



your body matters



**Teacher Notes F: Diets, religion, belief, allergy,
and intolerance**

Nourishing Body & Mind for a Healthy Life

A Primary Health and Wellbeing Curriculum Pack

Revised Version 2023



Teacher Notes F: Diets, religion, belief, allergy, and intolerance

Associated lesson plans		
Primary Stage	Lesson	Title
4	4.4	What do I Like?
Useful websites	<p>https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/food-and-nutrition/special-diets/vegetarian-and-vegan-diets <i>NHS Inform - Vegetarian and Vegan diets</i></p> <p>https://www.vegansociety.com/resources/downloads/vegan-eatwell-guide <i>Vegetarian Society - information and recipes</i></p> <p>https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/stomach-liver-and-gastrointestinal-tract/coeliac-disease/coeliac-disease <i>NHS Inform – About coeliac disease</i></p> <p>https://www.coeliac.org.uk/information-and-support/coeliac-disease/ <i>Coeliac UK – Information and support</i></p> <p>https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/stomach-liver-and-gastrointestinal-tract/coeliac-disease/coeliac-disease <i>Coeliac disease - how to manage the condition</i></p> <p>https://www.diabetes.org.uk/ <i>Diabetes UK - Information on type 1 and type 2 diabetes</i></p> <p>https://www.nutrition.org.uk/health-conditions/type-2-diabetes/ <i>British Nutrition Foundation - Type 2 diabetes</i></p> <p>https://www.nutrition.org.uk/putting-it-into-practice/plant-based-diets/plant-based-diets/ <i>British Nutrition Foundation - Plant-based diets</i></p>	

Choosing a diet

The decisions that people make when choosing to eat and not to eat certain foods are affected by a variety of factors and influences including moral, personal, ethical, religious, social and medical factors.

In addition, there are many religions that have celebrations, traditions, or rituals centred on preparation of and consumption of foods.

Religious diets

Judaism

Kashrut is the name given to the body of Jewish law dealing with food preparation, foods that can and cannot be eaten, and how foods should be eaten. 'Kashrut' comes from the Hebrew "Kaf-Shin-Reish" meaning fit, proper or correct. The word "Kosher" is used to describe ritual objects (including food) that are made or prepared in accordance with Kashrut Jewish law and are fit for ritual use. Kosher food preparation practices are very sanitary. Food that is not allowed is called "Treif or Trefah".

Parev

Foods like vegetables, pasta or rice are "neutral foods" called Parev and can be eaten with either meat or dairy. If they are washed beforehand, no Kosher rules will be broken.

The details of Kosher rule are extensive, but the main rules are:

1. Land animals must have cloven (split) hooves and must chew the cud, meaning they must eat grass. This includes sheep, cattle, goats and deer but does not include camel, rock badger, hare or pig.
2. Seafood must have scales and fins. Fish such as tuna, carp, salmon, and herring are all considered to be kosher but shellfish (e.g., crab, lobster, oysters, clams) is not permitted.
3. It is forbidden to eat birds of prey. Only clean birds, meaning birds that do not eat other animals, can be eaten. Poultry is allowed.
4. Meat and dairy cannot be eaten together, as it says in the Torah: "do not boil a kid in its mother's milk" (Exodus 23:19). So, Jews who follow these dietary rules cannot eat cheeseburgers for example. Sometimes these rules can be extended further so that people wait up to six hours after eating meat before they eat dairy.
5. Certain parts of permitted animals may not be eaten.

6. Utensils that have had contact with meat may not be used with dairy and vice versa. Utensils that have come into contact with non-kosher food may not be used with kosher food. This applies only where the contact occurred while the food was hot.
7. Grape products made by non-Jews may not be eaten.

Kosher slaughter is known as “Shechitah” and the person performing the slaughter the “Shochet”. Shechitah is a quick, deep stroke across the throat with a sharp blade with no nicks or unevenness (non-serrated). The animal should not be stunned prior to the slaughter but this method of slaughter renders the animal unconscious quickly and is considered humane for this reason. As a part of Shechitah, the blood of the animal must be drained. The Torah states that the life of the animal is contained in the blood and for this reason all blood must be drained from an animal prior to consumption (this does not apply to fish blood); any blood remaining in the animal following slaughter should be broiled, soaked or salted out of the carcass. The “Shochet” should be well trained in Jewish law, particularly Kashrut law in order to carry out the Shechitah. Often in small rural communities the rabbi and the Shochet were the same person, but it is not necessary for the Shochet to be a rabbi.

