



# National Nutritional Week

1<sup>st</sup> Sept. to 7<sup>th</sup> Sept. 2015

Do you ever think about why we eat? The easy answers are because we are hungry, tired and our stomach is rumbling. Sometimes you might also eat because you are bored, sad or happy, just because it's lunchtime, or because that chocolate-covered donut looks so good.

Those are some of the emotional and physical reasons why we eat, but do we ever put much thought into why our body needs food? Not just any food, by the way, but healthy, good-for-you food? Why is good nutrition important?

## What is Nutrition?

Nutrition refers to everything that we eat and drink. Our body uses nutrients from food to function properly and stay healthy. Nutrients include carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, and minerals. In the right amounts, nutrients give your child energy to grow, learn, and be active.

Calories are the amount of energy in the foods and drinks we consume. We need a certain amount of calories to grow and develop. But if you take in more calories than his or her body needs, the extra calories will be stored as body fat.

## Why is proper Nutrition important?

Like a finely-tuned racing car, your body needs the right fuel (food) and regular maintenance (exercise, lifestyle and mental attitude) to achieve its true health potential. Nothing is more important than healthy eating!

Put in the wrong fuel or let it go without regular use and there's no way it can deliver its full power and performance. Without healthy eating, your body's engine will cough, splutter and eventually stall.

Poor nutrition can cause health problems, overweight, and obesity. Some of the health problems associated with poor nutrition can be very serious, especially as we grow into an adult. We should understand healthy eating habits, so that we can help ourself to prevent these health problems.

## Maintaining a balanced diet by healthy eating can:

- Give you vitality and energy for life
- Help you stay at a weight that's right for you
- Boost your immune system
- Improve sports performance
- Delay the effects of aging
- Keep you active and fit into old age
- Help beat tiredness and fatigue
- Protect teeth and keep gums healthy
- Enhance your ability to concentrate and possibly alter mood
- Ward off serious illnesses like heart disease, certain cancers, mature-age onset diabetes, and gallbladder disease

## Basics of Health Eating for Today

### Low Fat

Cutting down on all fats from fatty and fried foods, butter, cream, margarine and oils is agreed on by nutritionists the world over as a way of making the modern diet healthier and reducing weight. Cutting down on saturated fat in particular is important for the heart.

### Lots of Starchy Carbohydrates

We have forgotten how important rice, pasta, potatoes, bread and cereals are to our health. Forget the stodgy image of starch from years gone by! Starch is in again and may turn out to be just as critical as fibre is now.

## High Fiber

Not just bran! Fiber, that largely indigestible part of our food and often the part that really gets us chewing, is responsible for so much good. It not only keeps our insides moving smoothly but it helps to lower cholesterol, prevent gallstones and bowel cancer, and keep our weight in check. Wholemeal and grain breads or roti are full of it, as are brown rice, barley, lentils, beans and vegetables. To start your day, there is a wonderful array of wholegrain and bran breakfast cereals.

## Vitamins, Minerals, and Anti-oxidants

Vegetables, fruit and grains carry an abundance of vitamins, minerals and numerous other natural substances (called phytochemicals) which scientists are only just beginning to discover. Phytochemicals function as anti-oxidants, which fight off free radicals that could otherwise damage our cells, membranes and DNA. Numerous studies show that people who eat lots of vegies and fruit have lower rates of heart disease and cancer.

## Variety

Variety doesn't mean 10 different cereal packs in your cupboard, but rather a variety of botanically different foods. Pasta, bread, puffed wheat and couscous all look and taste different but are all derived from the one basic (but versatile) grain (wheat). So they all provide similar nutrient substituting other grains like oats, barley, corn or rye for some wheat adds diversity to your diet and ensures a wider range of nutrients. The nutrients you miss from one food, you can make up from another.

## Moderate Sugar and Sweets

Sugar in modest amounts adds to the flavour of cooking and is a useful fuel for athletes and other active people. In excess, however, sugar adds unwanted kilojoules and can displace other more important foods - particularly for children and teenagers. In chewy and sticky form, sugar also can cause dental caries (or tooth decay).

