



PLANT-BASED
Health Professionals UK

Ready-made words for healthier conversations

Patient-letter phrases for plant-rich nutrition and lifestyle medicine

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How to use this resource

Copy and adapt the relevant wording for an individual patient's clinical circumstances, priorities and care plan. Replace any starred placeholder before sending.

Plant-Based Health Professionals UK

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READY-MADE PATIENT-LETTER WORDING

Healthy eating

Copy and adapt as appropriate for the individual patient.

Eating well and staying a healthy weight is an important part of managing your lung condition. A diet with all the right vitamins and minerals can help you to stay strong and fit. It can also help you to prevent chest infections or recover quicker. There is lots of information about the best diet which can be confusing but there are some simple steps you can take to make sure you're supporting your immune system and lung health.

- Eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruits and vegetables a day but aim for more, as eating up to 10 portions a day has additional benefits for health.
- Aim to include 30 different plants in your diet each week. This includes herbs and spices which provide a range of antioxidants and polyphenols which support your immune system.
- Around a third of the food you eat should be starchy food such as potatoes, bread, rice, pasta or yams. Choose wholegrain over refined versions. We digest wholegrains slower so they help us stay full and regulate blood sugar.
- Vary your protein sources. Good plant food sources of protein are beans, pulses, lentils, nuts, seeds, and tofu. These are more healthy sources of protein than animal products, especially processed meat.
- Some fat in the diet is essential but most of us are consuming too much. Choose unsaturated oils and spreads in small amounts. Extra virgin olive oil for salads and cold-pressed rapeseed oil for cooking are better options.
- Drink 6-8 cups/glasses of fluid a day, mainly water but you can include tea and coffee too.
- Minimise foods high in fat, salt and sugar. Foods such as chocolates, sweets, cakes, biscuits, fizzy drinks and ice cream are not needed in the diet and should only be eaten infrequently in small amounts.
- Think about what supplements may be helpful. If you are on an exclusively plant-based diet make sure you get an adequate amount of vitamin B12. People on all diets should consider vitamin D supplements in the winter months.

Eating well can reduce your risk of overweight and obesity, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, cancer, liver disease, dementia, and depression. It can also help you to feel better and have more energy.

You can find more information on eating well with a lung condition from Asthma and Lung UK here: www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/living-with/healthy-eating/eating-well.

You can find the NHS Eatwell guide here: www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/. There is also an African and Caribbean Eatwell guide: www.fountainmedical.co.uk/2021/10/25/african-and-caribbean-eatwell-guide/ and a South Asian Eatwell guide: <https://mynutriweb.com/the-south-asian-eatwell-guide/>.

You can find information from healthcare professionals on the benefits of a plant-based diet and how to incorporate more plants into your diet to optimise your health here: Factsheets - Plant Based Health Professionals UK.

READY-MADE PATIENT-LETTER WORDING

Managing cholesterol

Copy and adapt as appropriate for the individual patient.

- There are several factors that influence cholesterol including genetics, diseases of the liver, thyroid and kidneys. But the main cause of high cholesterol is our diet.
- Foods high in cholesterol include eggs, shellfish and offal (eg liver).
- Saturated fat and trans-fats are also important in raising cholesterol levels. Foods that include both these fats and cholesterol together lead to even higher levels. Common food examples are:
 - Dairy foods (milk, cheese, cream)
 - Meat products (burgers, sausages, bacon)
 - Animal fats (butter, ghee)
 - Processed foods (baked goods, fast food, cured meats)
- Added sugar and refined grains also increase cholesterol levels.
- To reduce cholesterol levels eat more whole food plant foods (plant foods don't contain cholesterol and most contain unsaturated fats which lower cholesterol).
- Avoid coconut and palm oil. Use olive or rapeseed oil and limit any added oils if you have high cholesterol, heart disease or diabetes.
- **Eat more cholesterol lowering foods such as:**
 - Fibre: oats, barley, beans
 - Soya: soya milk, tofu, edamame
 - Nuts and seeds
 - Red fruits and vegetables: tomatoes, watermelon, red cabbage, red bell peppers (high levels of lycopene)
 - Swap coffee for green tea

Resources

Plant-Based Diet Factsheets | [Plant-Based Health Professionals UK](#)

The Portfolio Diet: An evidence-based eating plan for lower cholesterol (PDF)

[Open the Portfolio Diet infographic](#)

Jenkins DJA, Kendall CWC, Chiavaroli L, Kavanagh ME, Glenn AJ, Burris L, Nicholas Angl E, Evans MF, Sievenpiper JLS. The Portfolio Diet: An evidence-based eating plan for lower cholesterol [infographic]. PortfolioDiet.app; 2024.

