

Food News

Volume 11, issue 4

June 2025

Welcome to Food News. This quarter our student dietitians are looking at weight loss injections and what foods to eat to help with perimenopause symptoms.

We are then joined by guest writers to share about using a food bank and to learn about the Kind Communities—Kind Food community project which will hopefully inspire you to become a Food Champion!

We have also included information support for Long Covid and Nutrition During Pregnancy. Finally, we are looking at what foods are in season with a lovely recipe for you to try!

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Warwickshire Food Forum

Food News is produced by the education & choice sub-group of Warwickshire Food forum and will be published quarterly.

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.

Truth or Myth

Are weight loss injections a quick fix?

As we dive into summer, for some this can be a difficult time of year to embrace body positivity when trying to squeeze into tight swimwear, whilst perhaps feeling a little body conscious if weight has gradually piled on. You may have tried lots of fad diets and still struggle to lose weight. If you are living with obesity, and concerned about your weight, could weight loss injections be the answer? In this article, the basics of what weight loss injections have to offer, eligibility and long-term outcomes will be explored.

What are weight loss injections and how do they work?

The medical term for weight loss injections is glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonists which are commonly referred to as GLP-1s or GLP-1RAs. These medicines help people feel fuller by mimicking a natural hormone released after eating. There are a variety of GLP-1s and some also support blood sugar control, therefore not all GLP-1s are authorised for weight loss and may be used for the management of type 2 diabetes.

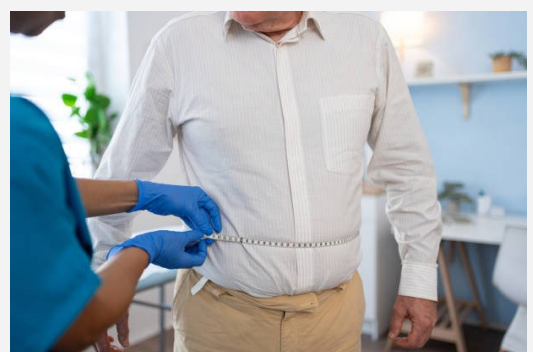


Why is this important?

According to Diabetes UK, more than **5.8 million** people in the UK are living with diabetes with the majority (90%) living with type 2 diabetes. The Office for Health Improvement & Disparities claim that **64.0%** of adults aged 18 years and over in England were estimated to be overweight or living with obesity; and that is higher at **66.2% in Warwickshire**. Therefore the introduction of GLP-1 medicine is a step in the right direction to support people to manage their weight and reduce the associated complications of obesity and diabetes.

Who is eligible for weight loss injections?

The NICE guidance (2025) eligibility criteria states that people with a BMI of 35kg/m^2 and above, with 1 weight-related comorbidity may be referred to a specialist weight management service to be prescribed GLP-1 medicine in the NHS. A lower BMI threshold may apply for people from South Asian, Chinese, other Asian, Middle Eastern, Black African or African-Caribbean ethnic backgrounds. Exceptions may apply for those with a BMI of $30\text{--}34.9\text{kg/m}^2$ provided they meet the criteria for referral to specialist weight management services and conventional treatment has been unsuccessful. However, Warwickshire has a phased introduction in order to help those most in need, as well as ensure lifestyle support and a consistent service is provided. The eligibility criteria for the first cohort of patients here is as follows: **must have BMI >40** (or 38.5 if BAME patient) and must have **4** of the following: ASCVD, Hypertension, Dyslipidaemia, Sleep Apnoea, Type 2 Diabetes.



A healthcare professional will assess the suitability of the GLP-1 medication. This medicine is not advisable for individuals with the following health conditions: ketoacidosis, pancreatitis, renal impairment, severe hepatic impairment & severe gastrointestinal disease. In addition **pregnant or breastfeeding women should not take GLP-1 medication** due to a lack of safety data for this group.

Truth or Myth

Are weight loss injections a quick fix?

Who are GLP-1 medicines intended for?

GLP-1s are medicines licensed to treat specific medical conditions and should **only** be used if you are living with obesity or diabetic. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has not assessed the safety and effectiveness of GLP-1s when used outside of their licensed use.