Islam

In Arabic-speaking countries, the term ‘Halal’ is used to describe anything that is permissible under Islamic law and ‘Haram’ is used to describe that which is forbidden. Under Islamic law, several foods and drinks, and methods of slaughter are Haram, including pork, blood, animals slaughtered in the name of anyone but God, carrion, carnivorous animals except for most fish and sea animals, and all intoxicants (specifically alcohol).

‘Thabiha’ is the method of slaughter permissible under Islamic law; it is Halal (permitted). The Halal method of slaughtering all animals, excluding fish, is to cut through the large arteries in the neck with one swipe of a non-serrated blade and drain all blood and impurities from the animal as the consumption of blood itself is forbidden. The action of slaughtering an animal is a religious ritual act that is preceded by a message of spoken praise e.g. “In the name of God, most gracious, most merciful” (bismillāh, i-rahman,i-rahīm).

Prior to the slaughter, the animal’s eyes and ears are checked to ensure that the animal is healthy and suitable for slaughter. If the animal is deemed to be healthy, it is first given water to drink (to quench its thirst) and is then pointed towards Mecca to be slaughtered. Muslims consider this method of killing the animal to be cleaner and more merciful to the animal.

Rastafari

Ital is food approved of in the Rastafari movement. Ital means it is natural, pure and clean food. The word derives from the English word vital, with the initial syllable replaced by 'I'. This is done to many words in the Rastafarian vocabulary to signify the unity of the speaker with all of nature.

There are different interpretations of Ital regarding specific foods, but the general principle is that food should be natural, or pure and from the earth. Rastafarians avoid food which is chemically modified or contains artificial additives (e.g., colour, flavourings, and preservatives). Some also avoid added salt in foods. In strict interpretations, foods that have been produced using chemicals such as pesticides and fertiliser are not considered Ital.

In common with religions such as Judaism and Islam, Rasta prohibits the eating of pork. Some Rastafarians also avoid eating shellfish because, in common with pigs, they are scavengers.

Most Rastafarians consider the Ital diet to forbid the consumption of all red meat, many do not eat fish or fish over twelve inches in length, and some are strict vegetarians. More strict interpretations would also avoid food that has been preserved by canning or drying and may even prohibit the use of metal cooking utensils. In this case, only clay and wood cooking pots, crockery and cutlery would be used. Few adherents of Ital follow the strictest interpretation.

Buddhism

In accordance with the teachings of the Buddha, a Buddhist believes that all living beings are of equal value. Therefore, most Buddhists adhere to a strictly vegetarian diet so as not to cause harm to any other living being. However, it is also of great importance to a Buddhist to be able to serve all living beings through a long and fruitful practice of the Dharma (Buddha's teachings). Therefore, if no alternative food is available, Buddhists will eat a non-vegetarian meal or diet to survive. For example, in some remote regions of Tibet where it was difficult to grow plants for food the people survive by farming animals.

Hinduism

The Hindu compassion for all living beings, lead Hindus to embrace a strictly vegetarian diet, avoiding all forms of meat, fish and eggs. Hindus offer food to God first before eating it and believe that the food can have profound impact on one's life. Hindus believe that the cow is a sacred animal and will not eat beef.

Other diets

Vegetarianism

People follow a vegetarian diet for a variety of personal, philosophical, environmental and economic reasons. Variations in strictness of vegetarianism are largely dependent on the person's reasons and beliefs. Some understanding of these reasons is important when considering nutritional status and when preparing meals for vegetarians; it may be necessary to use entirely separate utensils to prepare acceptable vegetarian dishes.

All vegetarians restrict to varying degrees or exclude meat from the diet. There are several different types of vegetarian diets:

- Semi-vegetarian: only eat meat occasionally or doesn't eat meat from mammals but eats poultry or fish.
- Ovo-lacto vegetarian: will eat milk, dairy produce and eggs.
- Lacto-vegetarian: will eat milk & dairy products but not eggs.
- Ovo-vegetarian: will eat eggs but not dairy products.
- Vegan: strictest sub-category of vegetarianism, do not eat any meat, dairy or egg products.
- Fruitarian (fructarian): will eat only the fruit of plants not the plant itself.

If a child follows a vegetarian diet, it is important that it is balanced and includes foods and paired nutrients from the examples below.