READY-MADE PATIENT-LETTER WORDING

Quality sleep

Copy and adapt as appropriate for the individual patient.

Good quality sleep is essential for physical and mental health. Sleeping helps to repair and restore our brains and bodies. It is essential for learning and memory. Long term poor quality sleep increases the risk of a number of serious health conditions including: heart attacks, stroke, obesity, diabetes, dementia and infections.

When you are not sleeping well it can be hard to motivate yourself to make changes, but good sleep hygiene habits will improve your quality of sleep.

Things to help you sleep

- Stick to a routine: go to bed and wake up at a similar time every morning (weekdays and weekend)
- Get regular physical activity
- Only go to bed when you feel tired
- If possible, only use your bedroom to sleep, have sex and get dressed
- Improve your bedroom environment
 - Keep the temperature comfortable
 - Make sure the room is dark (thicker curtains or blackout blinds may help)
 - Keep it quiet. Consider using earplugs
- Try to relax and unwind in the hour before going to sleep - a warm bath or massage, or a warm caffeine-free drink can help
- If you are not asleep within 20 minutes of going to bed, leave your bedroom and try a non-stimulating activity, such as reading in a dim light – return to bed when you feel sleepy again

Things to avoid

- Caffeine, such as coffee, tea or chocolate in the evening (caffeine can stay in the body for six hours so avoid after early afternoon)
- Drinking alcohol in the evening or using it to get to sleep (it may feel like it helps you get to sleep, but it reduces the quality of sleep)
- Smoking, especially in the evening (nicotine is a stimulant)
- Looking at screens such as phone, computer, or television in bed - try to avoid any screens for an hour before you go to sleep
- Taking daytime naps or falling asleep in front of the television in the evenings, as this will risk negatively resetting your body clock
- Trying to sleep when you are not tired, as this will make your mind more alert

Find more information on sleep and mental wellbeing here: www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/how-to-fall-asleep-faster-and-sleep-better/#1

Find information on sleep and lung health here: www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/living-with/sleep-lung-conditions

Chronic Insomnia books and web-based support

CBT for Insomnia books

- Overcoming Insomnia 2nd Edition: A self-help guide using cognitive behavioural techniques by Colin Espie.

- How to Beat Insomnia and Sleep Problems One Step at a Time: Using evidence-based low-intensity CBT by Kirstie Anderson.

Digital CBT for Insomnia

www.sleepful.me – free app providing CBT for Insomnia programme

www.sleepio.com – online programme, available on prescription in some areas of UK

www.sleepstation.org.uk – online programme, available on prescription in some areas of UK

READY-MADE PATIENT-LETTER WORDING

Living well with and beyond cancer

Copy and adapt as appropriate for the individual patient.

In terms of what you can do to stay well after cancer, the most important thing is not smoking. You have already been smoke free for *** weeks which is fantastic. In addition, based on international cancer guidelines we recommend:

- Stay physically active
- Eat a healthy, plant-rich diet, low in processed foods, meat and dairy
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Avoid or minimise alcohol
- Find ways to reduce stress
- Get good quality sleep

You can read more at: <https://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/after-treatment/lifestyle-and-wellbeing-after-treatment>

READY-MADE PATIENT-LETTER WORDING

Exercise and strength

Copy and adapt as appropriate for the individual patient.

To feel better in your mind and body, aim to move more every day. If you haven't exercised for a long time, it is important to start with small increases in activity and gradually build up how much exercise you do. Any activity is better than none. Over time, you'll get fitter and be able to do more.

