

These nutritional guidelines have been put together by Registered Dietitians from Centrepoint to provide information for staff and volunteers at food banks and food aid providers. They are evidence-based, affordable, and can be used to support beneficiaries to receive a nutritionally balanced parcel of food which takes individual needs such as health conditions, culture and kitchen facilities into account.



Nutrition and health

Eating a balanced diet is very important for good health, and protects us from a range of diseases. Nutritious food helps maintain our health by giving our bodies the energy and nutrients it needs to work at its best, fight off infections and also affects our mental health. Eating a variety of foods from the main food groups (fruit and vegetables, carbohydrates, protein-rich foods, dairy and alternatives and fats) and eating less salt, sugar and saturated fats is the basis of a healthy diet.

Many beneficiaries using the food bank may not have access to cooking facilities such as an oven and hob, which restricts what you can provide in the food parcel.

For people with limited cooking equipment it can be more difficult to prepare healthy food, however, there are still many nutritious options that can be included in the parcel. Where equipment such as a kettle, fridge or microwave are available, more can be prepared than you might think!

The following questions may be useful to ask the beneficiary, if you have the ability to further tailor their parcel:

- Which facilities do you have available? Microwave, kettle, hob, nothing?
- Do you have a tin opener? **TIP: if they do not, offer cans with a ring opener instead.**
- Do you have a fridge? **TIP: even long life milk and dairy are not a good choice without a fridge. Offer small packs if these are available.**
- Are there any foods you don't like/don't eat?
- Do you have specific dietary requirements that you would like to be considered? **See other guidelines for more information**
- Would you like some no-cook Recipe Cards with your parcel? **See next page for recipe suggestions**

The following food items would all be good options, try to include some from each group:

Carbohydrate-rich foods:

- Cereal products e.g. porridge oats, cereals, oat bars, crackers, biscuits
- Plantain chips
- Tinned potatoes
- Bread products if available

If they have a kettle or microwave:

- Pasta and noodles
- Rice and grains e.g. couscous, bulgur wheat, rice
- Microwave pouches of rice/pulses/grains

Protein-rich foods:

- Tins of beans e.g. baked beans, kidney beans, lentils, chickpeas
- Tins of meat e.g. chilli, curry, corned beef
- Tins of fish e.g. tuna, mackerel, sardines
- Packs of nuts, jars of nut butter
- Protein bars/shakes
- Tofu (long life)

TIP: If eggs are available, these can be cooked in the microwave.

Fruits and vegetables:

- Tins of fruit e.g. pineapple, peach, fruit cocktail, in juice
- Tins of vegetables e.g. tomatoes sweetcorn, peas, carrots, spinach
- Tinned soup e.g. lentil, vegetable
- Tomato paste/puree
- Long life fruit juice
- Packs of dried fruit

Dairy and alternatives:

- Tins of rice pudding, custard or custard based desserts
- Small cartons of long-life dairy or plant-based milks (such as soya, almond, oat)
- Tinned milk/ milk powder

TIP: If they have a fridge, fresh items like yoghurt and cheese can be offered.

Other items:

Jars of sauces (pasta, curry), seasoning (spices, dried herbs, stock cubes), condiments, oil, coconut milk, packs of tea, hot chocolate, coffee. Foods such as crisps, chocolates, biscuits & cakes can be included but ideally in small amounts.

If you have access to fresh or frozen food you could also add:

Bakery products and eggs don't need refrigeration, nor do most fresh fruit and vegetables - keep in mind available facilities to prepare them. Potatoes and yam can be microwave-cooked. Dairy products are suitable if they have a fridge.

An example parcel could include:

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| • 500g bag of pasta | • 1 box of long-life juice |
| • 2 x 250g pack microwave grains | • 2 tins of beans e.g. kidney, baked |
| • 500g of cereal or porridge | • 2 tins of meat/fish e.g. tuna, chilli |
| • 1 packet of crackers/biscuits | • 1 box of milk (cows or dairy-free) |
| • 500g jar of tomato pasta sauce | • 1 tin of custard or rice pudding |
| • 2 tins of fruit e.g. peach, pineapple | • 1 condiment e.g. hot sauce |
| • 2 tins of vegetables e.g. spinach, sweetcorn | • 1 pack spices e.g. paprika, all purpose, dried herbs |
| | • 1 pack of tea/coffee/hot chocolate |

The following Recipe Cards are appropriate without a cooker:

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| • Tuna Bean Salad (no cook) | • No fry noodles (kettle) |
| • Tuna Pasta (kettle) | • Microwave vegetable soup |
| • Stir Boiled Rice (kettle) | • Overnight oats (no cook) |
| • Scrambled eggs in microwave | • Microwave mashed potato |
| • Kettle Couscous | |

For resources on healthy eating with a condition: <https://www.bda.uk.com/>