Vitamin/mineral	Vegetarian sources
Iron*	Wholegrain/fortified cereals and wholemeal bread, peas, beans, lentils, dark green leafy vegetables, nuts and seeds, dried fruits
Protein	Lentils, beans, chickpeas, tofu, textured vegetable proteins (TVP), seeds/nuts and nut butters, sometimes eggs and dairy products (depending on the type of vegetarianism)

Calcium	Dairy products fortified dairy alternatives** (check labels), dried fruits (figs), nuts (almonds), sesame seeds, kidney beans, and some dark green leafy vegetables such as kale
Vitamin B12	Dairy products, fortified dairy alternatives** (check labels), eggs, fortified breakfast cereals and yeast extracts
Omega 3	Walnuts, flax seeds, chia seeds and hemp seeds and hemp oil, vegetable oil (rapeseed) and flaxseed oil

* Non-meat sources of iron can be better absorbed in the body when paired with a good source of Vitamin C such as citrus fruits, strawberries, green leafy vegetables, peppers and a fruit juice when served with a meal.

**Organic dairy alternatives are either not fortified at all or not to the same level as dairy products.

Veganism

“Veganism is a philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude—as far as is possible and practicable—all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of animals, humans and the environment. In dietary terms it denotes the practice of dispensing with all products derived wholly or partly from animals.”

The Vegan Society (2022)

People follow a vegan diet for a variety of personal, philosophical, environmental and economic reasons. A vegan diet focuses on plant-based foods and excludes all animal produce including dairy, eggs and honey as well as animal-derived products, products tested on animals and places that use animals for entertainment. A vegan diet is rich in fruits and vegetables, nuts, grains, seeds, beans and pulses. It is important to ensure that all necessary nutrients are provided by the diet however some additional supplements may be needed. Please seek professional advice if you have any concerns.

If a child follows a vegan diet, it is important that it is balanced and includes foods and paired nutrients from the examples below.

Vitamin/mineral	Vegan sources
Iron*	Wholegrain/fortified cereals and wholemeal bread, peas, beans, lentils, dark green leafy vegetables, nuts and seeds, dried fruits.
Protein	Lentils, beans, chickpeas, seeds, tofu, textured vegetable proteins (TVP), nuts/seeds and nut/seed butters, and some dairy alternatives e.g those made from soya
Calcium	Fortified dairy alternatives** (check labels), dried fruits (figs), nuts (almonds), sesame seeds, kidney beans, and some dark green leafy vegetables such as kale.
Vitamin B12	Fortified dairy alternatives** (check labels), fortified breakfast cereals and yeast extracts
Omega 3	Walnuts, flax seeds, chia seeds and hemp seeds and hemp oil, vegetable oil (rapeseed) and flaxseed oil
Zinc	Beans, nuts, seeds, pulses, wheat germ, mushrooms and some fortified breakfast cereals
Iodine	Fortified plant-based drinks and seaweed (nori, kelp)

* Non-meat sources of iron can be better absorbed in the body when paired with a good source of Vitamin C such as citrus fruits, strawberries, green leafy vegetables, peppers and a fruit juice when served with a meal.

**Organic dairy alternatives are either not fortified at all or not to the same level as dairy products.

For more information regarding vegan or vegetarian diets please visit <https://www.nutrition.org.uk/putting-it-into-practice/plant-based-diets/healthy-eating-for-vegetarians-and-vegans/> or [The Vegan Society](#)





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Plant based diets

In relation to vegetarian and vegan diets, plant-based diets are dietary patterns that have greater emphasis on foods derived from plants such as fruits, vegetables, wholegrains, pulses, nuts, seeds and oils. Eating a plant-based diet does not need to completely exclude animal products such as meat, fish, poultry, eggs and dairy products but is usually lower in these foods. There has been a shift in direction towards plant-based diets due to research suggesting a diet higher in plant-based foods can reduce the risk of developing certain dietary diseases and it is a more sustainable way to eat, reducing pressures on the global food system.

Plant-based diets are characterised by a high intake of plant-based foods. The exact composition of healthy, balanced plant-based diets can differ, but commonly include:

- High consumption of vegetables, fruit and wholegrains
- Some low-fat dairy products (or alternatives), seafood, nuts, seeds and legumes
- Some unsaturated fat
- Lower intake of fatty/processed meats, refined grains, sugar sweetened foods and drinks
- Lower salt and lower saturated fat content than typical Western Style Diet.

Health condition related diets

Diabetes

Diabetes is a condition where your blood sugar (glucose) level is too high. This happens when your pancreas (a small gland near your stomach) doesn't make enough insulin, or any at all, or when your body isn't responding to the effects of insulin properly. Insulin is a hormone produced by the pancreas. It is released when carbohydrate foods are eaten and are broken down into glucose. Insulin transports this glucose from the bloodstream into the body's cells where it can be used as energy.

This results in a build-up of glucose in the blood. Blood glucose levels that are too high (hyperglycaemia) or too low (hypoglycaemia) can lead to health complications, including, in the long term, damage to feet, eyes, kidneys and heart health.