What GLP-1 medicines are available in the UK ?



There are currently **6** GLP-1 medicines available in the UK, which can be injected in the thigh, abdomen, or upper arm. One that is popular amongst celebrities and often highlighted in the media, is Ozempic otherwise known as Semaglutide. It is also sold under the following brand names: Rybelsus and Wgovy.

Other licensed GLP-1 medicines to support weight loss and diabetes management include:

- Tirzepatide (Mounjaro)
- Liraglutide (sold under various brand names)
- Exenatide, lixisenatide & dulaglutide (for type 2 diabetics only)

These medications may be available in tablet or injectable form. Injectable GLP-1 agonists are more common and these can be self-administered at home.

Will the use of GLP-1 medicine lead to long term weight loss?

A randomised control study published in 2021 assessed the effectiveness of GLP-1 medication in non diabetic people with a BMI of 32-43kg/m² in combination with an exercise program vs people using GLP-1s and doing their usual level of activity. The study also compared weight loss achieved by people not on GLP-1 medicine following a low calorie diet, and those making no changes to their lifestyle (placebo group). The study found that approaching weight loss with a combined strategy i.e. taking a GLP-1 and engaging in an exercise programme over the course of 1 year, resulted in greater weight loss compared to the other groups and significant improvements in insulin sensitivity and cardiorespiratory fitness (Popoviciu et al., 2023). Therefore, for long term success, a holistic approach including lifestyle interventions are necessary alongside the use of GLP-1s. As GLP-1 medication continues to advance more research is needed in this area on long-term outcomes.



Truth or Myth

Are weight loss injections a quick fix?

Tips for those considering GLP-1 medicine

- ⇒ Please seek support from your GP/health professional & have a consultation covering the benefits, risks and eligibility (don't believe everything you read / see on social media).
- ⇒ Avoid products supplied as powder in vials (to be mixed with a liquid prior to injection) as these are NOT authorised in the UK and could put your health at risk. (Approved and safe GLP-1 medicines are in pre-filled injection pens).
- ⇒ Beware of counterfeit GLP-1s from unregulated sellers. Use of these could lead to serious health risks.
- ⇒ Remember all GLP-1 medicines are prescription only medicines, which means they can only be prescribed by a healthcare professional.
- ⇒ You should not take GLP-1 medication alongside other weight loss medications.
- ⇒ Be aware of the side-effects of GLP-1 medication which commonly includes: nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, constipation & stomach pain. For more detailed information on adverse effects and contraindications click here: [GLP-1 receptor agonists | Prescribing information | Diabetes - type 2 | CKS | NICE](#)

Links to further information & support

- ⇒ For support with weight management please visit: [Weight management :: South Warwickshire University NHS Foundation Trust](#)
- ⇒ For support with diabetes management please visit: [Diabetes UK - Know diabetes. Fight diabetes. | Diabetes UK](#)
- ⇒ For support with your weight, you may be eligible to join the NHS 12 week digital weight management programme: [NHS England » The NHS Digital Weight Management Programme: Patient leaflets](#)
- ⇒ For tips on how to stay safe when purchasing medicine online please visit: [FakeMeds: Safely buy medication online](#)
- ⇒ For more information on the complications associated with obesity, please visit: [Complications | Background information | Obesity | CKS | NICE](#)



Perimenopause & Diet: Supporting Balance and Wellbeing

Mental Wellbeing

Perimenopause is a natural transition, but its symptoms can significantly impact daily life. While hormone replacement therapy (HRT) is a common treatment, emerging research suggests that diet and lifestyle choices play a crucial role in managing symptoms and supporting mental health.

What is Perimenopause?

Perimenopause is when you have symptoms of menopause but your periods have not stopped. These symptoms range from hot flushes and joint pain to mood swings and brain fog. The Menopause Support Symptom Checklist ([Symptom-Checker.pdf](#)) outlines common signs, including insomnia, bloating, migraines, and anxiety. The NHS Menopause Guide ([Menopause - NHS](#)) also highlights changes in periods as key indicators.