## Light on Salt

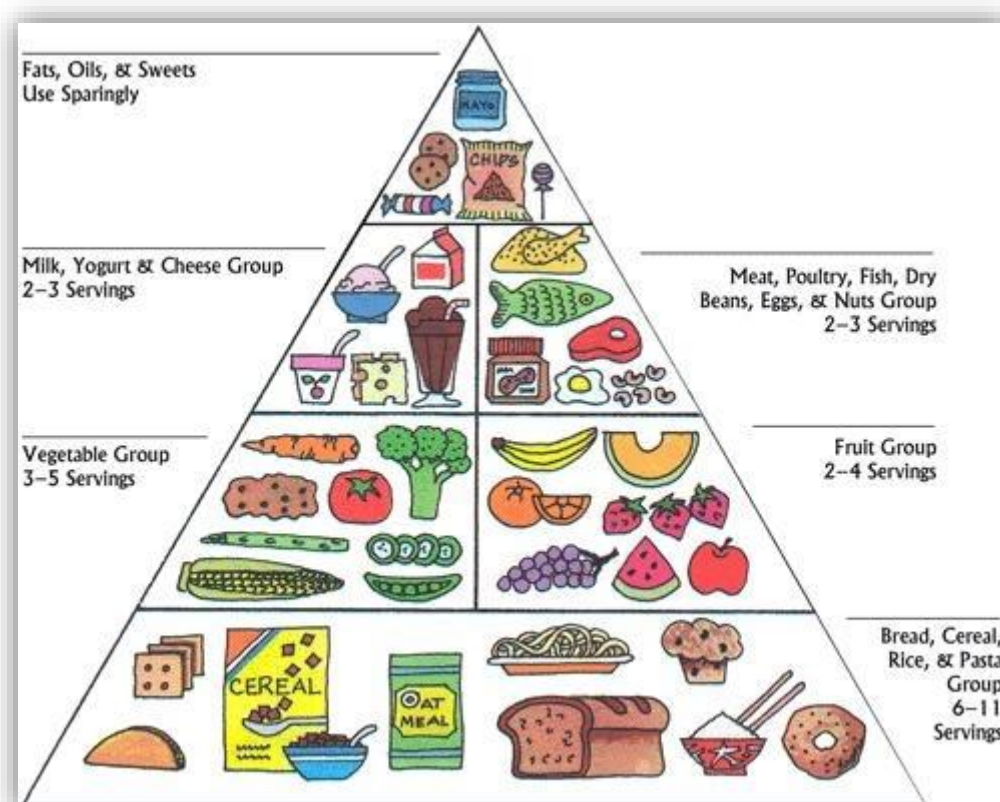
Our modern diet is laden with salt. It's not until you avoid salt for a few weeks that you notice how it masks the true flavour of foods. As 75 per cent of our total salt intake comes from everyday commercial foods (including bread, biscuits, cereals, butter, deli meats and snack foods), it is imperative to buy salt-reduced or no-added-salt products.

## Drink Plenty of Fluid

Two litres (8 glasses) of fluid a day is needed to keep the body hydrated and the kidneys working efficiently. In hot weather, even more fluid is required. Alcohol, Cold drinks and strong coffee do not count, as these act as diuretics and force the kidney to excrete more fluid than normal.

## Enjoy Mealtimes

Stress, tension, rushing and eating on the run all take their toll on your digestion and health. Try to relax and take the time to really appreciate the food in front of you. Not only will it increase your enjoyment and satisfaction by having a "comfortably full" stomach, this technique is often recommended as a strategy to help people lose weight.



## Breakdown of the Food Pyramid

### Bread, Cereal, Rice, and Pasta

6-11 Servings

These foods provide complex carbohydrates, and important source of energy. They also provide B vitamins, minerals, and fiber. Starchy foods are not fattening if you don't add butter, cheese, or cream sauces. Select whole-grain products to maximize fiber and other nutrients.

1 serving = 1 slice of bread; 1 ounce of ready-to-eat cereal; 1/2 cup cooked cereal, rice or pasta

### Fruits

3 Servings

Fruits are rich sources of vitamins, most notably vitamin C. They are low in fat and calories. Select fresh fruits and fruit juices, and frozen, canned, or dried fruits. Avoid fruit processed with heavy syrups and sugar-sweetened juices.

1 serving = 1 medium apple, banana, or orange; 1 melon wedge; 1/2 cup of chopped fruit or berries; 3/4 cup fruit juice.

### Vegetables

3-5 Servings

Vegetables provide vitamins (especially A and C), are excellent sources of fiber, and are naturally low in fat. For maximum nutrients, select dark leafy greens, deep-yellow or orange vegetables, and starchy vegetables like potatoes and yams.

1 serving = 1 cup raw leafy greens; 1/2 cup other vegetables chopped; 3/4 cup vegetable juice.

### Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs, and Nuts

2-3 Servings

Animal foods are excellent sources of protein, iron, zinc, and B vitamins, as are beans, nuts, and seeds. Tofu (made from soybeans) and white beans also supply calcium. Some seeds, like almonds, are good sources of vitamin E.

1 serving = 2-3 ounces of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish; 1 egg; 1/2 cup cooked beans; 2 tablespoons seeds and nuts.

### Milk, Yogurt, and Cheese

2-4 Servings

Milk products are the richest sources of calcium. They also provide protein and vitamin B12. Choose low-fat varieties to keep calories, cholesterol, and saturated fat at a minimum

1 serving = 1 cup of milk or yogurt, 1-1/2 ounces of cheese.

### Fats, Oils, and Sweets

Use sparingly

These foods provide calories, but little else nutritionally. Exceptions are vegetable oil, which is a rich source of vitamin E (1

## Benefits of Nutrition

### Good Nutrition Provides Energy

The foods we eat provide the energy our body needs nutrition to function. Just like we need to put fuel in our car or recharge your cell phone battery, your body needs to be fed energy-providing foods every day. The main form of energy for your body is carbohydrates.

