



# HEALTHY EATING

A WELL-BALANCED DIET PROVIDES ALL OF THE ENERGY YOU NEED TO KEEP ACTIVE THROUGHOUT THE DAY.



**THE FOODS WE EAT HAVE BIG EFFECTS ON OUR HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE. THERE'S NO SINGLE TYPE OF FOOD THAT CAN PROVIDE ALL THE NUTRIENTS A HUMAN BODY NEEDS – SO IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE EAT A WIDE RANGE OF FOODS. PROPER NUTRITION, ALONG WITH ADEQUATE REST AND SLEEP, REGULAR EXERCISE, AND GOOD HYGIENE, CAN HELP US TO LEAD A HEALTHY AND HAPPY LIFE.**

### **Key facts**

- Healthy eating helps to protect against malnutrition and non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and cancer.
- Unhealthy eating and lack of physical activity are leading global risks to health.
- Switching to healthy eating does not have to mean all or nothing. You do not have to eliminate the foods you enjoy, or change everything all at once. Just make a few small changes at a time.

### **Why is healthy eating important?**

- A well-balanced diet provides all of the energy you need to keep active throughout the day. It also provides the nutrients you need for growth and repair, to help you stay strong and healthy, and to help to prevent diet-related illnesses, such as some cancers.
- Deficiencies in some key nutrients – such as vitamins A, B, C and E, and zinc, iron and selenium – can weaken parts of your immune system.
- Maintaining a healthy weight and healthy eating can help to reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.
- A healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy can help to reduce the risk of heart disease.



- Too much salt and saturated fats in your diet can create high blood pressure and cholesterol.
- Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium. Make sure your body gets vitamin D from being in the sun, and by eating plenty of oily fish and fortified cereals.



## How much do I need to eat?

A healthy diet should provide the right amount of energy (calories) from food and drink to maintain energy balance – where the calories taken in by the body are equal to the calories it uses.

On average, women need around 2,000 calories a day, and men around 2,500 calories. But it's not just about counting calories. We need to eat the right types of food and in the right proportions for good health.

- **Moderation is very important.** It means eating only as much food as your body needs. However, it doesn't mean eliminating the foods you love. You should feel satisfied at the end of a meal, but not over-full.
- **Try not to think of certain foods as off-limits.** When you ban certain foods, it is natural to want those foods more, and then feel like a failure if you give in to temptation. Start by reducing portion sizes of unhealthy foods and eating them less often.
- **Think smaller portions.** By serving your meals on smaller plates or in bowls, you can trick your brain into thinking it's a larger portion. If you do not feel satisfied at the end of a meal, add more leafy greens, or round off the meal with fruit.
- **Take your time.** It is important to slow down and think about food as nourishment, rather than just something to gulp down in a break.
- **Eat with others whenever possible.** Eating alone, especially in front of the TV or computer, often leads to mindless overeating.
- **Control emotional (comfort) eating.** We do not always eat just to satisfy hunger. Many of us also turn to food to relieve stress. Tips to help control this include distracting yourself with a healthier behaviour, or managing your stress through breathing exercises or yoga.

## **Practical tips for healthy eating**

- Never skip breakfast. A healthy breakfast high in fibre and low in fat, sugar and salt can form part of a balanced diet.
- Starchy carbohydrates (including potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and cereals) should make up just over a third of the food you eat.
- Eat at least five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day (fresh, frozen, canned, dried or juiced), as they are low in calories and high in nutrients.
- Fish is a good source of protein, vitamins and minerals. Aim to eat at least two portions of fish a week, including at least one portion of oily fish, which are high in omega-3 fats and help prevent heart disease. Oily fish include salmon, trout, herring, sardines and mackerel.
- Avoid packaged and processed foods, as they often contain large amounts of sugar, salt or unhealthy fats.
- Cut down on saturated fat, as it can increase cholesterol in the blood and the risk of heart disease. This is found in many foods, including fatty cuts of meat, sausages, butter, cheese, and processed food. When you have meat, choose lean cuts and cut off any visible fat.
- Watch your salt intake. Keeping it to less than 5g per day helps to prevent hypertension, and reduces the risk of heart disease and stroke in adults. Even if you do not add salt to your food, you may still be eating too much.
- Cut down on sugar. Regularly consuming foods and drinks high in sugar increases your risk of obesity and tooth decay.
- Drink plenty of water. Water helps flush our systems of waste products and prevents dehydration, which causes tiredness, low energy, and headaches. Drink six to eight glasses every day. All non-alcoholic drinks count, but water, lower-fat milk and low-sugar drinks, tea and coffee are healthier choices.



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