**Table of Contents**

**Table of Figures**

**Table of Tables**

What is good health?

* Is good health just that moment when we are free of illness?
* Does what we eat affect our health?
* Does our attitude to life affect our health? If we are generally happy, are we healthy too?
* What about stress or worries – does this affect our health?

The short answer to all these is “Yes”, but there is much more to good health.

Being healthy is a combination of many aspects of health:

* Physical health – If we eat a well-balanced diet, get sufficient sleep & exercise regularly, (gardening, walking, sport or gym) we will keep the physical side of the body in good condition and we will be less likely to get sick.
* Mental health – It has been shown that if we maintain a positive mental attitude about all aspects of our life, our general health will benefit.
* Spiritual health – The positive benefits of a strong faith or spiritual belief under pins good moral values, compassion, gratitude, and confidence and our health will benefit as a result.
* Social health – The value of being able to meet friends and family regularly; being part of groups or clubs to expand interests or hobbies like sport, dancing, sewing, music in all its forms, reading, handcrafts and many others; or being part of organisations who assist others in need, so that we give of ourselves to help others less fortunate, all promote in us a feeling of self-satisfaction and accomplishment, as well as relaxation.
* Environmental health – Living in an area, which is neat, clean, with shelter from severe weather, and free of pollution, helps to contribute towards good health.

All these factors have an influence on each one of us every day of our lives. When there is a harmonious balance of the factors listed above, we feel happy and are generally well. However, when some of these factors are negative, it influences our health to the point where we become sick.

***It is very important to remember that there is no-one in control of our own health except our self.***

Each of us NEEDS to make informed decisions about our long term and overall health, so that we can live a long and disease free life. We cannot depend on doctors to cure us once we have developed life-threatening diseases that are a direct result of the bad diets that we eat. This means we should become educated and wise about the foods we eat, about simple health issues and about the value of a positive outlook on life.

Why do we eat food?

There are many reasons for eating. Do we eat because we feel really hungry? – or, because our mothers tell us to? - or because meal times occur at certain times of the day? - or because we just love to eat? – or because we are at a celebration?

All these are true, but the real reason why we eat is because the body needs food to keep it functioning properly. The body needs foods for growth, energy, and, most importantly, the maintenance of good health.

So, actually, it is very important that we eat, and that we eat PROPERLY, because if we eat too little food, or too much food, or the wrong choices of food, our bodies will show signs of this imbalance and we will get sick.

Do you ever hear people blaming their food because they constantly feel weak, sick, or tired, or that they cannot sleep? Never.

Do they blame their food because they have High Blood Pressure? Never.

In reality, eating a good basic diet can prevent many serious health problems. Your energy will increase, your immune system will be stronger to ward off illness, you will not become overweight, and you will have a more positive outlook on life.

How does food protect our bodies?

During digestion our food is broken down into nutrients which the body uses to keep itself functioning properly. Nutrients are the smallest particles that foods can be broken down into so that they can be transported in the blood to all parts of the body. There are 5 nutrient groups or food groups and we need to eat foods containing all of them, every day, to maintain our health.

Proteins

These foods are the body builders. They build new cells, tissues, muscles and bones. They also repair damaged & broken cells, tissues, muscles and bones.

Protein foods that come from animals are: Meat (beef, mutton, pork, game), offal (liver, kidneys, brains, lungs), fish, chicken, eggs, milk, cheese, yoghurt, maas.

Proteins that come from vegetables are: Soya beans, sugar beans and all other dried beans, peas and lentils. Sweet potato leaf, cow pea leaf, pumpkin leaf, amaranth, quinoa, lucerne (alfalfa).



Figure : Fish – protein, building block

Carbohydrates

These foods are the energy givers.

They provide the fuel that allows the body to function properly, (e.g. for the heart to beat, for the lungs to breathe) and the energy that the body needs to walk, run, for manual labour, to participate in sport, to sleep, and to think – yes, you need energy to think (for brain function).

Carbohydrates are found in all the starchy and sweet foods: Bread (white or brown), pasta, rice, oats, mealie meal, maltabella, breakfast cereals, samp, mealie rice, barley, potatoes, sweet potatoes, green or yellow mealies, dried beans, peas and lentils, sugar, syrup, jam, sweets, cakes, biscuits, chips, crisps, pizzas, hamburgers.

If we eat too much carbohydrate and the body doesn’t use it, it is turned into fat and stored in the cells of the body, and we become overweight or obese which is dangerous for our health.