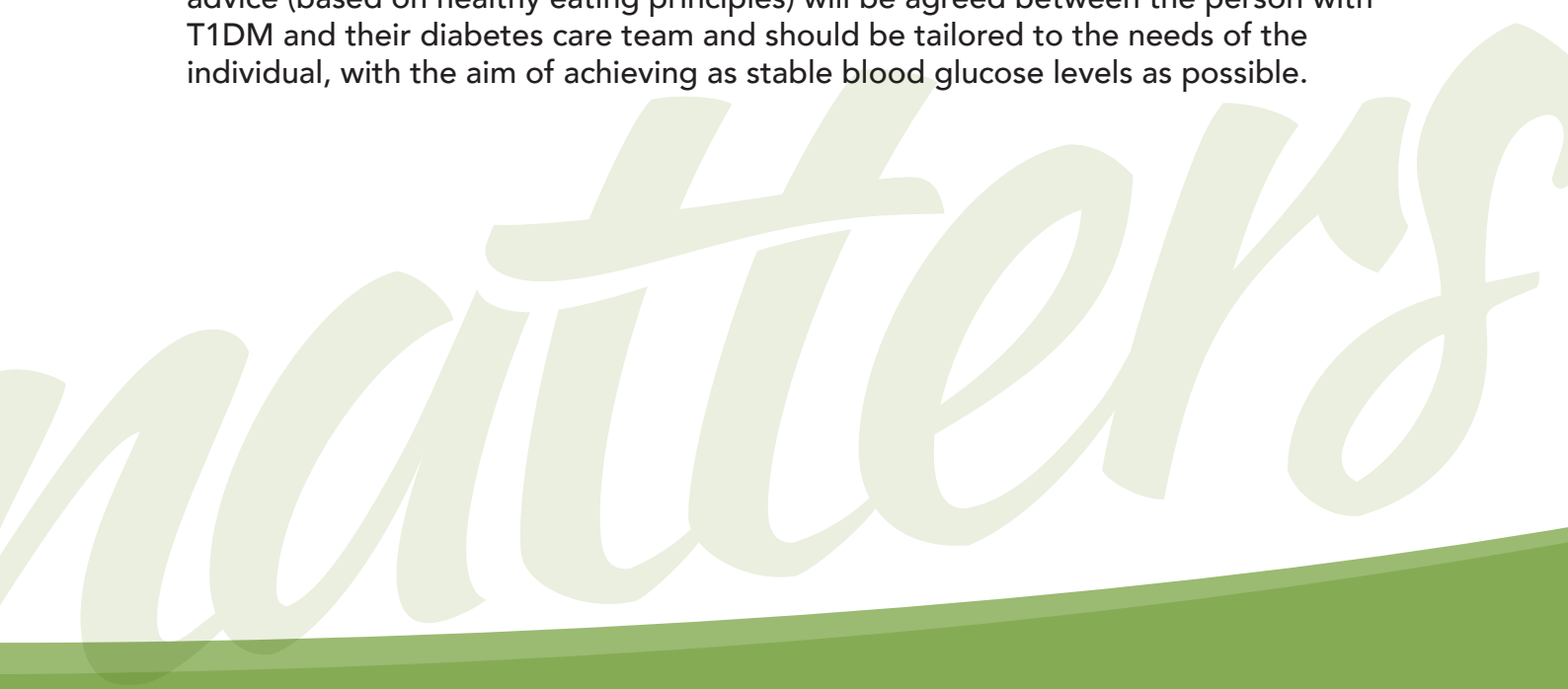
Below are two of the main types of diabetes (although there are some other types).

Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus (T1DM)

T1DM can develop at any age, but usually appears before the age of 40, particularly in childhood. In T1DM the body attacks the pancreas until it stops producing any insulin at all and so blood glucose levels become too high. It is not fully understood why this happens.

Alongside a healthy diet and lifestyle, someone with T1DM must have daily insulin injections to control their blood glucose levels and deal with the carbohydrate foods in their diet. They must also monitor their blood glucose levels daily in order to keep them in a satisfactory range. People with T1DM are at risk of hypoglycaemia (low blood glucose), which can be caused by a range of factors and requires quick treatment.

A suitable treatment plan of insulin doses, blood glucose monitoring and dietary advice (based on healthy eating principles) will be agreed between the person with T1DM and their diabetes care team and should be tailored to the needs of the individual, with the aim of achieving as stable blood glucose levels as possible.



Type 2 Diabetes (T2DM)

Many people who develop T2DM are living with obesity or overweight. Certain ethnic groups (including African Caribbean and South Asian) are also more at risk of developing T2DM.

