



Food News

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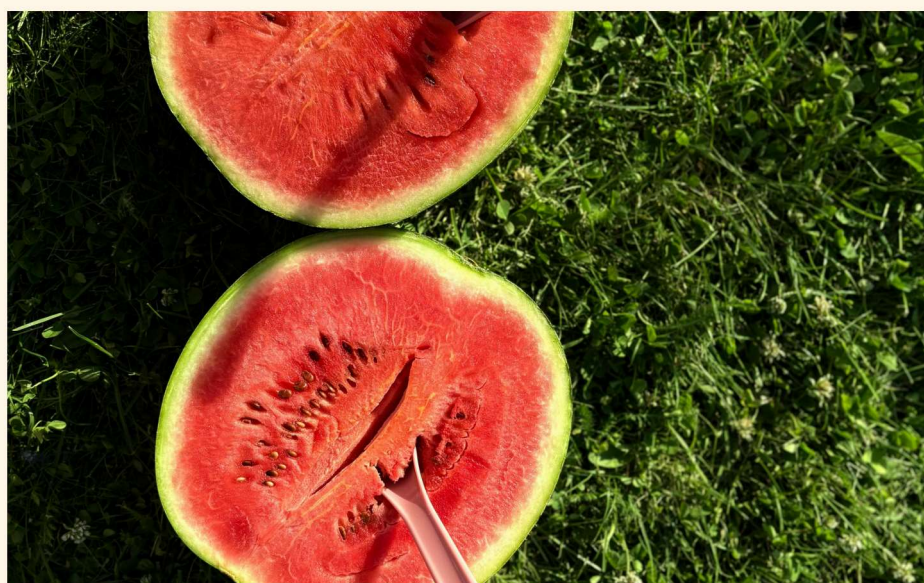
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Welcome to Food News

Summer 2026 edition

How is the summer here already?! As we move into hot summer months, this season's edition explains how Mindful eating can help us meet our dietary goals. Then our student dietitians are looking at how we can adapt our diets to prevent Type 2 Diabetes and why nutrition matters for learning disabilities.

As always we will look at what foods are in season and provide a tasty recipe for you to try.

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.

Can practising Mindfulness help improve our diets?

Regular readers of Food News may recall, that there is currently a challenge in terms of the diet quality of the population of Warwickshire. In an article published in the Spring edition, it was stated that 96% of adults were not meeting the recommendation for fibre intake whilst 82% did not adhere to the recommended limits for saturated fat consumption. Although there are many reasons why people may not eat a healthy diet, one potential strategy to help improve diet is the concept of “Mindful Eating”. This may be particularly important to those people whose diet is influenced by their mental wellbeing. For example, people who might be prone to eating when stressed, upset or bored, in other words people who eat for reasons other than hunger. It can also be used by people who have simply slipped into bad habits around eating. For example, eating a whole packet of biscuits whilst watching TV.

Mindfulness and Mindful Eating

Mindful eating is an adaption of Mindfulness which is a technique used by people to help improve their mental wellbeing. Although mindfulness has its roots in Buddhism and meditation, it does not require the participant to have any spiritual beliefs. Furthermore, Mindfulness has the seal of approval from NICE and is recommended by NICE guidance for the treatment of depression (NHS).

In essence, Mindfulness can be defined as the practice of paying deliberate, non-judgmental attention to the present moment. For the participant, the practicing of Mindfulness can reap multiple benefits which include:

- An increase in self-awareness
- An increase in feelings of calmness
- A reduction in feelings of stress
- An increased ability to be able to choose how to deal with difficult thoughts and feelings.
- It encourages people to show self-compassion (MIND)



However, it should be remembered that Mindfulness cannot change a person overnight and that it is a skill and like most skills it requires regular practice.

So how can mindfulness be applied to diet?

When applied to diet, Mindfulness shifts eating from an automatic behaviour to a conscious, sensory experience. This essentially means, that we move away from being on “auto pilot” and slow down our eating so that we can taste and enjoy meals. This is important for those trying to reduce energy intake as it takes around 20 minutes for the brain to register that the stomach is full. The benefit can therefore be twofold: reduced excess energy consumption and enhanced satisfaction in the process of eating.

So, what does Mindfulness look like? Mindful eating will look different to everyone, but if you wanted to have a practice, below is a simple exercise. You will need a small piece of food such as raisin.

