



# CHEESE AND A HEALTHY BALANCED NOURISHING DIET

**Cheese is probably the oldest way of preserving milk** and is a natural and nutritious food. It is a concentrated form of milk and it takes around 10 litres of milk to make 1 kg of Cheddar cheese (or in imperial terms – 8 pints to make 1 lb).

Hard cheese provides a number of nutrients, with 25 grams of Cheddar delivering the following proportions of the Reference Nutrient Intake<sup>1</sup> (RNI) of various nutrients in the diet of a 7 to 10 year old child:

**Vitamin B12 = 58%; Calcium = 34%; Phosphorus = 28%; Protein = 22%**

The Food Standards Agency's (FSA) target for salt intake in 7 to 10 year old children is 5 grams - equivalent to 2 grams of sodium. 25 grams of Cheddar provides just 9% of this. The same 25-gram piece of Cheddar provides 104 calories equivalent to between 5% and 6% of the recommended daily calorie intake of children aged 7 to 10.

Although cheese does contain fat and saturated fat, which the FSA advises us to limit, the latest National Diet and Nutrition Survey<sup>2</sup> shows that the amounts of fat and saturated fat contributed by cheese to the diets of children are small. The survey reported that cheese actually only contributes 5% of the average daily total fat intake of boys aged 4 to 10 years and 7% of the average daily total fat intake of girls of the same age. Cheese's contribution to daily total saturated fat intake in boys and girls aged 4 to 10 years was shown to be 8% and 11%, respectively.

Other sources of saturated fat are meat and meat products, pastry products, biscuits, cakes, chocolates, spreads, whole milk.

## Calcium

Hard cheese, like Cheddar, is a source of calcium with a 30 gram serving (the size of a small matchbox) containing 222mgs of calcium which provides about 32% of the adult RNI.

### But, why is calcium important?

An adequate calcium intake is important through all life stages. Childhood is an important time for building strong, healthy bones, and getting enough calcium is an important part of this. Calcium requirements are greater during the teenage years than at any other time in life because during these years the majority of the skeleton is laid down. Our bones continue to strengthen until our mid thirties. After this, we naturally begin to lose bone, making an adequate calcium intake important throughout adult life to keep bones healthy.

Calcium is also important for healthy teeth and small cubes of hard cheese can make a tooth-friendly snack.

1. The RNI is a figure set by the Department of Health which describes the amount of a nutrient that is enough to meet the dietary needs of most people in a group (97%).

2. National Diet and Nutrition Survey: Headline results from Year 1 of the Rolling Programme (2008/2009), Foods Standards Agency and Department of Health, February 2010.

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**The Food Standards Agency's Eatwell Plate** – below – shows what a balanced diet should look like, with the size of each of the 5 segments representing their ideal weight in the diet. Starchy foods and fruit and vegetables represent the major part of the diet with dairy (milk, cheese and yogurt), meat and foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar making up the balance.

## The eatwell plate

Use the eatwell plate to help you get the balance right. It shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group.



Milk, cheese and yogurt are an important part of a healthy, balanced diet because they are all sources of the minerals calcium and phosphorus, are a source of protein and all contain some of the B vitamins.

The FSA recommend choosing reduced or lower fat options where appropriate – for example skimmed, 1% fat or semi skimmed milk, low fat yogurts and certain low fat cheeses such as low fat cottage cheese or low fat cheese spread and reduced or half fat hard cheeses. Failing that, try using a smaller quantity of a stronger tasting cheese in recipes, whilst for sandwiches grating a hard cheese like Cheddar will expand the volume and result in less cheese being used. Another useful tip if you are looking to reduce the fat or calories in your sandwiches is to skip the spread entirely or use a low fat cheese spread instead to provide a barrier between the bread and the filling. Softer cheeses like Brie, Camembert, Mozzarella or Cottage Cheese have naturally about 30% less fat than hard cheeses simply because they contain more water. So you are never short of options when looking to include cheese as part of your balanced diet.

## British Cheese - yes please!

The British Cheese Board aims to increase consumption of cheese made by its members and provides information about cheese as part of a balanced diet.

What are the benefits of eating cheese?

- Hard cheese contains essential nutrients - protein, calcium, phosphorus and vitamin B12
- It is versatile and convenient to use as part of any meal occasion
- There are more than 700 named cheeses now produced in the UK alone

The British Cheese Board was formed in 1997 and its members account for the majority of cheese made in the UK.



For further information on the British Cheese Board and its members and the cheeses they produce go to [www.britishcheese.com](http://www.britishcheese.com) or e-mail us at [enquiries@britishcheese.com](mailto:enquiries@britishcheese.com)

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