

Nutrition

Health and nutrition experts share the same message; eating a healthy, balanced diet, including a diverse range of foods in the right quantities, can support overall health and wellbeing. High-quality red meat can play a vital part in this balance, such as lean cuts of Scotch Beef, Scotch Lamb and Specially Selected Pork, all rich in protein, vitamins and minerals.

Scotland and Red Meat

According to the Scottish Dietary Goals, the average intake of red and processed meat should be pegged at around 70g per person per day which is around 500g a week of uncooked meat. This is a portion similar to a deck of cards five times a week. The Scottish Eatwell Guide cites the Scotch Beef, Scotch Lamb and Specially Selected Pork logos on packs, which tell you the meat is quality assured and locally sourced. We are also encouraged to limit processed meats such as sausages and bacon as these can be high in salt and fat, and to choose lean cuts/remove fat from cuts like steak and chops.

Whilst people eating more than 90g a day of red meat shouldn't eat any more, the reality in Scotland is that our average intakes are now below (66g) the daily limit (University of Edinburgh, 2024). Women and girls in particular struggle to meet the dietary recommendations so blanket recommendations to limit red meat consumption would disproportionately limit nutrient intake as highlighted by a recent modelling study commissioned by Food Standards Scotland (FSS).

Dr Fiona Comrie from FSS said: *"Although the assumption is that meat and dairy reductions would be of benefit to both climate change mitigation and human health, the reality is more complex. Given the diet of the Scottish population is so poor, particularly in some sub-groups, an 'across the board' population reduction in meat and dairy consumption cannot be recommended as micronutrient intakes may be worsened among those with already low intakes".*

Red Meat Nutrition

Red meat such as beef, lamb and pork is a nutritional powerhouse and, depending on the species, contains:

- Potassium for normal muscle function and blood pressure
- Phosphorus for normal bone health
- Iron for normal cognitive function
- Zinc for normal immune function
- Selenium for normal reproductive health
- Riboflavin for normal vision
- Niacin for normal energy release
- Vitamin B6 for normal red blood cell formation
- Vitamin B12 for helping to reduce tiredness and fatigue
- Pantothenic acid for normal mental performance

All red meats are rich in protein which helps us to build and maintain muscle and supports growth in children. The iron and zinc in red meat are in a form that is easier for the body to absorb.

Nutritional composition per 100g (uncooked) of typical cuts of lean red meat in beef, pork and lamb:

	Beef	Pork	Lamb	Daily recommendation
Potassium mg	350	387	330	2000
Phosphorus mg	200	211	190	700
Iron mg	2.7	0.8	1.4	14
Zinc mg	4.1	2.1	3.3	10
Selenium mcg	7	18	4	55
Riboflavin mg	0.21	0.19	0.20	1.4
Niacin mg	5	8.7	5.4	16
Vitamin B6 mg	0.53	0.38	0.30	1.4
Vitamin B12 mcg	2.0	0.5	2.0	2.5
Pantothenic acid mg	0.75	1.05	0.92	6

Reference: McCance, R.A., Widdowson, E.M., 2021. Composition of Foods Integrated Dataset (CoFID)

Tips for including red meat in a healthy diet

The 'nutrient plus' effect - serve red meat with plenty of vegetables to create a balanced meal and enhance nutrient absorption in the body. Add beans, pulses or lentils to meat dishes to boost the fibre content. Choose family friendly Make it Scotch recipes using lean red meat and plenty of vegetables such as:

- [Make It Scotch | Mince and Tatties](#)
- [Make It Scotch | Moroccan Scotch Lamb chops](#)
- [Make It Scotch | Sticky Hoisin Pork](#)

For more information on celebrating the positives of red meat read our toolkit, [here](#).