Identifying Early Signs

Perimenopause can begin several years before menopause, with symptoms varying widely among women. Identifying these signs early can help you seek appropriate support and make beneficial lifestyle changes (Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust and West London NHS Trust, 2024). Available at: [Menopause and perimenopause :: Keeping Well](#).

How Hormonal Changes Affect Mental Health

During perimenopause, fluctuating oestrogen levels affect mood, cognition, and emotional resilience. According to the Menopause Charity, many women experience anxiety, depression, panic attacks, and brain fog. Mind UK highlights that these symptoms can begin years before menopause and may persist into post-menopause ([Menopause and mental health - Mind](#)).

Medical Approaches to Symptom Relief

NICE guidelines ([Overview | Menopause: identification and management | Guidance | NICE](#)) state that HRT is the most effective treatment for managing vasomotor symptoms and can help prevent osteoporosis. Individualised approaches consider factors like age and risk factors. NICE also recommends menopause-specific cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) for mood-related symptoms, particularly for women preferring non-hormonal interventions (Ayers et al., 2012).

Perimenopause & Diet: Supporting Balance and Wellbeing

HRT is the most effective treatment for managing some symptoms and it carries less cancer risk than lifestyle factors such as: excessive alcohol, living with excess weight or obesity, or a lack of physical activity.



Perimenopause & Diet: Supporting Balance and Wellbeing

What does good nutrition look like?

Fruits & Vegetables: Aim to maximise fruit and vegetable intake, including skins as they contain fibre and antioxidants that help combat inflammation. Whole foods are preferable to juicing, which can remove beneficial fibre and provide unnecessary amounts of sugar.

Healthy Fats: Essential omega-3 fatty acids found in walnuts, flaxseeds, salmon, sardines, and olive oil can help regulate inflammation and support heart health.

Whole Grains: Whole grain and wholemeal starchy carbohydrates— including brown rice and pasta, quinoa, lentils, and legumes—help stabilise blood sugar levels and help prevent energy crashes.

Nuts and Seeds: Incorporating almonds, Brazil nuts, sunflower seeds, chia, and pumpkin seeds delivers vitamins and minerals that support bone health and reduce inflammation.

Protein: is crucial in perimenopause to support muscle health and manage weight gain. Sources such as oily fish, poultry, tofu, beans, and pulses provide essential amino acids -body's building blocks, vitamins and minerals.

Foods in moderation

Ultra-processed foods: Such as shop bought biscuits, crisps, cakes or fizzy drinks, are industrially processed foods and drink which contain ingredients we would not have at home. They often contain preservatives, additives, and artificial ingredients, which can worsen inflammation and hormone imbalance. These foods are typically high in fat, salt and sugar too. Choosing minimally processed options, like fruit and vegetables (fresh or frozen) or plain Greek yogurt, provides better nutrition.

Added sugars: Excess sugar triggers inflammation, mood swings, and energy crashes. Many ultra-processed foods contain hidden sugars, so opting for naturally sweet and satiating foods like fruit and nuts can help stabilise hormones (Marí, 2017).

Highly refined carbohydrates: Opt for whole foods over ready meals or overly processed grains. White bread, pastries, and ready meals can cause rapid blood sugar spikes, leading to fatigue and cravings. Wholegrains like oats, brown basmati rice and wholemeal pasta, or quinoa, provide steadier energy and support gut health.

Alcohol and caffeine: Excessive consumption can worsen hormonal fluctuations, intensifying hot flushes, sleep disturbances, anxiety, and brain fog (British Menopause Society, 2025). Alcohol affects liver function, disrupting oestrogen processing and increasing inflammation. It also weakens bone health, raising the risk of osteoporosis (Royal Osteoporosis Society, 2021).

National survey – The results



In May 2016, a survey conducted by Ipsos MORI, on behalf of the British Menopause Society (BMS), revealed that one in two women aged 45-65 had gone through the menopause within the past ten years without consulting a healthcare professional. This is despite women surveyed reporting on average seven different symptoms and 42% saying their symptoms were worse or much worse than expected.

50%

of women aged 45-65 who have experienced the menopause in the past 10 years, had not consulted a healthcare professional about their menopause symptoms.