Our body has the easiest time digesting carbohydrates like sugar and starch. Carbohydrates are broken down into individual glucose, fructose or galactose units. Glucose is your body's favourite form of energy. If we don't get enough carbohydrates, your body can make glucose from protein or fat -- and if we get too many carbohydrates, our body is very good at storing them as fat.

### Good Nutrition Provides Raw Materials

Protein in the foods we eat is broken down into individual amino acids. Our body uses the amino acids to build and repair the various parts of your body. Our muscles contain lots of protein, and you need to replenish that protein through your diet. Our body also needs protein for components of our immune system, hormones, nervous system, and organs.

Another raw material our body needs is calcium. Calcium has several functions in your body, but its best known as the mineral that is stored in our bones and teeth. We need calcium from our diet to keep your bones and teeth strong.

Our body also needs fats to be healthy. Membranes that contain fats surround all the cells of our body. Our brain has fatty acids, and fats are also needed to signal hormones.

### The "Little Helpers"

Vitamins and minerals we get from our diet are just as important as carbohydrates, protein and fats; however, you only need them in small amounts. Vitamins and minerals usually function as co-enzymes, which means they help chemical reactions in the body happen a lot faster. For example, many of the B complex vitamins help our body burn carbohydrates for energy. Vitamin A is needed for vision, zinc is involved in many metabolic processes, and vitamin C helps keep connective tissue strong and our immune system functioning.

Your diet needs to provide adequate amounts of all of these "little helpers." A healthy, balanced diet will provide you with lots of vitamin and minerals. An unhealthy diet may make your body deficient in one or more of these helpers.

### Above and Beyond the Basics

Good nutrition provides more than energy, structural components, vitamins and minerals. There are other substances in the foods that we eat that have become better known over the last few years.

Phytochemicals are found in the colourful parts of fruits and vegetables. Although they aren't required for body functioning, they may have a very powerful impact on our health. For example, quercetin (found in red apples) functions like an antihistamine and as an anti-inflammatory effect. Resveratrol, found in grape skins and seeds, is a powerful antioxidant.

Antioxidants help protect our body from damage that comes from the sun, pollution, smoke, and poor dietary choices. They are found in the phytochemicals of fruits and vegetables, as well as some vitamins and amino acids.

When we eat a food, we don't eat just a carbohydrate, fat or protein. We eat a piece of apple, a steak, or a lump of mashed potatoes. Most of the foods we eat consists of varying amounts of all three of these nutrition components. Good nutrition means getting the right balance of carbohydrates, fats and proteins, plus the required vitamins and minerals. Great nutrition means getting a lot of the phytochemicals and antioxidants, too.

Take carbohydrates for example: What are good carbs, what are bad carbs, and what difference does it make? Since our body breaks them all down into individual units, the carbohydrates themselves aren't necessarily good or bad. The problems occur when we eat too many, or if the other ingredients in the food containing the carbohydrates aren't so good.

For example, that chocolate covered donut mentioned in the first paragraph contains lots of sugar and white flour; if we eat too many of them, we'll take in extra calories that will be stored in our body as fat. The donut also contains lots of fats, probably trans-fats that can raise our risk of heart disease. The donut doesn't provide you with much in the way of vitamins, minerals or other substances, such as natural anti-oxidants or healthy fatty acids. When we think of it this way, that donut may not sound so good any more.

An example of a good source of carbohydrates would be almost any fruit or vegetable. These options allow you to get the carbohydrates you need for energy, plus fiber for a healthy digestive system, vitamins, minerals and anti-oxidants. About half of our daily calories should come from carbohydrates. Those carbs should come from fruits, vegetables and 100% whole grain breads and cereals -- not from candy, sodas and pastries.

This concept works with proteins and fats, too. A healthy protein source is one that does not add extra unhealthy fats and hopefully offers some fats that are good for us, like navy beans. These beans provide protein, fiber, vitamins, minerals and carbohydrates. An example of an unhealthy protein is bacon. Bacon, and other processed meats like it, contain lots of fats and calories which can impact our heart health, expand your waistline, and even increase our risk of cancer.

Healthy fats come from foods that contain polyunsaturated or monounsaturated fats, like olive oil, fish, walnuts, soy, flax seeds and canola oil. While these fats and oils contain a lot of calories, we do need the fatty acids they provide. Unfortunately, there are a lot of unhealthy fats to be aware of. Saturated fats, found in some stick margarines, baked goods and processed foods, are very bad for our health.

### Good Nutrition Means Good Health

A healthy diet will give our body the right amount of energy, enough raw materials and all of the "little helpers" we need to stay healthy. Good nutrition will also provide phytochemicals and antioxidants that will help keep us feeling young, looking great, and perhaps even disease-free. A bad diet will give us too many or too few calories, not enough vitamins and minerals, and will actually make us need more of the antioxidants that we aren't getting.

**Good nutrition is the foundation for good health.**

**Eat Healthy & Be Healthy**