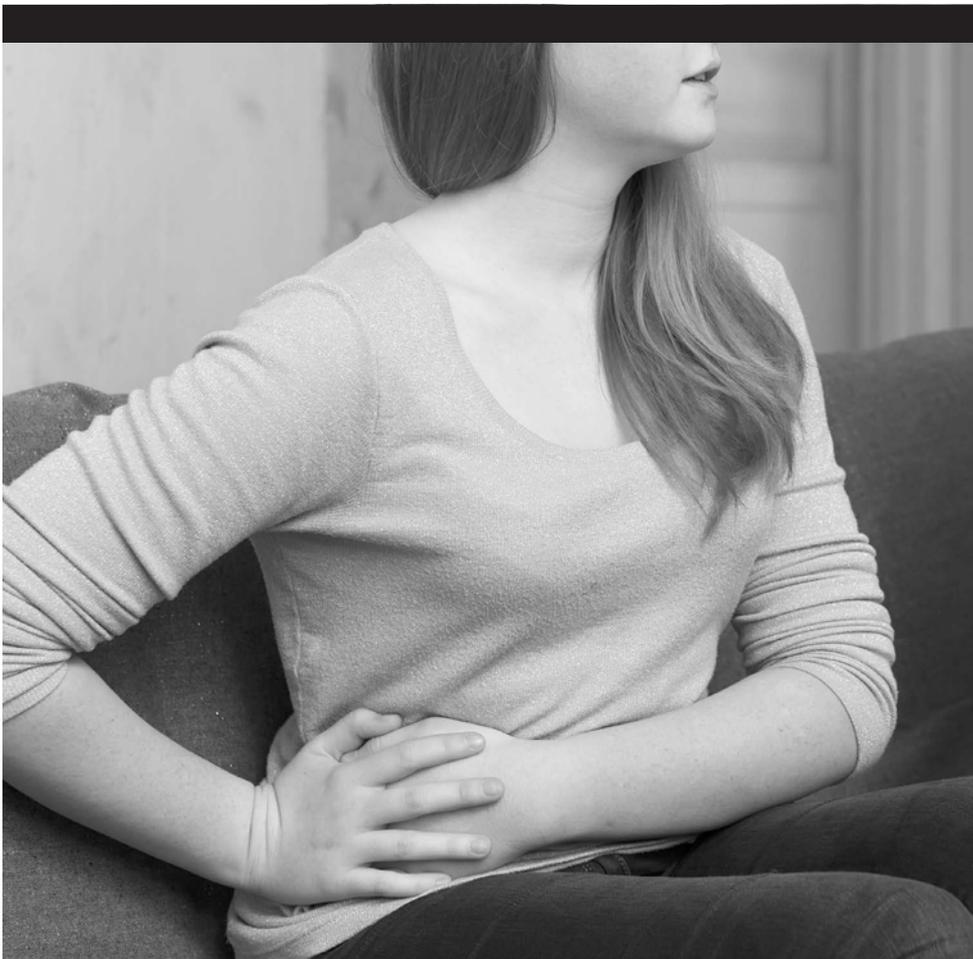


# Dietary advice for people with gallstones or cholecystitis



### **What does the gallbladder do?**

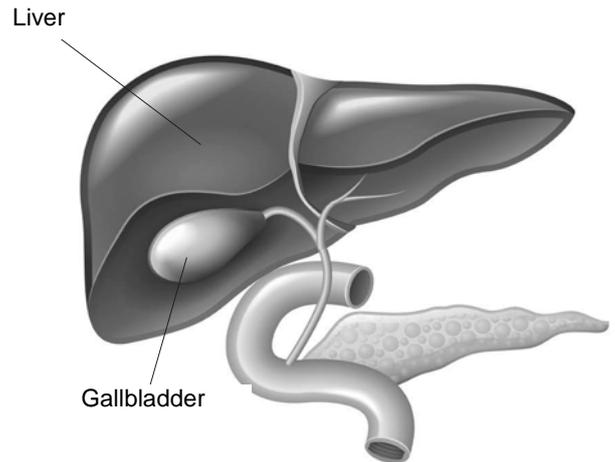
Your gallbladder, found beneath the liver, stores, concentrates and releases bile, a liquid which helps the body to digest fat from the food we eat.

### **What are gallstones?**

Gallstones are small stones that form in the gallbladder from hardened cholesterol, bile pigments or calcium. They can cause pain, cholecystitis, jaundice and pancreatitis.

### **What is cholecystitis?**

Cholecystitis is inflammation of the gallbladder. It usually occurs when a gallstone blocks the cystic duct.