This despite women reporting on average seven symptoms and 42% feeling their menopause symptoms were worse or much worse than they suspected.



50% of women said their menopause symptoms had impacted their home life.

Many experienced symptoms they did not expect, including:

22%

unexpected sleeping problems/insomnia

20%

difficulty with memory/concentration

18%

experienced unexpected achy joints

More than a third

said their menopause had impacted their work life.

79%

of women surveyed experienced hot flushes and

70%

experienced night sweats



36%

women said their menopause symptoms impacted their social life



50%

reported their menopause symptoms impacted their sex life

Women's Health Concern

www.womens-health-concern.org
Reg Charity No: 279651
Company Reg No: 1432023

For further details – please visit

www.thebms.org.uk or telephone **01628 890 199**

BMS
British Menopause Society

www.thebms.org.uk
Reg Charity No: 1015144
Company Reg No: 02759439

Perimenopause & Diet: Supporting Balance and Wellbeing

The British Dietetic Association's Top tips for Eating well for the perimenopause and menopause:

- *Changing eating habits and lifestyle may help to reduce symptoms, keep bones strong, and reduce risk of heart disease*
- *Eat more plant-based foods, including different coloured fruit and vegetables, plenty of fibre-rich cereal foods, and more nuts (unsalted), peas and beans for protein*
- *Aim for two-three portions of calcium-rich foods every day*
- *Reduce caffeine and alcohol intake to help manage hot flushes*
- *Maintain, or take steps to achieve a healthy body weight*
- *Take regular moderate exercise, especially weight bearing activity and include some muscle strengthening exercises*

Get advice from your dietitian, doctor or pharmacist on nutritional supplements, especially if you are taking regular medications

[Eating well for the perimenopause and menopause - BDA](#)

These tips will help you through perimenopause, menopause and beyond

Staying Healthy During and After Menopause

These tips may help you lower your risk for heart disease and osteoporosis and keep you healthy.



Eat a healthy diet.



Get enough calcium and vitamin D.



Be physically active.



Maintain a healthy weight.



Don't smoke or use tobacco products.

To learn more about menopause visit www.nia.nih.gov/menopause.

No one wants to have to use a Foodbank

Since 2010, in the UK Foodbanks have become widespread and are now an established feature of the informal welfare system, normalising the giving of free bags of provisions to people who have insufficient finances for food.

Food banks portray an intensely divisive image, often positioned in touching distance of conspicuous wealth. They are an uncomfortable reminder of austerity.

But what are the reasons for people needing to depend on food handouts? Many have been missing meals for days, going without heating and electricity and facing “destitution”. These are people on the lowest end of the low-income spectrum, described as living in “extreme financial vulnerability”.

Often of working age and mostly living in rented accommodation about five out of six are unemployed and depending on benefits. But among those in employment, the work is unpredictable and insecure with an unreliable income. Food bank users are often single adults or lone parents. Ill health is a very common feature.

People are living on wafer-thin margins. However, there is often something else that acts as the tipping point. An income or expenditure ‘shock’ that means people’s only option is to access the Foodbank. This can be a rise in rent, energy bills or the cost of food; or it could be a delay in benefits or fewer working hours.

At Stratford upon Avon Foodbank, we don’t judge. We listen. We understand the shame some feel having to walk through our doors and we try to lighten the load to the anxiety, stress and worry. Not only do we provide an instant solution to the question of “how am I going to eat tonight?” and allow people the space to breathe, but we also offer advice on benefits, housing and debt – supporting people to take the first steps up the ladder out of food insecurity and poverty.



No one wants to have to use a Foodbank

"I was angry at myself for ever allowing domestic abuse to be part of her life, part of mine. We had no life, only existence.

We were instantly greeted by such warmth and welcomed by a team of angels in green. We were offered a drink and a snack and a place to sit.

The foodbank asked all the right questions and did their very best to meet all my needs. They went above and beyond to get any extras if they can.

The shame instantly lifted, and I could breathe...my little girl would eat a decent meal. The Foodbank took time to listen and for the first time in years I wasn't invisible.

