

Food and guidelines for healthy eating

Rate your plate

Use the following table together with the tables showing serving sizes and serving distributions to plan your diet. Distribute the foods that you eat throughout the day. Then follow the plan you have developed. Use the sample menu as a guide. Don't skip any meals. Healthy snacks can be eaten in-between meals if desired. Keep track of your eating throughout the day using the checklist.

Remember to choose foods from all the food groups especially from the EAT MORE OF choices.

Answer the questions according to your present eating habits
Do you eat (or drink) ... Answer yes, no or sometimes
at least 3 meals a day?
breakfast everyday?
at least 6 servings from the bread, cereals, rice & pasta group everyday?
whole grain foods regularly?
at least 3 different kinds of vegetables everyday?
dark green leafy vegetables, like spinach, mustard and collard greens every other day?
yellow vegetables, like carrots, sweet potatoes, pumpkin every other day?
at least 2 kinds of whole fruit or fruit juice (200ml)?
citrus fruit or any other high vitamin C food (e.g. strawberries, guava, paw-paw, tomatoes, broccoli, peppers, potato, cabbage) everyday?
at least 2 servings of lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dry beans, or nuts?
at least 2 - 3 servings of milk (1 cup) or other dairy products?
6- 8 glasses of water
a wide variety of foods?
Do you?
cut the visible fat off food before cooking e.g. the skin on chicken or fish?
eat red meat >3 times per week?
use low fat / fat free dairy products?

Ideally you should answer yes to these questions, so get **FEEDBACK** below

Rate your plate...Feedback

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Meals
It is wise to distribute your food intake throughout the day, with emphasis on a variety of foods. This is done easily over 3 or more meals/snacks.
Breakfast?
Don't miss breakfast. A nutritious breakfast helps to provide your body with the nutrients and energy it needs to start the day. It helps to improve concentration and enhance mental performance. A good breakfast may reduce eating on impulse or binge eating later in the day.
At least 6 servings from the bread, cereals, rice & pasta group?
This group primarily provides energy in the form of complex carbohydrates, and are good sources of fibre, vitamins, and minerals, and are also low in fat. Grain products should provide the largest share of calories eaten. Choose primarily whole-grain breads and cereals. Whole grains provide complex carbohydrate and tend to have more nutrients and fibre than refined grains. Eating plenty of whole grains may reduce your risk of heart disease.
At least 3 different kinds of vegetables?
Eating a wide variety of foods from the various food groups increases your likelihood of consuming sufficient nutrients as the food complement each other with regards to nutrient content, thus curbing the possibility of any deficiency diseases. Although there's no single "super" food to prevent or cure cancer, scientists know fruit and vegetables have some protective effect against this and other diseases. Research has shown that people who eat TOO LITTLE fruits and vegetables have higher rates of cancer than those who EAT AT LEAST 5 OR MORE PORTIONS A DAY .
A dark green leafy vegetable, like spinach, mustard and collard greens etc.?
Dark-green vegetables provide: Vitamins A and vitamin C, riboflavin, folic acid, iron, calcium, magnesium, potassium. Examples: Beet greens, broccoli, collard greens, endive, escarole, kale, mustard greens, romaine lettuce, spinach, turnip greens, watercress.
A yellow vegetable, like carrots, sweet potatoes, pumpkin etc.?
Deep yellow vegetables provide: Beta carotene. Examples: Carrots, pumpkins, sweet potatoes, winter squash
At least 2 kinds of whole fruit or fruit juice (200ml)?
Fruits add flavour and variety to meals. They are low in fat and calories and help protect your body from heart disease and cancer. Eat a variety of fruit including those high vitamin C (citrus, melons, berries). Although there's no single 'super' food to prevent or cure cancer, scientists know fruit and vegetables have some protective effect against this and other diseases. (SEE ABOVE)
Citrus fruit or any high vitamin C foods?

Citrus fruit provides vitamin C, folate, dietary fibre, potassium. Citrus fruits, in particular oranges, also supply the B vitamin folate and vitamin B6, which have been shown to reduce heart disease risk. Vitamin C is important as it has antioxidant properties, helps in synthesis of collagen, healing of wounds, promotes resistance to infection, increases absorption of iron from meals etc.

At least 2 servings of lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dry beans, or nuts?

To provide protein (Primary function is the growth, repair and maintenance of body tissue), phosphorous, vitamin B6, vitamin B12, iron, niacin, thiamin and magnesium. Primary function is the growth, repair and maintenance of body tissue

At least 2 - 3 servings of milk (1 cup) or other dairy products?

To provide calcium, riboflavin, protein and vitamin B12. Fortified dairy products also provide vitamin D and vitamin A.

6 - 8 glasses of fluids (preferably water)

The human body is made up of 50% to 70% water. Therefore enough fluid is needed to maintain a balance of water in the body.

Water is important as it has many vital roles in the body.

- Water helps to regulate body temperature.
- Water serves as the body's transportation system. Water transports nutrients throughout the body and is used for waste removal.
- Lubrication. Water acts as a lubricant around joints, and acts to provide a protective layer around the body's tissues to guard against shock.
- Water is involved in many biochemical reactions

Have you eaten a wide variety of foods?

No single food type or food group provides all the nutrients your body requires. Eating a wide variety of foods from the various food groups increases your likelihood of consuming sufficient nutrients as the food compliment each other with regards to nutrient content. It can help your to recognise your taste preferences and food habits without forfeiting your health.

Do you cut visible fat off food before cooking e.g. the skin on chicken or fish?

A diet high in fat, mainly saturated fat, found primarily in animal products increases your risk of heart disease by raising your blood cholesterol. Removing any visible fat from food for a lower intake of fat to reduce your risk of heart disease, which would also reduce your overall energy intake.

Do you eat red meat >3 times per week?

Red meat generally has a higher fat content than fish and chicken, so by eating less red meat one can easily reduce the intake of fat, especially saturated fat.

Do you use low fat / fat free dairy products?

A diet high in fat, mainly saturated fat, found primarily in animal products increases your risk of heart disease by raising your blood cholesterol. Using low fat/ fat free dairy products will lower your intake of fat and reduce your risk of heart disease, obesity and other diseases of lifestyle.

For further, personalized and more detailed information, please contact a dietitian registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa. References from the scientific literature used to compile this document are available on request.

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