Most people eat too much carbohydrate.



Figure : Potatoes – a carbohydrate which gives energy



Figure : Bread – most beloved carb of all

Fats

Small amounts of fats are needed to protect certain organs in the body, keep the skin soft, and to provide the body with Vitamins E, D & K.

Excess fats are quickly stored in the cells, and cause over weight & obesity, which is dangerous for our health. Killer diseases that develop as a result of too much fat in the diet are cancer, diabetes, strokes and heart attack.

Foods containing animal fats are: Butter, egg yolk, milk (full cream, 2% and low fat), all cheese, low fat cheese, buttermilk, maas, meat, sausages, pies, boerewors, chicken, pastries, biscuits, cakes, hamburgers, pizzas, “take away’s”, “fast food”, hot chips, crisps.

Foods containing plant fats or oils are: Margarine, “lite” margarine, sunflower oil, olive oil, olives, avocados, coconut, nuts, peanuts, peanut butter, mayonnaise, dairy creamers, chocolates.



Fibre

The body needs bulk to help move foods through the digestive system quickly. Without this bulk, or roughage, the digestion becomes sluggish and constipation occurs. Toxins build up in the intestines, they are absorbed into the bloodstream and general health deteriorates. For good health one should pass a stool at least ONCE a DAY. Vegetables & fruits supply sufficient fibre necessary for good bowel function.

Fibres are found in: All vegetables and all fruits, whether fresh or dried, all unrefined whole grains like wheat, (brown flour, whole wheat, bran), yellow maize, oats, barley, sorghum, brown rice, dried beans, peas, lentils, nuts, whole wheat pastas, seeds.

Vitamins and mineral salts

Vitamins and mineral salts can also be called micro-nutrients. These are not foods but are in foods, and the body cannot remain healthy without them. All foods that have been processed and refined (e.g. white mealie meal, white flour) are lacking in micro-nutrients. Fresh vegetables, fruit and whole grain cereals are rich in nutrients.

Many of the processed foods that we buy, like margarine, bread and mealie meal, are “fortified” with Vitamins. This means that synthetically manufactured vitamins have been added to the product, because in the processing of these foods, the natural vitamins have been destroyed or removed.

The body needs **Vitamins** every day, so it is important that you eat a variety of foods to get all of them.

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| Vitamin | Needed in the body for | Found in these foods |
| Vitamin A  (Beta Carotene or Retinol) | Helps body resist infection. Boosts immunity. Good eyesight. Keeps lining of nose and lungs healthy. | In the yellow-orange foods: oranges, sweet potato, pumpkin, squash, carrots, pawpaw, apricot, mango, peaches, and also tomato. Green vegetables: spinach, broccoli and black jack leaf. Milk, yoghurt, cheese, liver, egg yolk. |
| Vitamin B1  (Thiamine) | Necessary for healthy nerves. Helps the body to change. Carbohydrates into energy | Spinach, broccoli, pumpkin, potatoes, peas, tomatoes, guavas, grapes, oranges, whole grain cereals, brown rice, liver, chicken, meat, dried beans, peas, lentils, nuts, milk, marmite, potatoes. |
| Vitamin B2  (Riboflavin) | Needed for healthy skin. Helps the body to process protein, carbohydrates & fats | Spinach, broccoli, potatoes, lettuce, asparagus, dried beans, peas & lentils, liver, kidney, meat, chicken, eggs, fish, cheese, yoghurt, whole grain cereals. |
| Vitamin B3  (Niacin or nicotinic acid) | Assists the body to control cholesterol. Necessary for healthy nerves. Keeps skin healthy. Assists the body in the processing of glucose. Promotes good blood circulation. | Potatoes, peas, beans, tomatoes, mango, guava, rice, meat, liver, kidney, chicken, eggs, fish, nuts, peanuts, cheese, dried fruits. |
| Vitamin B5  (Pantothenic acid) | Promotes healthy skin & hair. Necessary for healthy nerves. Necessary for a healthy immune system. | Beans, oranges, eggs, liver, whole grains, peanuts, dried beans, peas & lentils. |
| Vitamin B6  (Pyridoxine) | Necessary for healthy nerves. Formation of red blood cells. Necessary for a healthy immune system. | Peas, broccoli, spinach, green peppers, marrows, leeks, potato, banana, avocado, mango, melon, prunes, raisins, dried beans, peas, lentils, nuts, soya beans, whole grains, milk, fish. |
| Vitamin C  (Ascorbic acid) | Necessary for healthy skin, bones, teeth, muscles, & blood vessels. Helps body to resist infections. Helps wounds, sores, cuts and scrapes to heal. Helps body to absorb iron. | All raw fruits especially oranges & lemons, guava, strawberry, pineapple, kiwifruit, and in broccoli, green pepper, cauliflower, tomatoes, potato, chillies, cabbage, cow pea leaf, black jack leaf, orange flesh, sweet potato, amaranth leaf. |
| Vitamin D  (Cholecalciferol) | Assists the body to absorb calcium & phosphorus to build healthy bones and teeth.  Vitamin D is the only Vitamin that the body can make for itself. It is able to change the sunlight that falls on the skin into Vitamin D. | Found in the foods containing fats – liver, fish liver oil, oily fish (sardines, tuna, tinned salmon), egg yolk, full cream (fat) milk & cheese. |
| Vitamin E  (Tocopherol) | Protects cells against damage from pollution. Helps body to resist infection. | Cow pea leaf, black jack leaf, amaranth leaf, broccoli, spinach, peas, asparagus, leeks, tomato, avocado, mango, dried beans, peas & lentils, nuts, seeds, vegetable oils, egg yolk, whole grains. |
| Vitamin K  (Menadione) | Assists in the clotting of blood. | All green vegetables, potato, liver, egg. |

