

Health Eating in Sri Lanka

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Figure 1

Sri Lankans in Birmingham

- Sri Lankans account for 974 out of the 1.15 million living in Birmingham population (according to 2011 census)^[1]
- 86.8% of them are aged 15-64
- Majority Sri Lankans identify as Asian/Asian British ethnicity^[2]

Importance of a Healthy Diet

- A healthy diet protects you from non communicable diseases such as heart disease and diabetes.^[5]
- Unhealthy diets are linked to 4 out of 10 biggest deaths worldwide including obesity and high blood pressure.^[3]
- The impacts of poor diets now exceed that of smoking.^[3]
- Links to Sustainable Development Goal 2 – zero hunger
- Widespread diet change has occurred due to increased production of processed food, rapid urbanisation and changing lifestyles.^[3]

Sri Lankan Health

- Population - 21.8 million.^[7]
- Free and decentralised public health system.
- Divided into 2 streams: community health and curative care.
- Sri Lankan Ministry of Health responsible for health service development + regulation.^[7]
- Divided into 9 provinces and 25 districts.
- Non communicable diseases contributes to nearly 75% deaths.^[7]
- Double burden of over and under nutrition.^[5,6]
- Increasing obesity and type 2 diabetes rates especially among adolescents.

Healthy Diet Guidance

Table made using [7, 8,9,10,11]	SRI LANKA	UK
Publication year	-First published food-based guidelines in 2002 -Revised version in 2011	-First food model 1994 -Most recent model, Eatwell Guide, published March 2016
Stakeholder	Nutrition Division of Ministry of Health	Office for Health Improvement and Disparities
Food groups	Pyramid split into 6: -Rice, breads, other cereals + yams at base -Fruit + veg -Fish, pulses, meat + eggs -Dairy -Nuts + oils -Fats + sugary products at top	Plate split into 5 -Fruit + veg -Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta + other starchy carbs -Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat + other proteins -Dairy + alternatives -Oils + spreads
Fruit and veg daily	5-8 servings daily	Make up just over 1/3 daily intake
Starchy food/cereals daily	6-11 servings daily Low protein content but provides 50% daily as consume such large quantities	Just over 1/3
School meals provided	No	Yes
Life expectancy	Men – 72 Women – 78.6	Men – 77.2 (Birmingham) 79.5 (England) Women – 81.9 (Birmingham) 83.1 (England)
Key highlights	<p>Both recommend variety daily, drinking 6-8 cups water, consuming less salt, sugar + fats.</p> <p>Sri Lanka emphasises choosing natural over processed foods</p> <p>UK also recommends opting for wholegrain</p> <p>In Sri Lanka guidelines, proteins are seen as a single category, UK has more differentiation between proteins for example, and having fish twice a week, once being oily</p>	

Highlights from Sri Lanka

School programmes such as implementing story book and sticker-based food diary can educate children on healthy lifestyles in primary schools.^[4]

- They are:
- Cost-effective
 - Improve eating habits
 - Allow children to act as agents of change within their families

Highlights from Birmingham

- Provide free healthy school meals.
- Authorities should introduce regulation and requirement for nutrition labelling so consumers can make informed decisions on their diet.^[3]

Visit Sri Lankan Restaurants

Coconut Tree Birmingham

A great example of bringing Sri Lankan cuisine to a British city, sharing their heritage whilst being conscious of nutritional guidelines