- **Holding:** First, take a raisin and hold it in the palm of your hand or between your finger and thumb.
- **Seeing:** Take time to really focus on it. Let your eyes explore every part of it, examining the highlights where the light shines, the darker hollows, the folds and ridges, and any unique features.
- **Touching:** Turn the raisin over between your fingers, exploring its texture. Try doing this with your eyes closed.
- **Smelling:** Hold the raisin beneath your nose. Take in any smell, aroma, or fragrance that may arise. Do you notice anything happening in your mouth or stomach?
- **Placing:** Slowly bring the raisin up to your lips, noticing how your hand and arm know exactly how and where to position it. Place the raisin in your mouth; without chewing, noticing how it gets into your mouth in the first place. Spend a few moments focusing on the sensations of having it in your mouth, exploring it with your tongue.
- **Tasting:** Prepare to chew the raisin, noticing how and where it needs to be for chewing. Take a bite and notice the waves of taste. Without swallowing yet, notice the taste and texture in your mouth and how these may change over time, moment by moment. Also pay attention to any changes in the raisin itself.
- **Swallowing:** When you feel ready to swallow the raisin. Be aware of the intention to swallow as it comes up.
- **Following:** Finally, see if you can feel what is left of the raisin moving down into your stomach, and sense how your body as a whole is feeling after you have completed this exercise.

For a video version of this please visit https://youtu.be/aZ-fp6qws8Q?si=vs_hJJrQxOU9G1Kp

Mindful eating day to day

The previous exercise is designed to help you concentrate on eating slowly and paying attention to your food. However, on a daily basis there are other tips you can employ to help you eat more mindfully.

1. Think about the food you are eating. Are you enjoying it?
2. Try to avoid eating whilst reading, playing games, watching TV or even preparing a meal. If possible, eat from a plate at the table.
3. Eat at regular intervals throughout the day; thinking about how hungry you feel before and after you eat.
4. Chew your food well and swallow before placing more food on the fork. Put your knife and fork down while you are chewing. This will prevent you from eating too fast.
5. Stop eating when you start to feel satisfied with what you have eaten, rather than when your plate is empty.



What is the evidence to support Mindfulness and eating?

Using Mindfulness is supported by evidence from studies. The strongest evidence for the use of Mindfulness is in relation to Binge eating disorders. A metanalysis and systematic review by Liu et al (2025) showed that Mindful techniques offered greater benefits over non-psychological interventions and similar benefits to other psychological interventions in terms of improving behaviours in people with Binge eating disorders.

Several studies have demonstrated the benefit of Mindful eating in other clinical groups. Pepe et al (2023) conducted a RCT which demonstrated that Mindfulness was beneficial to women with obesity in terms of improving their emotional and uncontrolled eating. Whilst, Iccarino et al (2024) found that clinical indicators such as blood glucose improved when Mindful eating is applied even in the absence of weight loss in women with obesity (Iccarino et al 2024). Similar reductions in blood glucose were also seen in patients with diabetes in an RCT by Hamasak 2023.

The bottom line

Mindfulness when applied to eating behaviour maybe a useful tool to help people reconnect with food and their diet. It can help improve both mental wellbeing, help prevent over eating and help improve clinical indicators such as blood glucose levels. Evidence shows that Mindfulness is particularly useful to those with disordered eating and in these instances, a therapist trained in this technique may be more appropriate. However, for those amongst us who mindlessly chomp a way on unhealthy snacks whilst watching TV, maybe it is time for a bit of mindfulness in our lives.

Caveat- This article is not designed to give comprehensive medical advice and if you feel that you or someone you know are suffering from an eating disorder, please visit your GP or visit www.beateatingdisorder.org.uk

Adapting healthy eating to prevent risk of Type 2 diabetes



Prevalence

[Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2023]

- Around 7% of adults in England are found to have Type 2 diabetes. Of these 3 in 10 are not yet diagnosed.
- 50% in age groups of 16-44 years are more likely to remain undiagnosed. This also the case for women with low BMI and waist circumference, and those who have better health.

Prediabetes



- 1 in 9 adults (12%) are reported to be affected by prediabetes.
- Prediabetes is an early sign that someone is at high risk of developing Type 2 diabetes.
- The blood glucose levels are elevated but not high enough to confirm type 2 diabetes diagnosis (HbA1c levels between 42-47mmol/mol) (NHS, n.d.).