There are many mineral salts that the body needs for good health.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Mineral | Use in the body | Found in these foods |
| Calcium | For growth & maintenance of healthy bones & teeth.  Essential for healthy nerves.  Essential for blood clotting.  Essential for the muscles. | Milk, cheese, yoghurt, maas, tinned fish, grains. |
| Magnesium | For healthy bones & teeth.  Essential for healthy nerves.  Essential for the muscles. | Green vegetables, whole grains, whole wheat bread, brown bread, milk, cheese, yoghurt, maas, eggs, nuts, dried beans, peas & lentils, peanuts. |
| Phosphorus | For healthy bones & teeth.  Essential for the muscles.  Helps the body to store energy in the cells. | Meat, milk, cheese, yoghurt, maas, dried beans, peas & lentils. |
| Potassium | Essential for muscles & nerves.  Used for the control of water (fluid) in the body. | Fresh fruit, fresh vegetables, milk, cheese, yoghurt, maas, meat, grains, whole wheat bread, tea, coffee. |
| Iron | Keeps the blood cells healthy. | Meat, liver, kidneys, lungs, dried beans, peas & lentils, raisins, dried apricots, nuts, pumpkin leaf, cow pea leaf, amaranth leaf, black jack leaf. |

There are other minerals that are used by the body in very small quantities to assist with storing fats, for boosting the immune system, for red blood cell health, for strong teeth, hair & skin, and which are needed to promote growth and to maintain good health. These are called trace elements and they are copper, iodine, manganese, sulphur, zinc, fluoride, chromium and selenium. They are found in all the foods mentioned.

If the body becomes deficient (lacking) in vitamins and mineral salts, serious diseases develop.

Water

Water is not a nutrient but without it the body cannot function. You can survive without food for many days, but you cannot survive without water. All the body processes are carried out with the help of water, and all the wastes and toxins our body produces are eliminated along with water. Try, therefore to drink 6-8 glasses of clean, pure water every day.

Knowledge is power!

Now that you understand more about food, it is must be obvious to you that in order to keep the body healthy and functioning at its best, it is necessary to eat some food from each of the food groups every day.

This is why we hear people talk about a balanced diet.

A balanced diet ensures that foods from each food group are present in the diet every day.

You should always aim to eat small quantities of a wide variety of foods each day.

Try not to eat the same types of foods every day, week after week – you will start to suffer from malnutrition.

Grow your own!

The freshest vegetables, fruit and berries are grown in your own home garden. Start your own organic garden NOW, using good compost and natural, not synthetic (chemical) fertilisers. Do not use poisonous sprays to kill pests or to prevent plant diseases.

You will be surprised at the great tasting food you can produce, and because it is so fresh you will be eating really superior quality food rich in essential nutrients that your body needs.



Grow the herbs we will talk about in this booklet in-between your rows of vegetables. They will then be available for your use at all times.

Growing herbs with vegetables is known as companion planting, which helps to keep your vegetables healthy - free of diseases and free of pests.

*Source:*  
Help yourself to Health!  
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