PUBLIC HEALTH DIETITIANS TEAM

Welcome to our Newsletter! A warm welcome to all the new Tutors who have completed training with us this year. We offer tailored sessions for organisations, including health stands and wellness talks. We are also now offering bespoke training. If you have a number of staff wishing to be trained in a particular programme, let us know!

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Upcoming tutor training dates

What have we been up to?

Lunch and learn event

As part of October's Positive Aging Month the Public Health Dietitians team delivered a Lunch and Learn event combining practical cooking, nutritional education and social connection to support healthy aging.

The team provided education on the key nutritional messages to support healthy aging. We talked about the importance of a nutrient dense diet which includes:

- Protein
- Calcium
- Vitamin D
- Fibre

This event brought together community members and staff to learn, cook and connect and was thoroughly enjoyed by all!

Recent Tutor Training

We have been busy delivering **Food & Health Essentials** training to tutors from a wide range of organisations including BHSCT, LORAG, Choice Housing, Chinese Welfare Association, Belfast City Council and GLL.

It is great to hear about all the ways the knowledge, skills and confidence gained from this programme are making a difference in the community.

Cook it! and I Can Cook it! has been particularly popular over the last couple of months and our colleagues at LORAG availed of a bespoke training session for their team. There are great plans being made for running Cook it! programmes in the Lower Ormeau area 🙂

Health stands

We have been very busy attending a variety of events, engaging with the public to share nutritional messages, resources and signposting.

The team took part in the Falls Prevention Roadshow at IKEA sharing key nutritional messages to prevent falls and support healthy aging.

On September 29th as part of World Heart Health day the team facilitated a health stand at the Royal Victoria Hospital. We shared nutritional messages to support heart health and long-term health.

At the Carers NI Roadshow, we offered practical advice on budgeting and making the most of the food shop.

In the spotlight on the YouTube Channel

A healthier you in 2026

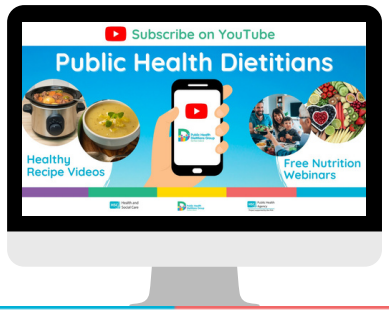
The "New Year, new me" mindset is all over social media with so much talk of "quick fix" weight loss and detox diets.
In reality, we don't need to have a complete overhaul of our diet or cut foods out. Small changes that are consistent, sustainable, and enjoyable add up over time and can make a big difference

Small changes make a big difference!

There are new short videos on the Public Health Dietitians YouTube channel:

- Healthier habits for a happier, healthier, longer life
- How to improve your health and achieve a healthier weight
- How to set and achieve your health goals

As part of **Octobers Menopause Month** – our menopause webinar is now available to watch on YouTube, covering practical nutrition and wellbeing advice.



You can view and subscribe to the Public Health Dietitians Youtube channel with other helpful videos and webinars here

We'd love your feedback

1. Scan the QR code or click the link
2. Complete a short survey to give us your feedback on the videos on the Public Health Dietitians YouTube channel.

Public Health Dietitians Group Northern Ireland

YouTube

EATING WELL

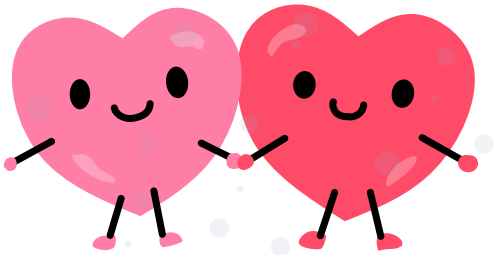
Your guide to EATING WELL for life

Our brand new **Protein Resource Box** is ready for borrowing!

This resource box has been created to help bring clarity to all the noise about high protein products. The resource addresses key questions like, 'what is protein and why do we need it?' and 'how much protein do we need?'