Figure 4 – Coconut Tree Menu

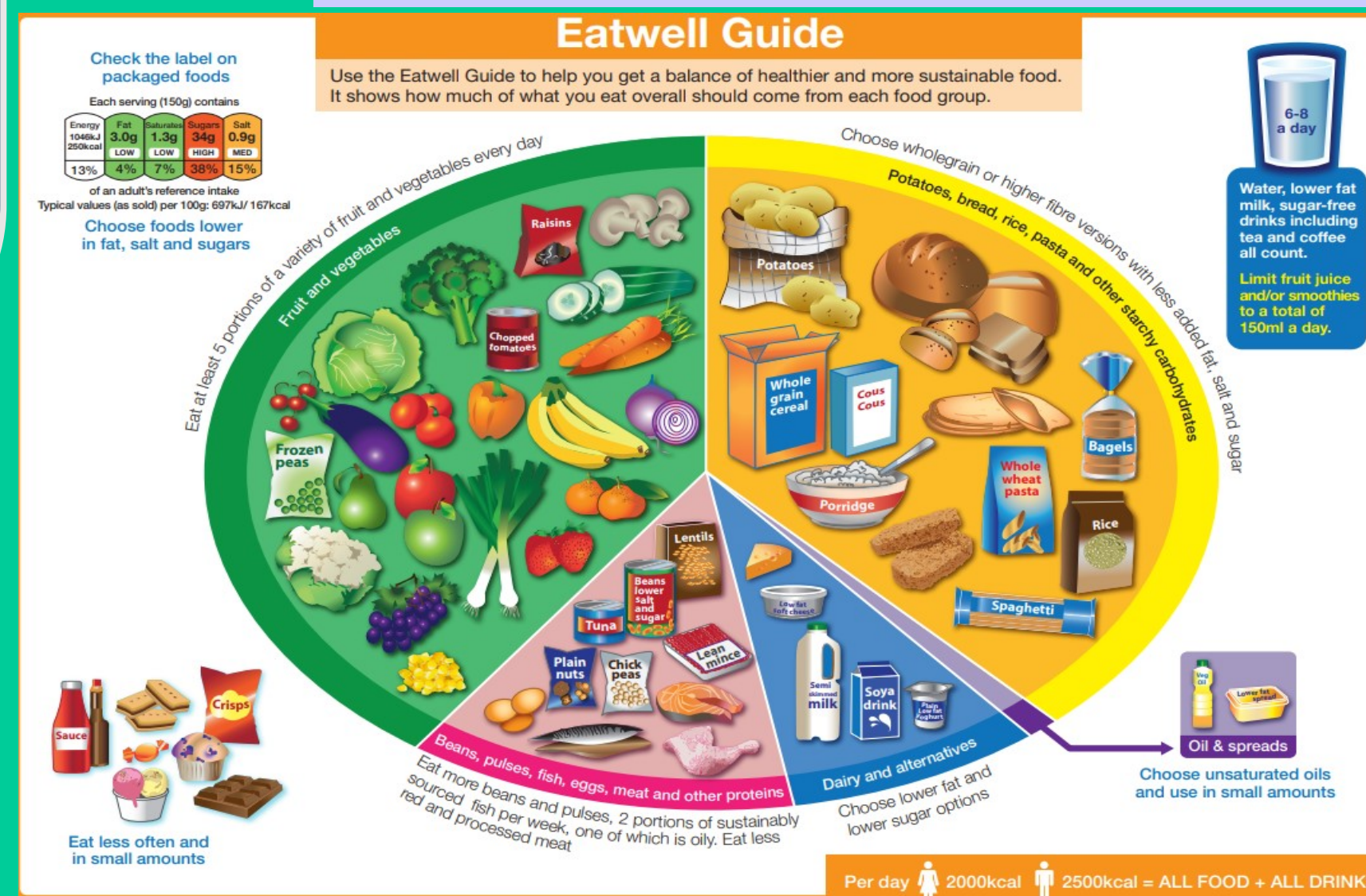


Figure 3 – UK EatWell Plate

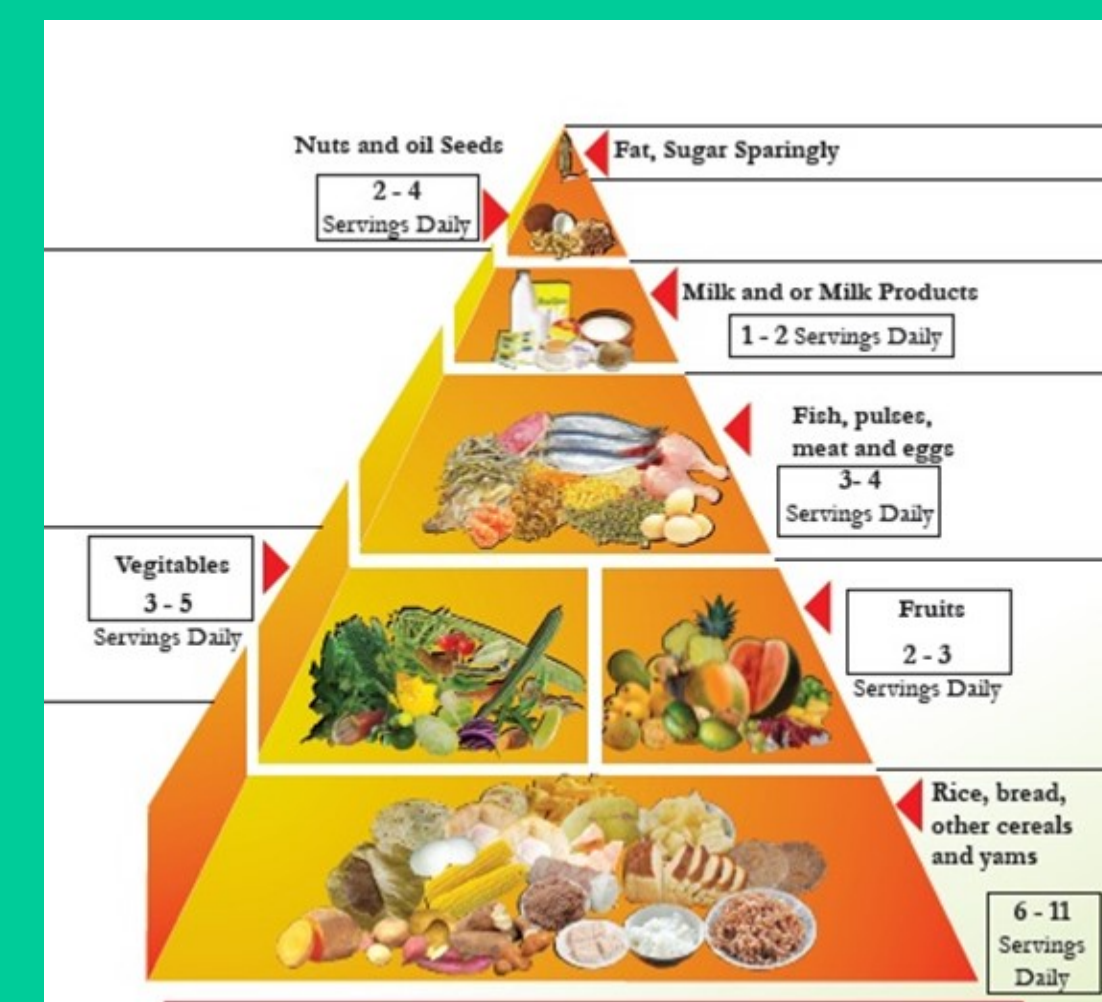


Figure 2 – Sri Lanka Food Pyramid

Conclusions

Although the Sri Lankan population in Birmingham is small, their country of origin has a burden of ill health linked to dietary factors. Therefore, Birmingham should invest and engage in their heritage and be aware of small differences between both national guidelines

By Timna Levinson

References

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