In T2DM the body does not produce enough insulin, or the insulin produced does not work properly. The body may also have become less responsive to the insulin that is being produced (known as insulin resistance). This all leads to blood glucose levels that are too high. People with T2DM are generally at lower risk of low blood glucose levels (hypos) than in T1DM, but hypos may still occur in some people, for example depending on the medications they might be taking for their T2DM.

Eating a healthy, balanced diet, being physically active and losing some weight if needed can all help to manage T2DM, but some people will require medications or insulin injections to control their blood glucose levels and reduce/delay health complications. Dietary guidance for people with T2DM is based on healthy eating advice for the general adult population, which includes The Eatwell Guide.

Some of this guidance includes having a daily intake of fruit and vegetables, aiming for a low daily intake of salt, fat and sugar and including a source of complex carbohydrate at meals (such as wholegrain bread, porridge) as these will provide fuel for the body but are broken down at gradual rate which is better for blood glucose control.

High sugar foods do not need to be cut out completely but should be eaten less frequently and in small portions. Purchasing special diabetic sweets, cakes, jam, ice creams etc is not recommended; they are not beneficial as part of a healthy diet and often have higher fat contents.

Relevant dietary and lifestyle advice can play a part in reducing and managing hypoglycaemia (hypos); this education would be provided by a diabetes care team and tailored to the individual.

Appropriate blood glucose monitoring and diabetes treatment can also help to reduce and detect some serious conditions like Diabetic Ketoacidosis, or DKA, (where there is a severe lack of insulin in the body). This is more common in T1DM than T2DM and needs quick medical treatment. Someone at risk of DKA would be educated on this by their diabetes care team.

Consuming a healthy, balanced diet is an important part of the treatment of any form of diabetes and will help to control blood glucose levels and protect long term health by reducing/delaying damage to the eyes, kidneys and nerves. A balanced diet will also aid heart health and help to prevent damage that can be caused by high blood glucose, cholesterol and blood pressure levels.

- Diabetes UK (2023)

Coeliac Disease

Coeliac disease is a common digestive condition where the small intestine becomes inflamed and unable to absorb nutrients. Coeliac disease is a lifelong autoimmune disease caused by a reaction to gluten, a protein found in three types of cereal-wheat, barley and rye.

Gluten can be found mainly in the following foods:

- Anything made with flour, which includes most breads, sauces, desserts
- Pasta
- Cakes
- Most breakfast cereals (sometimes even oats must be avoided)
- Some types of ready meals

Coeliac disease can cause a range of symptoms including diarrhoea, bloating and abdominal pain, however, these usually disappear when products containing gluten are removed from the diet.

Food allergies and food intolerance

Food reactions are common, but most are caused by a food intolerance rather than a food allergy. However, it is important to consult a doctor to be diagnosed correctly.

Food Allergy

Having a food allergy means that a person's immune system reacts to a protein as a harmful invader and sets the body's defences against it. Each time the person encounters this protein, the immune system attacks the protein by releasing histamines and other chemicals. These set off the symptoms of an allergic reaction ranging from hives to life-threatening anaphylaxis. Even a tiny amount of the offending food can cause an immediate and severe reaction.

The 14 common food allergies are:

- Cereals containing gluten
- Eggs
- Mustard
- Sesame seeds
- Tree nuts (walnuts, pecans, etc.)
- Crustaceans
- Sulphur dioxide and sulphites
- Celery

- Milk (contains a protein called lactose (lactose intolerance)).
- Soybeans
- Peanuts
- Fish
- Molluscs
- Lupin

Food Intolerance

A food intolerance is caused by your body not being able to digest a certain food or an ingredient in food and is not the same as a food allergy. The symptoms of food intolerance generally come on gradually and don't involve an immune system reaction like food allergies. Often the symptoms can occur many hours after eating the problem food and can include bloating, diarrhoea, nausea or stomach pain. Unlike an allergy, a food intolerance is not life threatening.

The most common food intolerance is lactose intolerance where the body cannot digest lactose, a sugar mainly found in milk and dairy products. Other intolerances include and are not limited to:

- Gluten (wheat, rye and barley) found in foods like bread, pasta and cereal
- Histamine- found in food and drinks like cheese and wine
- Caffeine- found in coffee, tea and some fizzy drinks
- Alcohol
- Sulphites- found in cider, beer and wine
- Salicylates- found in some fruits, vegetables, herbs and spices
- Monosodium glutamate (MSG)- found in ripened fruits, cured meats and savoury foods. Also, a common ingredient in Chinese takeaways.

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