These figures highlight not only a high prevalence of diabetes but also a sizeable group of population who are at risk of developing Type 2 diabetes in the near future.

Risk factors

(NICE, n.d.)

Obesity and inactivity

Physical inactivity is related to obesity, which has 80% -85% risk.

Family history

15% increased risk if one parent has type 2 diabetes. Rises to 75% for both parents.

Ethnicity

2-4x more risk for Asian, African, and Afro-Caribbean ethnicities.

Gestational diabetes (GD)

7x increased risk for mothers who had GD of developing it later in life, and 6x for children born to them.

Diet

Diets high in sugary foods and drinks, white rice, white bread and potatoes, and low in fiber.

Medications

Statins used to treat high cholesterol levels, corticosteroids & certain combination therapy used for hypertension or heart failure, so speak with your doctor if you are taking these.

PCOS/PMOS

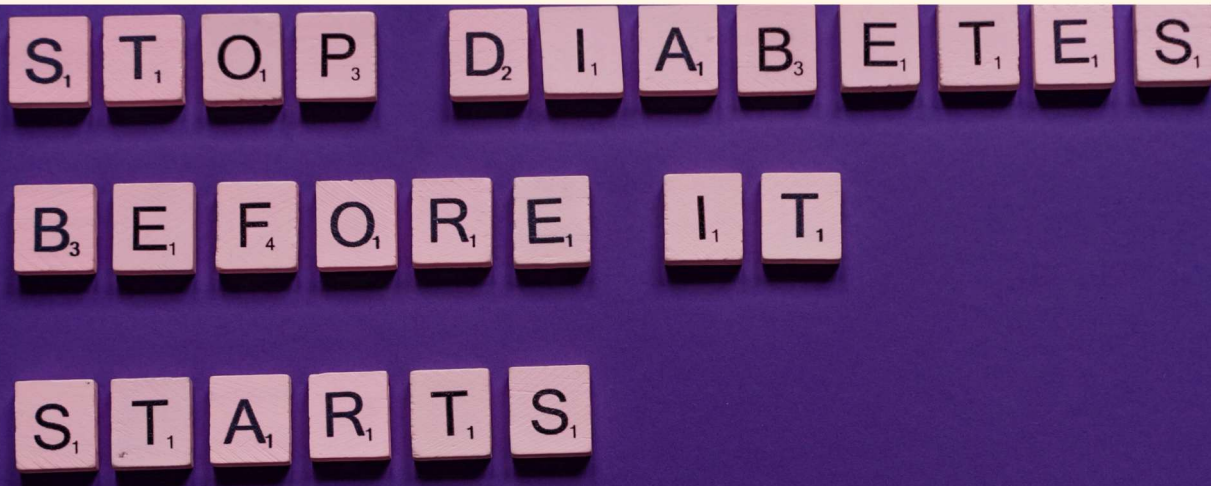
High risk due to insulin resistance.

Multiple chronic conditions

Metabolic syndrome defined as a combination of high blood pressure, abnormal lipid levels, fatty liver disease & central obesity may lead to insulin resistance.

Low birth weight or preterm birth

Associated with increased risk in adult life



Can you reduce the risk?

Absolutely! Some factors such as genetics, ethnicity and age cannot be changed. However, adaptations in physical activity levels, body weight, diet and lifestyle can help to reduce the risk (Diabetes UK, 2026a).

Evidence shows that maintaining a healthy body weight, healthy diet, regular exercise, not smoking, and light alcohol consumption can reduce your risk significantly (BMJ Best Practice, n.d.).

Benefits of adapting a healthy diet and lifestyle for everyone

What's more? Adapting these changes can not only be beneficial in reducing your risk of diabetes but also help your friends and family to maintain good health throughout their life as these are likely to:

- reduce insulin resistance, chronic inflammation, prediabetes risk
- help in maintaining healthy weight
- prevent chronic diseases by promoting heart health, reduced blood pressure, dyslipidaemia
- support long term healthy eating habits



Adapting healthy eating

While, the general principles of the Eatwell Guide remain relevant to manage your risk, following adaptations are likely to be more helpful if you are at high risk:

- **Carbohydrates:** Choosing high fibre carbohydrates (low glycaemic index) such as brown rice, wholemeal bread, brown pasta etc., reducing intake of sugary food & drinks such as fizzy pop, honey, cakes etc, and being mindful of portion size (Diabetes UK, 2026b)
- **Fats:** Using small amounts, less of red and processed meats and full fat dairy, more of unsaturated fats/oils (olive oil, sunflower oil etc), oily fish, leaner meats, beans or pulses, and grill/bake/steam foods instead of frying.
- **T – Plate portions:** $\frac{1}{2}$ portion consisting of vegetables or salads and $\frac{1}{4}$ portion of starchy carbohydrates and a $\frac{1}{4}$ portion of protein foods.