### **Can changing my diet help with my gallbladder problems?**

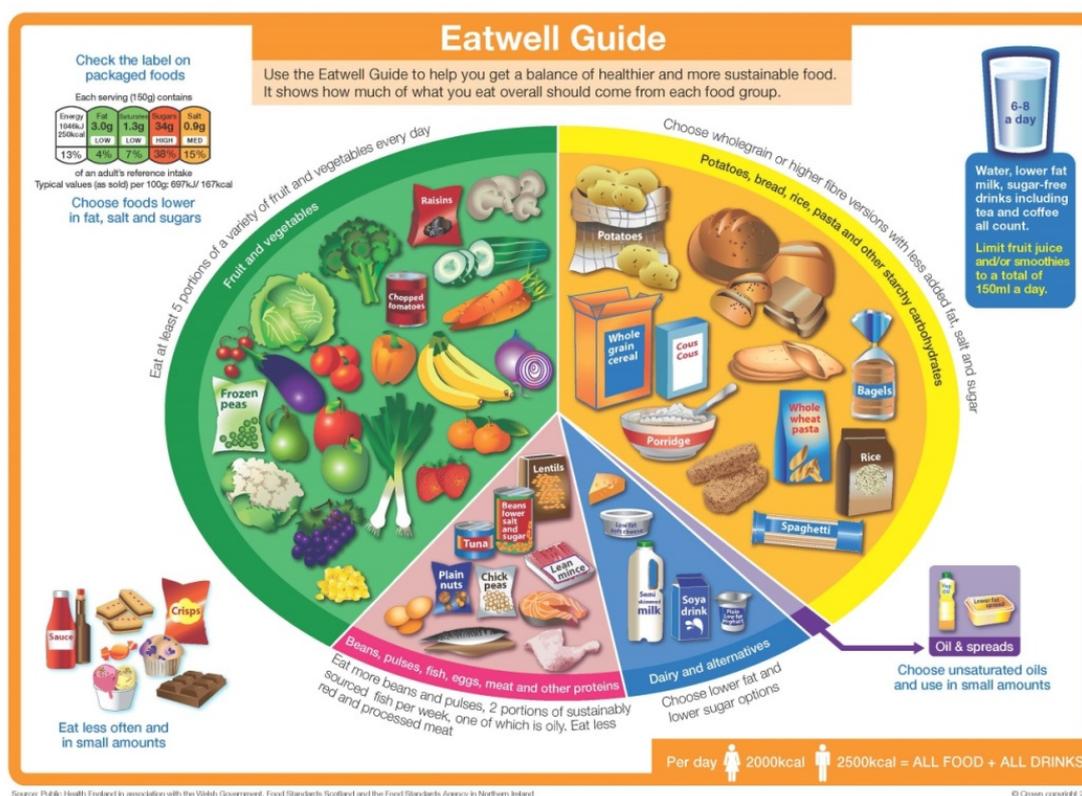
People are often told to follow a low fat diet if they are diagnosed with cholecystitis or gallstones; however, there is little evidence to suggest that removing any type of food from your diet will improve your symptoms or condition. Cutting all the fat from your diet may lead to rapid weight loss which is associated with increased risk of gallstones and malnutrition. People with cholecystitis or gallstones should eat a variety of foods and have regular meals and snacks. Generally, it is recommended that people with gallbladder problems eat within the healthy eating principles demonstrated on the 'Eat Well Guide'.

### **The 'Eatwell Guide' (see Figure 1)**

The Eatwell Guide divides the foods we eat and drink into five main food groups. Try to choose a variety of different foods from each of the groups to help you get the wide range of nutrients your body needs to stay healthy.

- Eat at least five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables a day
- Base meals on potatoes, bread, rice, pasta or other starchy carbohydrates and choose wholegrain where possible
- Have some dairy or dairy alternatives (such as soya drinks and yoghurts) and choose lower-fat and lower-sugar options where possible
- Eat some beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other protein. Aim for at least two portions of fish every week – one of which should be oily, such as salmon or mackerel
- Choose unsaturated oils and spreads and eat in small amounts
- Eat foods high in fat, salt and sugar less often and in small amounts
- Drink plenty of fluids – the government recommends 6-8 cups/glasses a day

Figure 1



### What if I have symptoms when I eat certain foods?

Some people may experience pain after eating; this is caused by eating in general as eating causes the gallbladder to contract and not by certain foods. If you experience pain with certain foods, avoid the food for a trial period to see if the pain reduces. If symptoms continue, reintroduce the food and speak with your Doctor or Pharmacist about appropriate pain relief. Missing meals can make your symptoms worse so it is important to eat regularly.

### How can I reduce the risk of developing further gallstones or inflammation of the gallbladder (cholecystitis)?

Following healthy eating principles as above is advised. If you are overweight gradual weight loss of 1-2lbs (0.5-1kg) per week can help reduce your risk of further gallstones forming. It is recommended 'yo-yo' dieting is avoided as this can cause rapid weight loss which is linked to gallstone development. If you would like further support with weight loss ask your doctor for a referral to the Dietitian or further information is available on [www.lnds.nhs.uk](http://www.lnds.nhs.uk)

### What if I have my gallbladder removed (cholecystectomy)?

After a cholecystectomy, you do not need to follow a special diet. Your liver will continue to produce bile that will drip into the bowel continuously rather than being stored in the gallbladder. It is important that you continue to eat well to recover from your surgery. Once you have recovered, it is advisable for you to return to eating a healthy balanced diet.