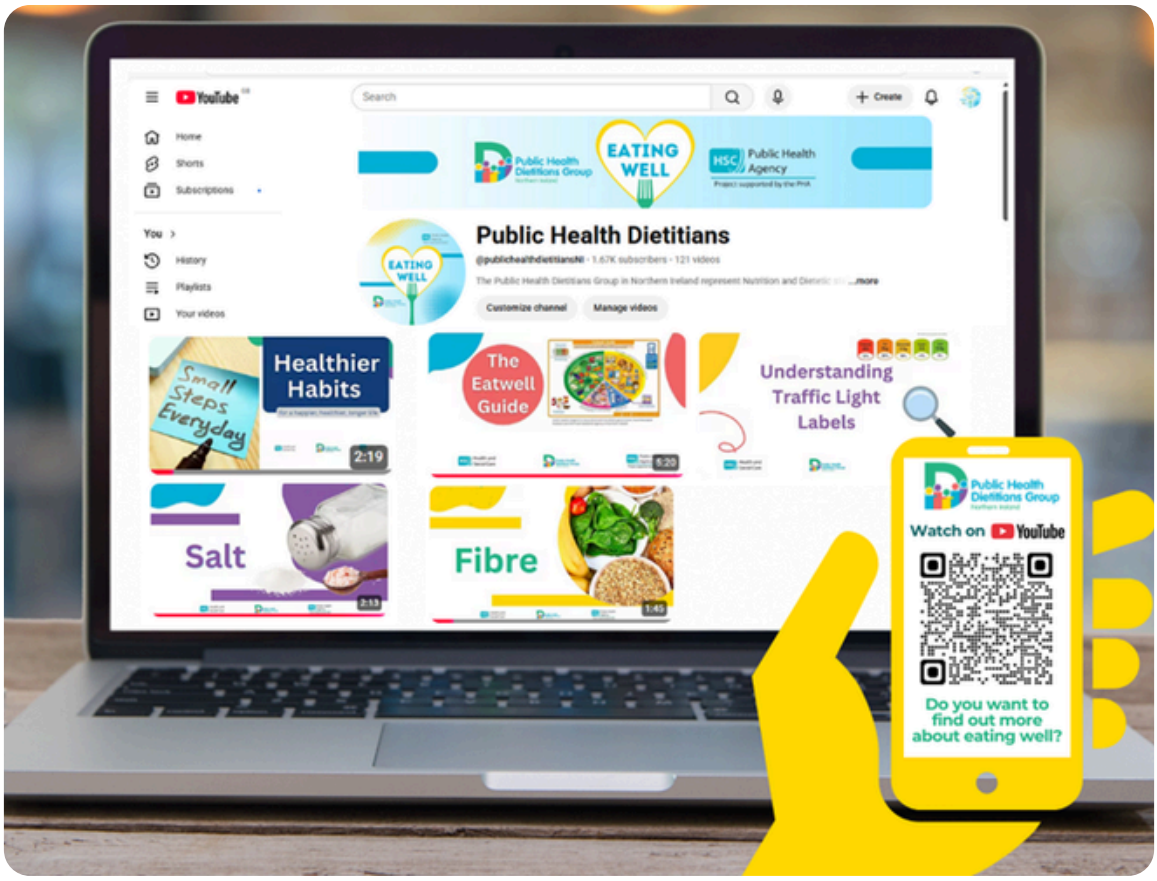
Contact us via phone or email to borrow this resource to use with your community.

February is Heart Month!



Did you know? Around ⅓ of adults in NI have high blood pressure and over half of the UK adult population have high cholesterol.

This Heart Month, small changes to what we eat can make a big difference to heart health.



For practical, evidence-based tips, the Public Health Dietitians YouTube channel has a range of short videos on healthy eating, understanding food labels and building healthier habits that support heart health.

Public Health Dietitian's Group Northern Ireland

HSC Public Health Agency
Project supported by the PHA

HSC Health and Social Care

For information on our programmes click here

Tutor training dates April-June 2026

Food & Health Essentials

Tuesday 21st April
9.30am - 4pm

You must have completed Food & Health Essentials training before you can proceed to book any other session dates

Cook it! / I can Cook it!

fun, fast food for less

Wednesday 13th May
9.30am - 4pm

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust / Public Health Agency — Food Values

Wednesday 20th May
9.30am - 4pm

Nutrition Awareness

Wednesday 3rd June (online)
10am-12noon

Tel: 028 9615 2450
Email: PHdietitians@belfasttrust.hscni.net

Food Connections

Active Belfast

Seniors in Belfast have been connecting with each other and learning more about good nutrition and reducing food costs through the Food connections initiative. Helping older people live more active and socially connected lives is a target set out in the Belfast Agenda and Belfast's Age Friendly plan. Eating together provides an opportunity to connect with others as well as having a tasty, nourishing, hot meal.

Gráinne McMacken, Active Belfast dietitian, has teamed up with Age Friendly Belfast to work with Seniors forums in the city on this initiative. Engage with Age, Volunteer Now, North Belfast Seniors Forum and Ardoyne Community Centre are all running activities for seniors with a focus on good nutrition, being shopping savvy and eating together as a group.

Age Friendly Belfast

Public Health Dietitians are providing support with information on eating a nutrient-rich diet for healthy ageing. Belfast City Council's Environmental Outreach team are offering information on saving money through meal planning, shopping and food storage to reduce food waste. Seniors Forum members have chosen to take part in physical activity like yoga, pilates and boccia too. The initiative is funded by Active Belfast and runs until the end of March 2026.

For more information contact grainne.mcmacken@bhdu.org
For information on the work of Belfast Health Development unit check out the website - Home - Making Life Better Together

Click on title for more information!

Is dark chocolate good for you?

British Heart Foundation's in-house Dietitian answers this question in her recent article. Here is a summary of her findings.

The cacao tree is where the beans that are used to make chocolate are found. They are processed and made into a paste and separated into cocoa solids (non fat) and cocoa butter (fat). Dark chocolate has a higher amount of **cocoa solids** and less cocoa butter and sugar than milk chocolate and white chocolate (which doesn't have any cocoa solids so technically isn't 'real' chocolate!)

Cocoa solids are a good source of **flavanol** (a type of chemical found in plants) which is known to help make blood vessels more flexible and help lower blood pressure. However, you can also get flavanols from green and black teas, nuts, apples, pears and grapes!

Whilst it is less than milk or white chocolate, dark chocolate still contains a lot of fat, saturated fat, sugar and calories. So, in conclusion, dark chocolate, like every other food that is high in fat, salt or sugar has its place in our diets to provide enjoyment. While it probably is a healthier choice than milk or white chocolate, dark chocolate should still be **eaten in moderation** as a treat (British Heart Foundation, 2025).