

5 DIET

Like most people, Addisonians can burn the candle at both ends, eat badly, drink too much alcohol, tea and coffee, and survive. But we are particularly susceptible to the effects of dehydration and have a tendency to lose salt faster than other people. This means that we need to pay attention to our diet to ensure that our mineral balance is stable. And because we tend to have difficulty mobilising stored fat, we are more susceptible to the problems of weight gain when our diet includes too much sugar and fat.

i. Plenty of fluids, protein, vitamins and minerals

You do not need to follow a special diet, unless you have related health conditions like diabetes, coeliac disease or osteoporosis. But it is important to follow a healthy, balanced diet, which includes plenty of fluids, protein, vitamins and minerals without too many sugars or fats.

ii. Tastes and cravings

It is quite common for Addisonians to develop a taste for acid and salty flavours in combination. (The salt and lemon juice chaser that traditionally accompanies tequila must have been invented by an Addisonian!) Mediterranean foods are often a healthy way to satisfy these tastes: fresh salads with olives, pickles, salty cheeses, tuna or anchovies provide a good balance of protein, vitamins and minerals.

iii. Multi-vitamins and other supplements

Multi-vitamin and mineral supplements can be reassuring, so that your body is getting the best balance of nutrients at all times. However, if you are eating well they should not be necessary unless you have other specific health conditions.

Addisonians tend to retain potassium as well as lose sodium, so it is best to avoid supplements that are high in potassium. Fruits that are high in potassium, such as bananas, apricots (especially dried), dates and raisins, should not be eaten in copious amounts.

If you have a family history of osteoporosis or you have had a bone scan showing some loss of bone density, your doctor may recommend calcium supplements and vitamin D as preventative measures.

Some general guidelines for healthy eating are as follows:

DIET: A SUMMARY

You need to maintain a healthy diet to ensure you do not experience dehydration or a mineral imbalance.

You will tend to put on weight easily if you eat too much sugar, refined carbohydrate or fat.

A healthy, balanced diet means plenty of fluids, protein, vitamins and minerals with not too much sugar or fat.

Multi-vitamins and other supplements can be reassuring but should not be necessary if your diet is healthy.

PLENTY OF FLUIDS

Aim to drink at least one and a half litres of water a day.

Try to drink a glass of water for every glass of alcohol, cola drink, or cup of tea/coffee you have.

Avoid sports drinks with added potassium.

Remember to drink more fluids in hot weather.

PLENTY OF PROTEIN

Nuts are a good snack food.

Dairy foods (cheese/milk/yoghurt) provide protein and calcium.

Oily fish (salmon/sardines/mackerel) are a good source of calcium and protein.

Peas, beans and other legumes are a valuable protein source for vegetarians.

PLENTY OF VITAMINS AND MINERALS

Keep your calcium intake up to prevent osteoporosis.

Aim to eat more salty foods in hot weather.

Stick to the rule about at least five servings of fresh fruit and vegetables a day.

Take a multi-vitamin supplement if you wish, but it should not be necessary.

Avoid supplements which are high in potassium.

NOT TOO MUCH SUGAR

Refined carbohydrates (white bread and most bakery goods) are quickly converted to sugar by the body. They need to be balanced in a meal with protein and fibre to avoid a 'sugar crash'.

Complex carbohydrates (whole grain cereals) provide a more sustained source of energy and are less likely to produce a 'sugar crash'.

Fresh fruit is a good source of sugar because it is balanced with fibre.

Treat chocolate biscuits and the like as an occasional luxury.

The best time to eat sugar is at the end of a meal - so the occasional pudding is a treat you deserve!

NOT TOO MUCH FAT

Watch for the 'hidden' fats in takeaway foods and ready-made meals.

Try grilled foods rather than fried foods.

Butter is okay when applied sparingly rather than lavishly!