Fast forward 3 months I have collected keys to a permanent home, my daughter is settled into her school, and I have a new job. My bank account is healthy, and my cupboards are full of good wholesome food.

Every person from every walk of life is welcome at a Foodbank. They don't turn anyone away who needs help. Don't ever feel ashamed of using a Foodbank. It's the kindest thing you can do for yourself and your family in your hour of need"

No one wants to have to use a foodbank but if you need us, we are here. Be kind to yourself and reach out. We will help.



No one wants to have to use a Foodbank

How to get help

Stratford upon Avon Foodbank works on a referral-based model, as do all Trussell Foodbanks.

To access the Foodbank you need to come with food voucher, which can be obtained from local agencies, such as schools, GP surgeries, health visitors, Citizen Advice South Warwickshire and Stratford District Council. A few questions will be asked about your financial situation and what support networks you have in place. This is so we can tailor support to meet your needs.

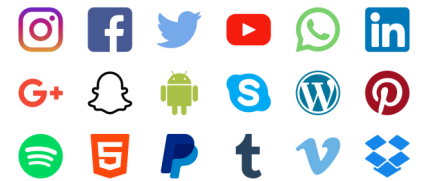


We offer casework via our commissioned service Coventry Independent Advice service (CIAS) around housing, debt and benefits. We also work with local support agencies to attend our distribution sessions so you can discuss issues/concerns. Orbit, Family Information Service and Act on Energy regularly attend.

In addition to receiving emergency food parcels we do run projects (if funding is available) to provide lunch hampers to children during the school holidays, meal kits to families and gift hampers at Christmas.

Our website is www.stratforduponavon.foodbank.org.uk for further information.





What's in the media?

Kind Communities- Kind Food

Kind Communities- Kind Food is an exciting, community-based project which is part of the Warwickshire County Council's Food Strategy 2023-26. The strategy has three objectives:



- Increasing accessibility and affordability of healthier food
- Increasing education and people's choices around healthier food
- Increasing awareness of sustainable food choices.

The project is founded on the principle that people and communities enjoy coming together to share ideas and their knowledge about affordable, healthy food. Community-led food initiatives can make a powerful contribution to everyone eating more healthily and therefore improving people's health and wellbeing overall.

Kind Communities-Kind Food public events

One of our main activities is Kind Communities-Kind Food events across Warwickshire, free of charge and open to the public where our volunteers demonstrate low-cost healthy cooking, providing taster bowls, sharing recipes and ideas. We give talks on energy saving methods, provide free slow cookers and invite many organisations and community groups along to take part share their advice. Two of our most recent events were at George Eliot Hospital (staff health and wellbeing awareness day) in Nuneaton.

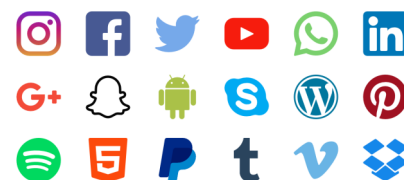
(Warwickshire Food Champion Sheela Hammond demonstrating how to prepare Bhel Puri at a Kind Communities-Kind Food event at The Jubilee Sports centre in Nuneaton)



Funding for community food projects

We have provided a grant scheme over the last two years for community organisations to obtain funding for projects that help improve access to affordable food. In total 45 groups have received funding to help get a range of community food projects going, including community growing, allotment projects, cooking lessons, and food waste reduction projects. These groups have received a total of over £44,000 to support their plans. We hope to announce another grant scheme later this year. *(Nether Whitacre Edible Garden project was funded by Kind Communities-Kind Food)*





What's in the media?

Kind Communities- Kind Food

Warwickshire Food Champions



Warwickshire Food Champions carry out a wonderful role engaging with the food strategy and supporting it through volunteering their time and knowledge to deliver their own food projects in the community and with supporting KC-KF events. Food champions develop recipes which they demonstrate at our Kind Communities-Kind Food events and help promote key messages about good diet and healthy food. There are 34 food champions in Warwickshire, and **we want to recruit more**. Please use the link at the bottom of the page to find out more about becoming a Warwickshire Food Champion.

