



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2011-00354

**Keyword:** Human Resources

**Subject:** Nutritional Or Dietary Advice

### Request and Answer:

This is to inform you that the Police Service of Northern Ireland has now completed its search for the information you requested. The decision has been taken to disclose the located information to you in full.

### Question

Under the Freedom of Information Act, please could you state whether you provide any of your staff or officers with any nutritional or dietary advice. If so, please could you provide me with this advice. Please note that this request includes - but is not restricted to - officers in specialist roles, such as firearms etc.

### Answer

PSNI staff can access information on all aspects of health and well-being via the 'Well-being hub' provided by Occupational Health and Welfare. This is an internal resource managed by OH&W staff and is committed to the well-being of all PSNI personnel.

Advice can also be extended to an individual/audience for a specific illness, weight loss or in conjunction with an exercise programme.

Please see the information at the end of this correspondence in relation to nutritional and dietary advice.

Further information which you may find useful, can be accessed via the link provided below:

[http://www.acpo.police.uk/documents/workforce/2009/strategy\\_for\\_a\\_healthy\\_police\\_service\\_15x10x09review\\_website.pdf](http://www.acpo.police.uk/documents/workforce/2009/strategy_for_a_healthy_police_service_15x10x09review_website.pdf)

If you have any queries regarding your request or the decision please do not hesitate to contact me on 028 9070 0164. When contacting the Freedom of Information Team, please quote the reference number listed at the beginning of this letter.

If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a

review. You should do this as soon as possible, or in any case within two months of the date of issue of this letter. In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to the Head of Freedom of Information, PSNI Headquarters, 65 Knock Road, Belfast, BT5 6LE or by emailing [foi@psni.pnn.police.uk](mailto:foi@psni.pnn.police.uk).

If following an internal review, carried out by an independent decision maker, you were to remain dissatisfied in any way with the handling of the request you may make a complaint, under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, to the Information Commissioner's Office and ask that they investigate whether the PSNI has complied with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act. You can write to the Information Commissioner at Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. In most circumstances the Information Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out, however the Commissioner has the option to investigate the matter at his discretion.

Please be advised that PSNI replies under Freedom of Information may be released into the public domain via our website @ [www.psni.police.uk](http://www.psni.police.uk)

Personal details in respect of your request have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.

## Healthy Eating

What we eat affects our health. With just a few small changes to what we eat every day, we can help to protect against illnesses such as cardiovascular disease, some cancers and obesity. Healthy eating can also improve our overall feeling of well-being.

Research has shown that:

- fruit and vegetables contain vitamins and other substances which help protect against many cancers (vitamin supplements don't give this protection);
- by eating five or more portions of fruit and vegetables a day, we can significantly reduce our risk of getting cancer by as much as one fifth;
- by eating more fibre, from starchy foods like potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and cereals, we can reduce our risk even more.

You should try to increase the amount of fruit and vegetables you eat to 5 portions per day. Most people eat too little fruit and vegetables and too much food containing fat and sugar. Change just two or three things to begin with. Set yourself a few realistic targets that you will be able to stick to. Some suggested changes include:

- **Variety is important.** You should aim to eat a variety of different fruits and vegetables every day. This is because different fruits and vegetables contain different types and quantities of nutrients - if you ate five portions of only one sort of fruit or vegetable, you may still miss out on some important nutrients.
- **Base your meals on starchy foods.** Starchy foods include bread, cereals, rice, pasta and potatoes. Starchy foods should make up about a third of the food we eat. They are a good source of energy and the main source of a range of nutrients in our diet. As well as starch, these foods contain fibre, calcium, iron and B vitamins. Try to choose wholegrain varieties of starchy foods whenever you can. Change from white bread to wholemeal or granary.
- **Eat more fish.** Most of us should be eating more fish - including a portion of oily fish each week. It's an excellent source of protein and contains many vitamins and minerals.
- **Drink more water.** Our bodies are about 75% water. It is a vital part of a healthy diet. Water helps flush our systems, especially the kidneys and bladder, of waste products and toxins.

- **Cut down on saturated fat and sugar.** Try to cut down on food that is high in saturated fat and eat foods that are rich in unsaturated fat instead, such as vegetable oils (including sunflower, rapeseed and olive oil), oily fish, avocados, nuts and seeds. Swap deep fried chips for oven chips.
- **Try to eat less salt.** Salt is a secret ingredient in many different types of food. Three-quarters (75%) of the salt we eat is already in the food we buy, such as breakfast cereals, soups, sauces and ready meals. Eating too much salt can raise your blood pressure and increase the likelihood of heart disease.
- **Don't skip breakfast.** Breakfast can help give us the energy we need to face the day, as well as some of the vitamins and minerals we need for good health. There is some evidence to suggest that eating breakfast can actually help people control their weight.
- **Work out a daily meal routine.** Changes in the way we live have led to changes in our eating habits. By being continually on the move and eating at irregular times, some of us are losing awareness of what, when and how we eat. And we have moved away from the traditional family meal at the table to eating on the move or in front of the television. Working out a daily meal routine and focusing on your food will help increase your awareness of what you are eating and develop healthier eating habits.

## **Physical Exercise**

Physical activity improves both your physical and mental health. It is one of the most important factors in maintaining a good quality of life. Although technology and the convenience of modern life has made our lives easier it is making us increasingly inactive. We move around less, and burn off less energy than we used to. We drive cars or take buses. Machines wash our clothes. We entertain ourselves in front of a TV or computer screen. Physical activity is vital for good health but it's a fact that most people are not active enough. The government recommends we do 30 minutes of moderate physical activity (such as brisk walking) at least five days a week. Only 37% of men and 25% of women are currently managing this.