For more practical tips on eating healthy, read this article:

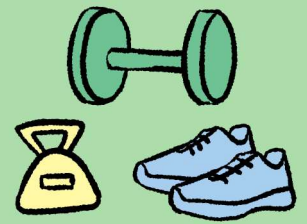
[Healthy eating tips for prediabetes and lowering type 2 risk | Diabetes UK](#)



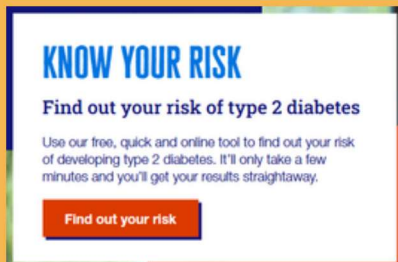
Physical activity and weight loss

A combination of increasing physical activity and weight loss is shown to reduce risk by 30- 50%.

- Activity- Guidelines suggest to aim for 150mins per week of moderate OR 75mins per week vigorous activity, 2 x muscle strengthening exercise per week, getting up & moving every 30minutes (Department of Health and Social Care, 2019).
- 5-7% weight loss can reduce risk by 50% & 10% weight loss can reduce it by 80%. Each kilogram lost reduces risk by 16% (British Nutrition Foundation, n.d).



Assess your risk



Use 'Know Your Risk' tool at riskscore.diabetes.org.uk



Free NHS Health Check (available for those between 40-74years of age)



Ask your GP Practice

Need support?

If you find out that you are at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes and need support to prevent it or to lose weight, you could enrol into free NHS programmes.



1. NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme

Healthier You programme is a 9-months evidence-based lifestyle change programme that offers personalised support to manage their weight, eat more healthily and be more physically active.

- Proven to reduce risk in more than a third of people completing the programme
- Face to face or Digital.



2. Digital Weight Management Programme

- Supports adults living with obesity who also have a diagnosis of diabetes, hypertension or both with BMI >30kg/m² (or 27.5 adjusted for ethnicity)
- 12-week online behavioural and lifestyle programme accessed via a smartphone or computer with internet access.

Learning Disabilities and Nutrition: Why Food Matters



Did You Know?

People with learning disabilities experience significantly poorer health outcomes than the general population and are more likely to die from avoidable causes (NHS England, 2022). Many of these health inequalities are linked to nutrition-related conditions, highlighting the importance of accessible nutrition support.

Why Is This Important?

People with learning disabilities often face barriers accessing healthcare and health information. Communication difficulties, reliance on carers, and challenges navigating services can all impact their ability to maintain good health (Public Health England, 2016).

As specialist services evolve, people with learning disabilities are increasingly being seen across mainstream healthcare settings. This means all healthcare professionals have a role in supporting equitable access to nutrition care.



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY A LEARNING DISABILITY?

A learning disability affects how a person understands information, learns new skills and manages everyday activities throughout life (Public Health England, 2016). In the UK, over 1.5 million people are estimated to have a learning disability (NHS England, 2023). Many face barriers accessing healthcare and health information, contributing to poorer health outcomes and increased health inequalities.

Common Nutrition Challenges



Diabetes

Diabetes risk may be increased where obesity and inactivity are present. Accessible nutrition education and practical food-based advice can help individuals make healthier choices and improve self-management (NHS England, 2023).

People with learning disabilities are more likely to experience nutrition-related health issues, including obesity, constipation, diabetes and dysphagia (Public Health England, 2016).

Dysphagia

Dysphagia (swallowing difficulties) can affect food and fluid intake and increase the risk of dehydration and malnutrition. Close working between dietitians, speech and language therapists, carers and catering teams helps ensure food is both safe and nutritionally adequate (RCSLT, 2023).



Obesity

Obesity is more common due to factors such as reduced physical activity, medication side effects and barriers to accessing healthy eating information. Supporting healthy lifestyle changes often requires tailored approaches involving carers and support networks (Public Health England, 2016).

