

Information Sheet 2

What makes a good diet?

1) Look at your present eating habits and the changes that you promised to make.

- Did you make the changes you said you would?
- If yes, congratulate yourself and keep it up
- If no, then look at why
- Were the goals you set unrealistic?
- Do you need to modify them?
- Do you need to set new goals?

If we are to take control of our eating habits, we need to recognise what our faults are before we can go about changing them. We also need to understand what types of food we need to be eating and what effect they have on our bodies.

2) What does our body need?

Everyone's body needs a balance of nutrients to remain healthy. If you go on a diet, you must be careful that you are not cutting out some of these essential nutrients.

The following are what we need to get from our food:

- **ENERGY** - or calories, is required to fuel our body (and mind). We get energy from protein, carbohydrates, fat and alcohol. If you want to lose weight, you may need to cut down on the number of calories you are taking in.
- **PROTEIN** - repairs the body and strengthens hair, nails, muscle and skin.
- **FAT** - helps keep the cells healthy, and is used to transport some vitamins from food into the body.
- **CARBOHYDRATES** - provide energy
- **VITAMINS** - Some vitamins are more essential than others.
- **MINERALS** - e.g... calcium and iron.
- **FIBRE** - is required to keep our bowels healthy.
- **FLUIDS** - help keep the systems of the body in good working order.

3) How can we improve?

We can all make improvements to our eating habits by eating

- more fibre
- less fat
- less sugar
- less salt

This can be done in the following ways:

- eat more bread, cereals and potatoes
- eat more vegetables and fruit
- use less fat/oils
- eat less fatty foods
- eat less cakes, pastries and sweets
- drink fewer sugary drinks
- the Eatwell Plate Model by the Food Standards Agency, aims to help us achieve this by showing the foods in the correct proportions of our daily intake

4) How long will it take to lose weight?

Our aim is to lose weight and retain muscle and therefore you should aim to lose between 1 and 2lbs per week. If you lose weight faster than this, you will probably be losing fluid and muscle as well as fat. You may find that you get an initial weight loss of more than 2lbs, but this will probably be excess fluid and glycogen. Aim to keep your weight loss gradual.

These are the changes I will make this week: