



GOOD NUTRITION FOR A HEALTHY BODY AND MIND

Good nutrition and healthy eating is essential for your well-being. A balanced, healthy diet can help improve health-related conditions and help you maintain a weight that is healthy for your height. Good food choices at meal times not only fuel your body physically but also keep you alert and less likely to feel hungry between meals.

Food provides the energy our bodies need to function and survive. Specific vitamins and minerals are needed to repair and rejuvenate cells and keep organs and systems functioning optimally.

Poor nutrition can have a big impact on your health, both current and long-term. Wrong food choices at certain times of day can leave you feeling sluggish. Refined carbohydrates and sugary foods may give you an instant pep-up as your blood sugar levels rise, but when this drop off, you'll feel less energised.

Over time poor nutrition can lead to high blood pressure, high cholesterol, weight gain, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and increase your risk for stroke and heart disease. Optional nutrition also strengthens your immune system which helps fight illness.

Research shows that nutrients also affect the brain. Vitamins in the 'B' group,

omega 3 fatty acids and proteins are essential for good brain development and boost mental efficiency. Together with antioxidants, they help you cope with stress and the demands of a busy lifestyle.

Healthy meal times

A balanced diet is one that contains foods from all food groups and in the correct portion sizes. It could be as simple as eating less processed foods and more fresh fruit and vegetables and making smart choices for mid-morning and mid-afternoon snacks.



Breakfast

Never skip breakfast. It is essential to have something healthy to eat in the morning to provide fuel for your body at the start of the day. Proteins are essential for good brain function and coupled with a small portion of carbohydrates, will give a boost of glucose energy. Consider

whole wheat toast and a scrambled or poached egg; yoghurt with muesli or fruit or a bowl of oats with a little milk.



Lunch

Always take your lunch break at work. Not only does your body need food for fuel, but your mind also needs to relax. This break in the workday can help you cope with stress and help you refocus as your return to your work. If you pack a lunch for work, consider the healthy plate guideline (see the box) and choices from all the food groups.

Include a portion of lean protein like fish fingers, chicken, tuna or sardines; a portion of dairy like yogurt, cheese or a boiled egg and a carbohydrate like whole-wheat bread, low-GI crackers or a baked potato. Fruit and vegetables (raw or cooked) should also be included for a total of five portions per day.



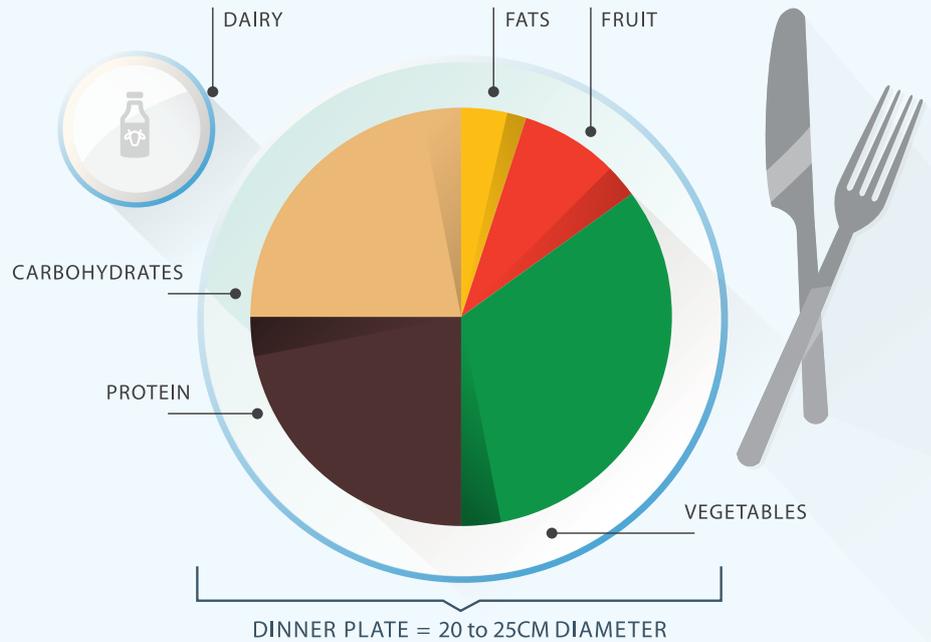
Healthy plate guide

Dinner

Choose foods according to the healthy plate guideline. Avoid having your last meal very late at night. You should eat about two hours before you go to bed. A good night's sleep is also part of a healthy lifestyle, so avoid caffeine drinks about three hours before bed.

Snack options

You can also enjoy a healthy snack between meals to maintain blood sugar levels. If you usually choose a high kilojoule chocolate bar or reach for a bag of chips, make a smarter choice – a tub of low fat yogurt, a handful of nuts or dried fruit, or vegetables like cucumber, tomatoes or pickled onions. Food rich in antioxidants make great snack foods – raisins, plums, dates, red kidney beans, chopped broccoli, strawberries and sunflower seeds.



Healthy food choices

Use the traffic light to make better food choices for your health and well-being.



STOP - Red options

These foods should only be eaten occasionally. They offer the body very little in terms of nutrition and are high in fat, sugar and/or salt. Examples are cakes and other confectionary, refined/processed carbohydrates, pies, crisps, hot chips, chocolate bars, white bread, ice cream, fatty meats, sweets and sugar-loaded carbonated cold drinks and cereals. Always stop and consider a healthier option before choosing foods from the 'red' group.

CAUTION - Yellow options

These foods are beneficial in terms of nutrition but must be eaten in moderation as they are higher in energy and/or contain added sugar and/or unhealthy fats. These include cereal/energy bars, full fat dairy products including butter, fruit juice, chicken and meat (with skin or visible fat), brown bread or salted nuts.

GO - Green options

These are healthy food choices you should make most of the time. Fruit and vegetables make up the bulk of this group and provide our bodies with vitamins and minerals needed for good health. 'Green' options requires no or very little processing and are low in sugar and unhealthy fats but high in fibre. These include whole grains (whole-wheat bread or pasta, oats), low-fat dairy, eggs, lean meats and legumes.

Wise up on water

Water keeps you hydrated and flushes toxins out of your system. Drink between one and a half to two litres of water throughout the day

