

ANSAWDD  
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WELSH LAMB  
MEAT QUALITY

# The Nutrition of Lamb





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The programme encompassed three strategic projects: Stoc+, an animal health planning project, Hill Ram Scheme, a genetic improvement project and the Welsh Lamb Meat Quality Project, an eating quality project.

### References

- British Nutrition Foundation
- Diet and nutrition survey
- McCance and Widdowson's The Composition of Food
- Eatwell Guide
- Hybu Cig Cymru – Meat Promotion Wales, Welsh Lamb Meat Quality project results 2020





## Get up to speed about lamb

Let's start with some good news; lamb can be enjoyed as part of a healthy balanced diet.

The nutritional profile of lamb is impressive. Lamb is naturally rich in many key nutrients which are essential to maintain good health and wellbeing.

Lamb is an excellent source of protein, essential fats, vitamins and minerals and these nutrients will be discussed in this booklet.

Not only is lamb rich in essential nutrients but the quality of the nutrients means that the body can use them very effectively and efficiently compared to other sources.

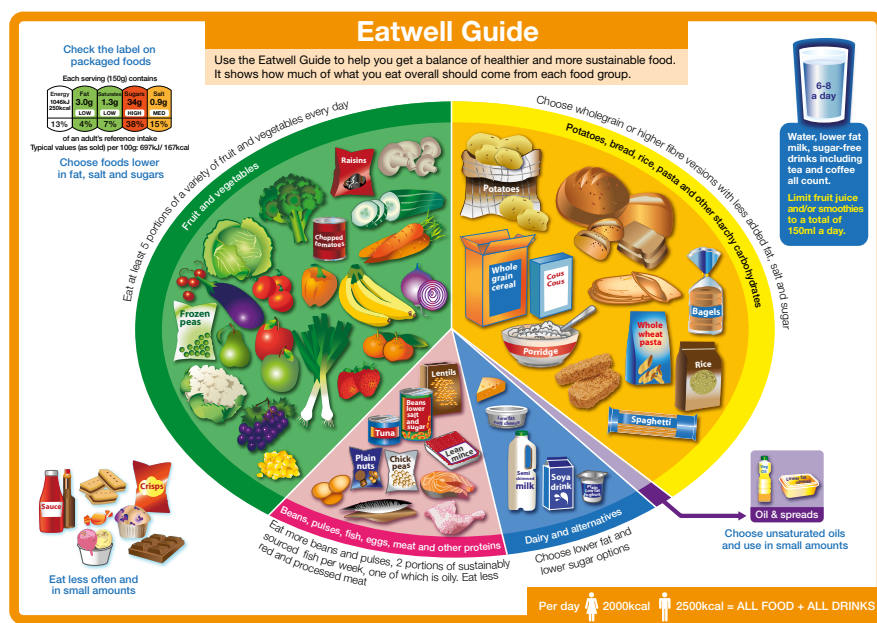


## Eatwell Guide

The *Eatwell Guide* shows how much of what we eat overall should come from each food group to achieve a healthy, balanced diet.

You do not need to achieve this balance with every meal, but try to get the balance right over a day or even a week.

As part of the *Eatwell Guide* it is recommended that we should eat protein foods such as meat, fish, eggs, lentils and pulses as part of each meal. Choose lean cuts of meat and mince to reduce fat intake.



[Click on this image to view the full guide]



## Lamb and healthy eating

### *Your questions answered*

#### What is a portion of lamb?

The recommended portion size for red meat is 70g a day of cooked meat which is about the size of the palm of your hand. This works out to be around 500g a week per person.

#### How can I cook lamb in a healthier way?

Here are a few simple tips to help you cook in a healthier way:

1. Cut off any visible fat before cooking. The skin contains much more fat than the meat itself. It's important to cut it off before cooking rather than after as the fat will melt into the meat as it's cooking.
2. Grill meat rather than frying or roasting.
3. If you are roasting meat, place it on a metal rack above a roasting tin so that the fat can run off and be discarded leaving tasty meat juices to make your gravy!
4. You don't need to add extra fat or oil to meat when you cook it and drain off any fat while cooking dishes that use mince.
5. Stir-frying is a great way of cooking meat as very little oil is used and it cooks within minutes, vegetables will stay crunchy and retain their goodness.
6. When making casseroles, skim off the fat on the surface before serving.



