

A healthy diet

FACT

A healthy diet is important because it:

- keeps the body and mind healthy
- gives the body energy to be active and function well
- helps the body to grow and repair itself
- helps the body to fight infections and illness
- makes children grow well
- makes pregnant women produce healthy babies.

A healthy diet has a variety of foods from different food groups

Staple foods

Cereals: e.g. maize/cornmeal, millet, sorghum, wheat flour, rice

Starchy roots: e.g. potato, sweet potato, yam, fresh cassava, cassava flour, plantain

Legumes, oilseeds and nuts

Legumes: e.g. cowpea, pigeon pea, kidney bean, lentil, chickpea, groundnut

Oilseeds: e.g. soybean, pumpkin, sunflower seed, sesame, melon seed

Nuts: e.g. chestnut, walnut, hazelnut, macadamia, almonds

Vegetables and fruits

Vegetables: e.g. tomato, pumpkin, carrot, spinach and other leaves, orange sweet potato, sweet pepper, eggplant

Fruits: e.g. mango, pawpaw, passion fruit, orange, pineapple, banana, dates

Animal foods

Meat, offal, poultry and fish: e.g. beef, goat, sheep, pork, liver and other offal, chicken, fresh or dried or canned fish

Milk, eggs and dairy products: e.g. fresh cow milk, fresh goat milk, eggs, curds, yoghurt, cheese

Fats and oils

Fats: e.g. butter, margarine, fat from meat, ghee

Oils: e.g. coconut oil, sunflower oil, groundnut oil, red palm oil, maize oil, oilseeds

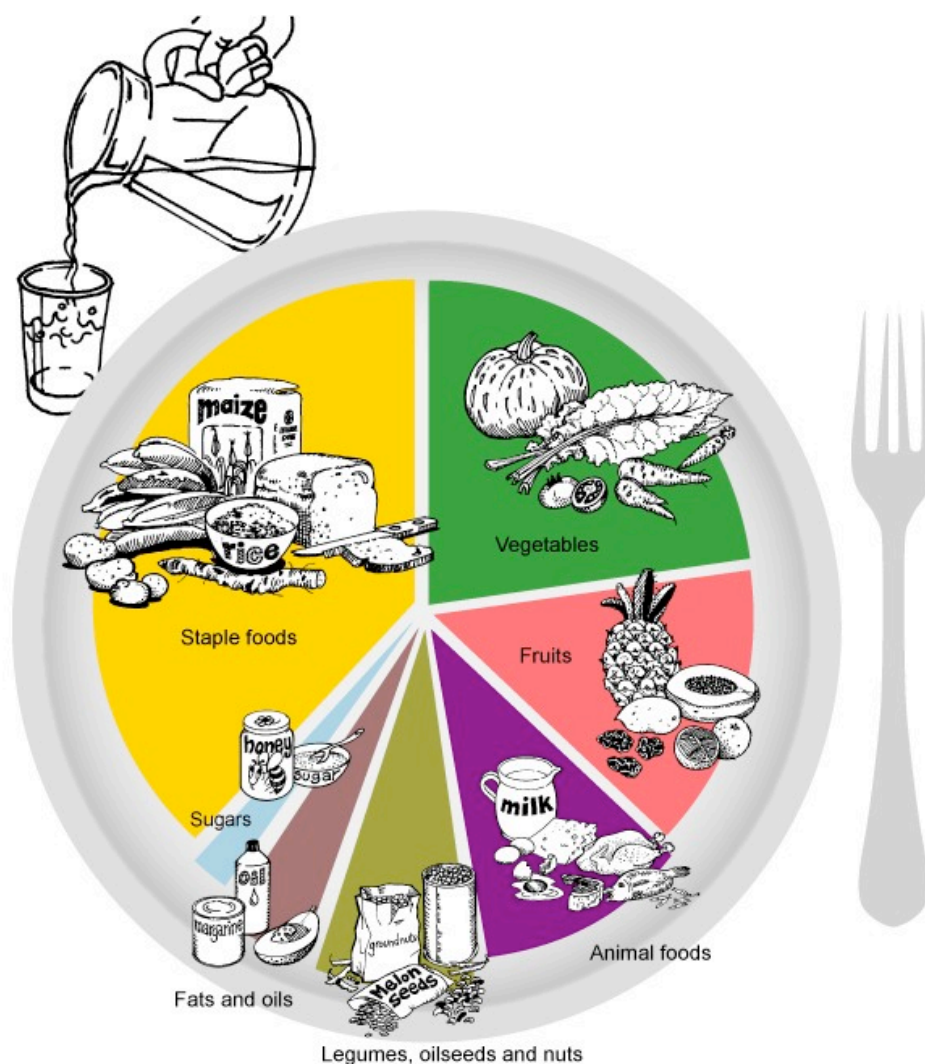
Sugars

e.g. sugar cane, honey, jam

Sugar can improve the energy content and taste of foods, but eating sugary foods (like sweets, candies, sodas, jam, sweet cakes, biscuits) regularly and in large amount is not healthy.

ACT**Eat a variety of foods in the right proportions**

Too much as well as too little food is bad for your body. A healthy, balanced diet has the right proportions of good quality foods.



The plate shows the proportions of the different food groups you should eat during the day. Make sure you have a total of at least 2-3 meals per day.

- ❖ **Staples** are the biggest portion of the plate. They should be the main component of your diet.
- ❖ **Vegetables and fruits** are about one third of the plate. Have plenty of them, at least 5 a day, ideally different ones. Have them with your meals and as snacks in between meals.
- ❖ **Meat, eggs, fish, dairy products, legumes and oilseeds** make up a smaller part of the plate. Every day you should eat at least ONE of these:
 - an animal product (e.g. meat, poultry, offal, milk, dairy products)
 - or fish
 - or legumes.
- ❖ **Fats and oils** are a small part of the plate. Add them to vegetables and meals in small amounts (e.g. 3-4 tablespoons per day per person).

- ❖ **Sugars** and sugary foods are the smallest part of the plate. Eat them only in moderation.
- ❖ Drink plenty of **water** (e.g. 8 cups a day).
- ❖ **Breast milk is the best food for babies under 6 months.**

Get the best from your food

- ❖ Eat fruits with every meal to improve the iron absorption (see Fact Sheet 5).
- ❖ Add a little fat (oil or butter) to increase absorption of vitamins (e.g. vitamin A).
- ❖ Use iodised salt to get enough iodine. Do not use more than 1 teaspoon per person per day (see Fact Sheet 7).
- ❖ Do not drink tea or coffee until 1-2 hours after a meal because it will reduce the iron absorption (see Fact Sheet 5).

Eat a colourful diet

A healthy diet has a lot of colours. Especially colourful are vegetables and fruits.

- red:** e.g. tomato, red pepper, red plums, red watermelon, beets
- orange:** e.g. carrots, mangoes, oranges, papaya, pumpkin, sweet potato
- yellow:** e.g. corn, grapefruit, lemon, pineapple, yellow bell pepper
- green:** e.g. avocados, green beans, kale, kiwi, leeks, peas, spinach
- white:** e.g. bananas, garlic, potatoes

Have two or three meals a day and snacks in between

Healthy snacks are e.g. fruits, vegetables, boiled eggs, sour milk, bread, sweet potatoes, boiled or roasted maize cobs, fried fish, chapatis, bean cakes, nuts and oilseeds.

OTHER IMPORTANT TIPS

WARNING! Do not drink alcohol regularly and/or in large amounts. It is not part of a healthy diet.