Tip: Sit less, move more This is one of the biggest changes you can make to get more active. Try to break up long periods of sitting and increase the number of steps you take each day

Different types of exercise have different benefits:

- Aerobic exercise gets your heart and lungs working, so you feel somewhat out of breath, a bit warm and sweaty. As you get fitter, the more you will be able to do before getting too breathless. Lots of everyday activities are actually aerobic exercise, like walking briskly, dancing, housework and gardening.
- Strengthening (or resistance) exercises help you develop stronger muscles. This is important to stay independent. Always stretch after these exercises to avoid any muscle soreness. Try to do some strengthening exercises at least 2 days a week. Most of them also help with balance too, as strength in your 'core' and legs is important for this.
- Balance and co-ordination exercises reduce the risk of falls. Activities like dance, tai chi, yoga and bowls are all good for your balance and co-ordination. Many of the strengthening exercises also help to improve your balance. Try to do activities to help your balance and co-ordination at least 2 days a week. Some of these can double up as strengthening exercises.

You can find short videos of different types of exercises at:

www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/living-with/keep-active-programme

Remember that it's normal to get breathless when you're active. But if you're living with a lung condition, you may feel anxious when this happens. The key is to stay calm and learn ways to manage your breathlessness. By becoming more active, your body can use oxygen better. This will actually help you to feel less out of breath when you do everyday tasks. Try the breathing techniques at:

www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/symptoms-tests-treatments/symptoms/breathlessness.

You can find videos on strength training from the NHS here: <https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/get-active/home-workout-videos/>

Some pictures and explanations from the NHS are here: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/strength-exercises/>

Start small, with just a few repetitions, and just 15-minute workouts before increasing as you build strength.

READY-MADE PATIENT-LETTER WORDING

Osteoporosis

Copy and adapt as appropriate for the individual patient.

You recently had a DEXA scan. I am writing to let you know that the result is now available. It shows that you have very low bone density and have osteoporosis. Your bone density is below the expected range for age. This puts you at higher risk of fractures.

Things that contribute to low bone density include:

- Smoking tobacco
- Oral steroid courses
- Low weight
- Older age
- Menopause in women
- Regular alcohol use
- Inactivity

We recommend the following further actions:

- Regular exercise (read more here: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/osteoporosis/prevention/>)
 - Adults aged 19 to 64 should do at least 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, such as cycling or fast walking, every week.
 - Weight-bearing exercise and resistance exercise are particularly important for improving bone density and helping to prevent osteoporosis.
 - As well as aerobic exercise, adults aged 19 to 64 should also do muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week by working all the major muscle groups, including the legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, arms and shoulders.
- Consider taking calcium and vitamin D supplements
- Consider taking a bisphosphonate such as alendronate
- Regular bone density scans at 3-5 year intervals
- Ensuring your lung condition is well controlled to minimise the need for oral steroids

Ways you can improve bone density through diet are:

- Healthy diet (whole grain, mostly plant based, including carbohydrates, protein, healthy fats, vitamins D, C, K and B12)
- Dietary calcium sources include milk, cheese and other dairy foods, green leafy vegetables – such as curly kale, okra but not spinach (spinach does contain high levels of calcium but the body cannot absorb it all), bread and anything made with fortified flour
- Consume 2 portions of minimally processed soya a day (eg milk, yoghurt, tofu, edamame beans)

For more information see:

- Osteoporosis information: <https://theros.org.uk/information-and-support/bone-health/>
- Healthy diet advice: www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/the-eatwell-guide/

Bone health advice: <https://plantbasedhealthprofessionals.com/factsheets>

READY-MADE PATIENT-LETTER WORDING

Incidental coronary artery disease on CT

Copy and adapt as appropriate for the individual patient.

Your CT scan has shown that you have a degree of coronary artery disease (narrowing of the blood vessels that supply the heart with blood). This increases your risk of a heart attack in the future. There are several ways you can reduce your risk.

- If you are currently a smoker you can get help to quit by calling 0300 123 1044 for free, or visiting <https://stopsmokinglondon.com/>.
- Increasing your physical activity has huge health benefits, including reducing your risk of a heart attack. For support visit <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/active10/home>.

Your diet is a major determinant of your health. Reducing meat and dairy, and increasing whole grains and vegetables can significantly improve your health and specifically reduce your risk of heart attack. You can find simple advice on how to eat well at <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/the-eatwell-guide/> and advice on moving towards a healthy plant-based diet at <https://plantbasedhealthprofessionals.com/free-resources>.

This resource supports, but does not replace, individual clinical assessment and shared decision-making.