Red meat  
recommended  
portion size  
**500g**  
(per week, per person)

#### Top tips for eating lamb

- Choose lamb that has not been highly processed; processed meats can have a detrimental impact on health as they are higher in saturated fats and salt. If you do wish to buy processed meat, look at the label for the product with the highest meat content.
- If you're buying pre-packed meat, check the nutrition label to see how much fat it contains and compare products, for example, when buying mince, the percentage of fat content can vary between 20% fat to 5% fat.









## Protein and essential amino acids

Protein is an essential nutrient and is incredibly important for our health as it helps muscle growth, supports muscle mass, supports bone maintenance and facilitates the growth and repair of all our cells.

Protein is made up of amino acids. There are about 20 different amino acids and, for adults, 8 of these have to be provided in the diet and are 'essential' as the body cannot produce them.

Protein-rich foods tend to make us feel fuller than foods high in carbohydrates or fat, so including a lean source of protein with a meal can help to minimise feelings of hunger and decrease overall energy intake which can help us manage our weight and reduce snacking.

Everyone needs protein in their diet, and if you do endurance sports or weight training you may benefit from increasing your protein intake as you will be building and repairing more muscle

mass. Studies also suggest that as we get older we may benefit from eating more protein because it helps minimise the muscle loss associated with aging.

Lamb is naturally rich in protein and is classed as a complete protein as it contains every amino acid. It has also been found that protein from animal sources (i.e. meat) are more easily absorbed than protein from other sources.

It is advised that we have around 56g of protein a day for men and 45g a day for women. One portion of lamb (70g) can contain 20g of protein.



## Fats and essential fatty acids

The first thing to note is that fat is an essential part of the diet. Fats provide essential fatty acids which the body can't make therefore must be supplied by the diet. Fat also carry fat soluble vitamins such as vitamin A, D, E and K and is a source of energy.

**There are 2 main types of fat:** saturated and unsaturated.

Saturated fats are mainly found in animal products and processed foods. Saturated fats are considered less healthy as they can raise cholesterol levels. Unsaturated fats are generally found in plant foods and lean red meat, and can either be polyunsaturated or monounsaturated. There is good evidence to suggest that unsaturated fat can help lower cholesterol levels.

Omega 3 fats are a type of polyunsaturated fat, and are often called 'essential' fatty

acids as the body cannot make enough. Generally, the UK diet is low in omega-3 and grass-fed red meat, such as Welsh Lamb, can contribute to our intakes.

Lamb contains a mixture of saturated and unsaturated fats. In order to minimise our intake of saturated fats, it's really important to consider the cut and the type of meat. Leaner cuts and non-processed meats will have significantly less fat.

In terms of how much fat we need, the Reference Nutrient Intake is 70g of fat per day for adult women and 95g per day for adult men. Saturated fat should not exceed 20g per day for women and 30g for men.

On average 100g of fully trimmed raw lamb contains 8g of fat with 3.5g of it being saturated fat.



## Vitamins and Minerals

Several key vitamins and minerals are contained in lamb and it is a rich source of nutrition which is bioavailable, which means that it is easily absorbed by the body.

Lamb provides five essential vitamins and minerals that support normal energy production in the body and normal mental function – niacin, vitamin B6, vitamin B12, zinc, and pantothenic acid.

- Niacin has been found to boost 'good' cholesterol levels (HDL cholesterol) and lower triglycerides which can be harmful for health if levels are too high.
- Lamb is also a rich source of vitamin B6 which helps brain function, potassium which is required for all our cells to work and phosphorous which is essential for the growth and repair of cells.
- Vitamin B12 is important for maintaining the health of the nervous system and produce red blood cells.

- Lamb is a rich source of zinc which is an essential trace element needed for a healthy immune system and wound healing.
- Lamb is naturally low in sodium which is great for heart health.
- Iron is a mineral which is required by the body for several different roles including making red blood cells which carry oxygen around the body and maintain a healthy immune system.

Lamb (and other red meats) is one of the most bioavailable sources of dietary iron, as animal-based iron sources are classed as 'haem iron' which means it's easier for the body to absorb the iron from haem sources than from plant-based sources (known as non-haem iron).

Lamb is naturally rich in many key nutrients, including protein, healthy essential fats and important vitamins and minerals, which are essential to maintain good health and wellbeing. Initial results from the Welsh Lamb Meat Quality Project confirm this. Lamb is a healthy food choice, to be enjoyed as part of a balanced diet.



Visit our website for some great recipes using Welsh Lamb

[www.eatwelshlamb.com](http://www.eatwelshlamb.com)