



## HEALTHY EATING

### The different food groups

Your body needs energy to work normally and keep you alive. You get this energy from nutrients in the food that you eat - mostly, carbohydrates, fats and proteins. Minerals and vitamins are other nutrients that are also important in your diet to help your body stay healthy.

It is important to get the right balance between these different nutrients to get maximum health benefits. Your diet should contain food from each of the following food groups:

- Starchy foods such as bread, rice, potatoes, pasta, etc.
- Fruit and vegetables.
- Milk and dairy foods.
- Protein foods. These include meat, fish, eggs and other non-dairy sources of protein (including nuts, tofu, beans, pulses, etc).
- Fatty and sugary foods are the fifth food group that you eat. However, only a small amount of what you eat should be made up from fatty and sugary foods. In addition to the above, plenty of fibre and water in your diet is also important for your health.

### Eat plenty of starchy foods (complex carbohydrates)

Carbohydrate is an important energy source for your body. Starchy foods often contain a lot of fibre (roughage). When you eat starchy foods, you get a feeling of fullness (satiety) which helps to control appetite. They also contain other vitamins and minerals important for health.

Tips to increase starchy foods include the following:

- For most meals, include a portion of, for example, rice, pasta, baked potatoes, or bread.
- For more fibre, choose wholemeal bread, brown rice or wholemeal pasta. When baking, use wholemeal flour.
- If you have cereals for breakfast, choose porridge, high-fibre cereals, or whole grain cereals (without sugar coating).
- Have tea breads, and plain or fruit scones, instead of sugary cakes and biscuits.

### Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables

It is recommended that we eat at least five portions of a variety of fruit or vegetables each day. If you eat a lot of fruit and vegetables, then your chances of developing heart disease, a stroke, or bowel cancer are reduced.



### Eat enough milk and dairy foods

Milk and other dairy foods such as cheese and yoghurt are important in your diet as they provide calcium which is needed for healthy teeth and bones. They are also a source of protein and can provide other vitamins and minerals important for your health.

### Eat other protein foods in moderation

Other protein-containing foods include meat, fish, eggs and non-dairy sources of protein. Non-dairy sources of protein include nuts, tofu, beans such as red kidney beans and canned beans, and pulses such as lentils and chickpeas.

### Don't eat too much fat

You do need some fat in your diet but you need to be careful about *how much* fat you eat and what *type* of fat you eat. A low-fat diet helps to reduce your chance of developing diseases such as heart disease and stroke. It will also help you to keep a healthy weight. You should not have much saturated fats such as butter, lard, dripping, and unspecified margarine. Unsaturated fats are better, such as sunflower oil, olive oil, and low-fat spreads.

### Don't have too many sugary foods and drinks

Sugary foods and drinks are high in calories, and too much may cause weight gain. It isn't just the amount of sugar that may be bad. Even eating small amounts of sugary foods (sweets, etc) too often is bad for teeth.

### Don't eat too much salt

Too much salt increases your risk of developing high blood pressure. Guidelines recommend that we should have no more than 6 grams of salt per day. If you are used to a lot of salt, try gradually to reduce the amount that you have. Your taste for salt will eventually change.

### Don't forget portion sizes

You may be eating very healthy foods but you still need to keep an eye on your portion sizes because if they are too large, you will still gain weight. Deliberately try to take smaller portions when you have a meal.

### Think about what you are drinking

Many drinks contain calories, including alcoholic and many nonalcoholic drinks. Think about what you are drinking.

- Choose healthier nonalcoholic drinks. Some tips: water contains no calories and can be both refreshing and healthy. Add a slice of lemon or lime to your water. Keep a jug in the



fridge so that it stays cool. Also, think about switching your whole-milk latte coffee for a coffee made from skimmed or semi-skimmed milk.