

Healthy Eating Getting the Balance Right

The Balance of Good Health

Eating a healthy diet means choosing a range of foods from each of the 5 food groups in the proportions illustrated below.

This may mean eating more of some foods and less of others

Fruit &
Vegetables

Bread, other
cereals & potatoes



Pulses, Dahl &
alternatives

Milk & dairy
foods

Foods containing
fat and sugar

...Read on for a closer look at each group!

WHAT SHOULD I EAT?

CHAPPATTI, BREAD, OTHER CEREALS AND POTATO

These are needed for energy so try to eat some at each meal. It is good to fill up on the high fibre versions as they are bulky, low in fat and contain more vitamins and minerals.

Try:

- Chapattis - use flour from the UK as it is fortified with vitamins and minerals
- Breakfast cereals
- Couscous, noodles, pasta
- Rice
- Wholemeal or granary bread,
- Potatoes, plantain, yam, sweet potato
- Oats, porridge
- Maize, cracked wheat



Fibre

Eating high fibre foods can protect against bowel cancer, diverticular disease and constipation. Some foods in a typical Asian diet, such as fruits, pulses, and vegetables are high in fibre. Wholemeal cereals and chapatti are eaten less often, but are higher in fibre than the refined varieties.

FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

Are a rich source of vitamins, minerals and fibre and protect against heart disease and a range of other health problems.

Aim for at least 5 portions of a variety of different fruit and vegetables every day.

Try

- spinach, karela, cabbage, kale, broccoli, sprouts
- onions, cauliflower, carrots, peppers
- salad vegetables - tomatoes, lettuce
- fresh, frozen or dried fruit
- citrus fruits e.g. oranges, grapefruit, lemons
- tinned fruit in natural juice, fruit juice



Tips

- ◆ Cook vegetables for a short time, as this preserves the vitamin content
- ◆ Add grated or chopped vegetables to raitas
- ◆ Add vegetables towards the end of cooking curries as this preserves the vitamins
- ◆ Fresh fruit and vegetables lose vitamins when stored, so buy new supplies regularly

Vitamin C

Essential for the formation and repair of skin, blood and bones. Include them at every meal and eat vegetables lightly cooked or raw.

Vitamin C increases the body's absorption of iron, so include fruit and fruit juices at mealtimes.

PULSES, DAHL AND ALTERNATIVES

The body needs these for growth and repair. Aim for 2 portions each day. Good choices are:

- Lentils, peas, beans, dahl
- Soya, Textured Vegetable Protein (TVP), tofu
- Lean meat or fish
- Seeds and nuts
- Egg
- Quorn (mycoprotein)



If you do not eat meat, you need to select foods that contain similar nutrients – especially protein and iron.

Tips

- Skim fat off after cooking
- If you like fish, try to eat it at least twice a week. Oily fish such as sardines, mackerel and salmon are especially good
- Cook beans and lentils without salt otherwise the skins become tough

Iron

This is essential for healthy red blood cells, skin and bones - eat iron rich foods twice a day to be sure of getting enough. The most concentrated sources of iron are red meats. If you do not eat these, try:

- fortified breakfast cereals, bread
- beans, peas, lentils, soya
- dried fruit, leafy greens
- seeds, nuts, egg

NB Tea/herbal 'tea', coffee and cocoa contain substances that reduce the absorption of iron from food. Try drinking fruit juice or water with meals and keep the tea or coffee to between meals.

MILK AND DAIRY FOODS

Dairy foods are a rich source of calcium and protein – aim for three portions a day. These foods also contain saturated fat so choose low fat varieties. Low fat foods contain the same amount of calcium as full fat .

Calcium

This is needed for healthy growth and repair of bones and teeth, the nervous system and overall health. If you do not take milk and dairy produce you could try:

- white bread, fortified cereals
- spinach, broccoli, kale
- beans, tofu, tahini



If you prefer soya or rice milk, check the brand you use has added calcium.

FOODS CONTAINING SUGAR

Sugar and sugary foods should be used sparingly – they contain only energy (calories) but no other nutrients. Taking sugar frequently will increase your chances of getting tooth decay and becoming overweight.

Brown sugar, jaggery and honey are all pure sugar and contain only the smallest traces of nutrients, and should therefore also be kept to a minimum.

Tips

- Take tea without sugar. If you do not like it unsweetened, use an artificial sweetener instead
- Avoid sweetened fizzy drinks and squashes that contain sugar
- Drink plenty of water instead
- Sweeten foods such as rice pudding with fruit rather than sugar
- Have sweets such as burfi, jalebi or laddu only on very special occasions and only in small amounts.

FOODS CONTAINING FAT

Fat is needed in very small amounts provide some vitamins and energy. Certain foods (ghee, oil, paratha, samosa, pakora, jalebi) are high in saturated fat, which increases the long-term risk of heart disease.

Tips

- Use small amounts of fat in food e.g. 1 tablespoon of oil in a sauce for 4 people
- Use monounsaturated oil such as rapeseed/olive oil rather than ghee or corn oil
- Keep fried foods for occasional treats

Omega-3 fatty acids should be included, as they protect the body against heart disease. Try:

- ◆ Nuts and seeds
- ◆ Low fat dairy – yoghurts, cheese, spreads
- ◆ Sunflower oil, olive oil
- ◆ Margarine (olive or sunflower oil) with A, D, E vitamins
- ◆ Rapeseed oil

NB Remember, all fats/oils are high in calories – too much of any kind of fat can lead to an increase in weight.

Fluid

It is important to drink 8-10 cups (1,500-2,000ml) of fluid every day with at least half as water. The large quantities of fibre in a vegetarian diet soak up moisture in the gut and fluid helps prevent constipation.

B12

Strict vegetarian and vegan diets often lack this vitamin, as it is not found in plants. Try:

- ◆ fortified breakfast cereals
- ◆ milk/dairy foods, fortified soya milk
- ◆ yeast extract, e.g. marmite.

A pint of milk a day or 3 portions of dairy foods will provide the daily requirement of vitamin B₁₂.

HEALTHY SNACKS

- ◆ Fresh fruit/vegetables
- ◆ Mixed unsalted nuts/seeds or dry roasted chickpeas
- ◆ Crackers/rice cakes/crisp breads
- ◆ Savoury scones, muffins or rolls, crumpets
- ◆ Hummus with bread sticks/raw vegetable sticks
- ◆ Dried fruit, e.g. raisins, apricots
- ◆ Plain popcorn/plain biscuits
- ◆ Diet/low fat yoghurts/fromage frais
- ◆ Breakfast cereals, (low sugar varieties) e.g. weetabix, cornflakes

SUMMARY

- ◆ Eat three meals a day, based around starchy foods
- ◆ Eat a wide variety of foods
- ◆ Eat at least 2 portions of different protein foods a day
- ◆ Eat 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day
- ◆ Drink plenty of fluids, especially water
- ◆ Try not to eat too many fatty, salty or sugary foods
- ◆ Get active and try to be a healthy weight

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