinic	AM

These clinics are for ages 18–64. Over 65 clinics to be arranged.

November dates to follow for more clinics and roaming.

Vaccines - Are they safe for my child? Absolutely and if you have any questions, be sure to speak with your GP, Midwife or Health Visitor

– watch the video for questions and answers: https://youtu.be/iD_sPz9HkD8



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If you have an interest in food, hydration and health, and would like to join the Warwickshire Food Forum, please contact the editor.

If you would like more information about any of the articles in this newsletter, please contact the editor who will pass this on to the author of the article.

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