Regular activity, which gets the heart pumping a little harder, can really benefit our health and can make us look and feel better. It helps to reduce stress, control weight and lower blood pressure. Even a little bit of activity can lower the risk of developing major chronic diseases, such as coronary heart disease, stroke, some cancers and type two diabetes, by up to 50%. It can also cut the risk of premature death by about 20% to 30%.

As well as these health incentives physical activity also provides the following benefits:

- More energy - you'll be able to cope with your daily routine easier.
- Reduced stress- exercise relieves stress making you feel better.
- Stronger bones and muscles.
- Better balance, strength, suppleness and mobility.
- Improved sleep.
- Improved body shape.
- Reaching and maintaining a healthy weight.
- More social opportunities.
- A sense of achievement.
- More independence in later life.
- Increased enjoyment – activity can be fun and it's something you could do as a family.
  - Most people in the UK spend long amounts of time sitting down. At work, many of us have jobs where we sit at a desk all day. At home, we are spending more time doing sedentary activities like watching television, surfing the Internet or reading. It is important to break up these long sessions of inactivity, e.g. go for a brief walk. Moderate activity doesn't have to cost you money or too much time. It includes anything that leaves you warm and slightly out of breath, such as brisk walking, gardening, dancing or housework.
  - Changing a few of your daily habits can soon add up to a more active lifestyle, e.g. use the stairs instead of the lift and walk or cycle to work or to the train station. Even small bits of activity are beneficial, and can add up over the course of a day. You don't have to walk for a long time - every little bit adds up. And don't worry if you think you're unfit. Build up the amount you do gradually.
  - Try to fit activity into your normal routine A total of 30 minutes or more, five days of the week, could make a real difference to your health. The 30 minutes of physical activity can be achieved either by doing all the activity in one session, or made up of two or three bouts of activity of 10 or 15 minutes or more.
  - Walking more is a great way to increase your level of physical activity. Walking is so flexible that you can fit it into your daily routine. You don't need to buy special walking shoes or join a gym - just try to walk a little bit more throughout the day
  - Also try to aim for a variety because different activities have different benefits. This will also help prevent you from getting bored of the same old exercise routine.

If you feel discomfort or pain when being more active then you should get advice from your doctor. You should also consult your GP about your activity if you have any condition for which you are taking prescribed medication.

## **Weight Issues**

The British population has gradually been getting more and more overweight. In the last 10 years, the number of people who are very overweight has doubled. People generally gain weight gradually over the years, due to a continuous small energy imbalance (we tend to eat more and do less as we grow older).

**Being overweight** increases the risk of health problems such as:

- Periods when you stop breathing during sleep (sleep apnoea)
- Shortness of breath
- Coronary heart disease
- Some types of cancer: for example, bowel, kidney, oesophagus (foodpipe), womb and breast cancer in women after the menopause
- Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease
- Sleeping difficulties
- Back pain
- Painful joints and osteoarthritis
- Type 2 diabetes
- Fertility problems; irregular periods in women
- Skin infections and sores
- Gallstones

Even a small weight loss of 5-10 kg (approximately 1-1½ stones) can help to reduce many of these problems. It is important to maintain a level of control over your weight. On average obesity reduces an individual's life expectancy by nine years.

**Being underweight** can damage your body in a variety of different ways. These can include a weakening of your immune system, fragile bones and a lack of energy. The reasons for your low weight may be down to an unhealthy diet, or an underlying medical cause that may need to be looked at, or even emotional problems that can easily trigger a subconscious change of eating habits.

**Check your BMI.** Health professionals use a measurement called Body Mass Index (BMI) to find out whether someone is overweight or very overweight. Your Body Mass Index (BMI), which is calculated by comparing your weight and height, can reveal a great deal about your health. But remember this information is only a guide and it's aimed at healthy adults. It isn't suitable for children, young people, older people or people with well-developed muscles (muscle tissue weighs more than fat tissue thus your BMI may indicate you are overweight when in fact you have a healthy body shape with little fat). You can check your BMI using our handy BMI checker within the *Well-being Checks* section.

There are two main options if you want to **lose weight**: eat less or do more exercise. The best way to lose weight is a combination of the two.

- Research shows that the best way to lose weight – and to keep it off – is to be realistic, and set small and achievable goals. If you're aiming to lose weight, a target of 5-10% of your current weight is recommended by experts, as a realistic, achievable goal over 6 months.
- Remember crash diets rarely lead to long-term weight loss. In fact, they can sometimes lead to longer term weight gain. A survey conducted by the British Dietetic Association in 2004 found that a third of people quizzed ended up heavier than their original weight only weeks after dieting. The main problem is that this type of diet is too hard to maintain. Your body will be low on energy, causing you to crave high-fat and high-sugar foods. When you finally give in and eat those foods, you will often eat more calories than you need, causing weight gain.
- If you are overweight you may want to cut down on the amount you're eating, especially food and drinks high in fat or sugar.
- It is important to create a healthy amount of variety within your diet – you can find out more within the 'healthy eating' advice section.
- Quick tips can include trimming the fat off meat and choosing low-fat varieties of dairy and other products
- Plus you should do it gradually by making small, long-term changes to what you eat. Try to plan regular meals and snacks, starting with breakfast.
- You should also consider doing more physical activity, just a little bit extra each day can really make a difference. Finds ways to increase the amount of walking you do on a daily basis. For example park the car further away from the office, even though there may be closer free spaces! Take the stairs instead of the lift.

If you are underweight you may benefit from **putting weight on**, in which case this should be done as part of a well-balanced and nutritious diet. Find out more about healthy eating within the 'healthy eating' advice section. If your weight is very low you should consult your GP.