Slow cooker courses

Over the last two years we teamed up with Warwickshire Rural Community Council to provide slow cooker courses at winter warm hubs across Warwickshire. This involved 12 courses with up to 12 places on each 4 -week course – providing professional cooking lessons using the slow cooker- with a free slow cooker (donated by Cadent) and ingredients to cook a meal each week. This has led to 24 courses and 244 people attending each being given their own free slow cooker. Excellent feedback has been received about the usefulness of these courses.



(James Morrison – Warwickshire Food Champion about to provide a cooking demonstration at a Kind Communities-Kind Food event at George Eliot Hospital, Nuneaton)

If you would be interested in becoming a Food Champion or would like to find out more, or ask questions, please contact Mike Slemensek at mikeslemensek@warwickshire.gov.uk.



For further information about the Warwickshire Food Strategy:

<https://searchout.warwickshire.gov.uk/homepage/37/warwickshire-food-strategy>



Could it be Long Covid?

If you have a cough that isn't going away, or are feeling breathless or exhausted without doing much after being unwell, **it could be Long Covid.**

- extreme tiredness (fatigue)
- feeling short of breath
- problems with your memory and concentration ("brain fog")
- heart palpitations
- dizziness
- joint pain and muscle aches

If you're experiencing any of these symptoms and think it could be Long Covid, see your GP.

Healthy Eating in Pregnancy



South Warwickshire
University
NHS Foundation Trust

***Eat 5 portions of fruit and
vegetables a day**

***Choose healthy snacks**

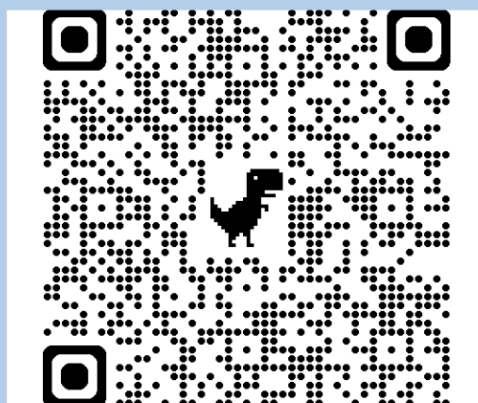
***Take your pregnancy
vitamins**

***Have 6 - 8 glasses of water
a day**

***And say no thank you to
alcohol**



**Download the
leaflet here:**



What's in Season?

Here is a list of what fruit and veg are in season in June

Fruit	Vegetables
Blackcurrants, Cherries, Gooseberries, Raspberries, Redcurrants, Rhubarb, Strawberries, Tayberries	Asparagus, Aubergine, Beetroot, Broad Beans, Broccoli, Cauliflower, Chillies, Courgettes, Cucumber, Elderflowers, Lettuce, Marrow, New Potatoes, Peas, Peppers, Radishes, Rocket, Runner Beans, Samphire, Sorrel, Spring Greens, Spring Onions, Summer Squash, Swiss Chard, Turnips, Watercress

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.

Pasta with watercress and radish pesto (serves 4) -

Ingredients:

- Bunch radishes with leaves (about 275g), radishes finely sliced, leaves roughly chopped
 - 80g watercress
 - 70g pumpkin seeds, toasted
 - 70g parmesan or vegetarian alternative, finely grated
 - 2 garlic cloves, crushed
 - Grated zest and juice 1 lemon
 - 100ml olive oil
 - 300g pasta (shape of your choice)
 - 250g frozen peas
1. Put the radish leaves and half the watercress and any thick watercress stalks in a food processor. Add the pumpkin seeds, cheese, garlic, lemon zest and juice. Whizz to a paste, then tip in half the sliced radishes. Pour in the oil, season with salt and pepper, then pulse until the radishes are finely chopped.
 2. Cook the pasta in boiling salted water according to the packet instructions until al dente, adding the peas for the final 1 minute of cooking. Reserve a cupful of cooking water. Drain and return the pasta and peas to the pan, then stir in the pesto, adding enough of the cooking water to loosen so it coats the pasta. Divide among plates and top with the rest of the radish slices and watercress.
 3. Chill the sauce in a tub for up to a week, or freeze for up to a month.





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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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What's in season

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