Constipation

Constipation is also common and may be linked to low fibre intake, inadequate hydration, reduced mobility and medication use (Robertson et al., 2017). Encouraging regular meals, fibre-rich foods and good fluid intake can help support bowel health.).



Small Changes, Big Impact

Simple adjustments can make nutrition support more accessible

- ✓ Use plain language
- ✓ Offer Easy Read resources
- ✓ Use pictures and visual aids
- ✓ Allow extra time for appointments
- ✓ Involve carers where appropriate
- ✓ Check understanding

These small changes can help improve engagement and support better health outcomes.

Key Message

Good nutrition care should be accessible to everyone. By understanding the challenges faced by people with learning disabilities and making simple adjustments to our practice, we can help reduce health inequalities and improve wellbeing.



What's in Season?

Here is a list of what fruit and veg are in season this Summer & a recipe to try

Fruit

June: Blackcurrants, Cherries, Gooseberries, Raspberries, Redcurrants, Rhubarb, Strawberries, Tayberries

July: Blackberries, Blackcurrants, Blueberries, Cherries, Gooseberries, Greengages, Loganberries, Raspberries, Redcurrants, Rhubarb, Strawberries

August: Blackberries, Blackcurrants, Cherries, Damsons, Greengages, Loganberries, Plums, Raspberries, Redcurrants, Rhubarb, Strawberries

Vegetables

June: Asparagus, Aubergine, Beetroot, Broad Beans, Broccoli, Cauliflower, Chicory, 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

July: Aubergine, Beetroot, Broad Beans, Broccoli, Carrots, Cauliflower, Chicory, Chillies, Courgettes, Cucumber, Fennel, French Beans, Garlic, Kohlrabi, New Potatoes, Onions, Peas, Potatoes, Radishes, Rocket, Runner Beans, Samphire, Sorrel, Spring Greens, Spring Onions, Summer Squash, Swiss Chard, Tomatoes, Turnips, Watercress

August: Aubergine, Beetroot, Broad Beans, Broccoli, Carrots, Cauliflower, Chicory, Chillies, Courgettes, Cucumber, Fennel, French Beans, Garlic, Kohlrabi, Leeks, Lettuce, Mangetout, Marrow, Mushrooms, Parsnips, Peas, Peppers, Potatoes, Pumpkin, Radishes, Rocket, Runner Beans, Samphire, Sorrel, Spring Greens, Spring Onions, Summer Squash, Sweetcorn, Swiss Chard, Tomatoes, Watercress



What's in Season?

Here is a list of what fruit and veg are in season this Summer & a recipe to try

Courgette & feta fritters with tomato & bean salsa

Ingredients:

For the salsa

- 150g cooked cannellini or haricot beans
- 3 tomatoes, diced
- 1 chilli, deseeded and finely chopped
- ½ red onion, finely diced
- small bunch chervil or parsley, finely chopped
- olive oil
- 1 lemon
-

For the fritters

- 2 courgettes, coarsely grated
- 1 egg
- 50g self-raising flour
- 75g feta
- 1 garlic clove, finely chopped
- small bunch of dill, finely chopped
- oil for frying e.g. sunflower or light olive



Cooking time: 55 mins / Vegetarian / Serves 2

Method:

For the salsa

Step 1: Throw the beans, tomatoes, onion, chillies and chervil into a mixing bowl with 2 tbsp of oil and a squeeze of lemon. Season generously. Taste and tweak the seasoning and lemon to your liking.

For the fritters

Step 1: Line a colander with a clean tea towel. Put the grated courgette in the towel. Fold up the sides, then squeeze several times to wring out as much liquid as you can.

Step 2: Beat the egg in a large bowl. Add the courgette and flour. Mix together. Crumble in the feta. Add the garlic and dill. Season and mix together.

Step 3: Put your oven on to 140°C/ Gas 2). Heat a thin layer of oil in a large frying pan over a medium heat. In batches, spoon dollops of the batter (approx. 2 tbsp worth) into the pan, flattening them slightly. Cook for 3-4 mins on each side, until golden. Drain on kitchen paper if you have any, pop them onto a plate and keep them warm in the oven while you cook the rest.

Step 4: Serve the fritters with the salsa and your side of choice.

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To explore Mindfulness visit:

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- **NHS.** Mindfulness. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/tips-and-support/mindfulness/>
- **SWFT Dietetics** Mindful Eating Leaflet

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