

A guide to healthy eating

61

This information pamphlet is one of a series giving advice to South Africans over the age of 7 years about healthy food choices for healthy living. Following the advice in these pamphlets will help us to make wise food choices for ourselves and our families' health.

Many South Africans are not as healthy as they could be. Some South Africans, especially children, are underweight, do not grow properly and get sick easily. This is because they eat too little food or do not eat enough variety of foods to give them all the nutrients their bodies need. Others are overweight, which can lead to serious illnesses such as diabetes mellitus, heart disease, hypertension and stroke. This is because these people eat too much food, especially those too high in fat, salt and/or sugar; and also because they do not do enough physical activity.



What should I eat to be healthy?

South African nutrition experts have developed guidelines to provide us and our families with advice on how to eat healthily.

When choosing foods and planning meals for ourselves and our families it is important to apply these guidelines.

It is important to eat different types of food, because one type of food does not contain all the nutrients we need. To eat wisely means to eat different types of food that contain all the nutrients our bodies need.

The best way to ensure that we obtain all of the nutrients we need is to eat three meals a day and to eat a variety of foods at these meals. Young children should have extra food between meals because their stomachs are smaller.

When planning good mixed meals, these are the guidelines we should use:

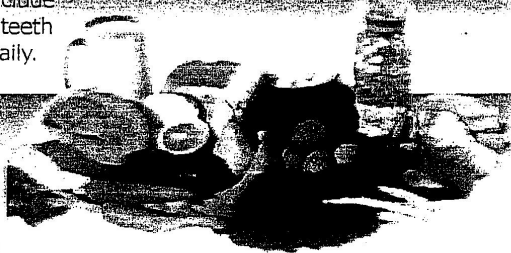
Choose a starchy food such as maize meal, bread, rice, potatoes or any other starchy foods that are available and affordable. Starchy foods are rich sources of carbohydrates which supply the body with energy. Starchy foods should make up the main part of the meal, and other food should be served with them to provide extra nutrients. We should also ensure that we make fortified maize meal and/or fortified bread part of our family's daily meals.

Add other foods to the starchy food. Examples of these are found in the following three guidelines.



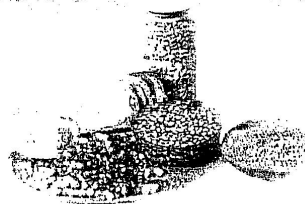
Chicken, fish, meat, milk or eggs could be eaten daily

These foods are good sources of many nutrients. These include protein and minerals to build our muscles, our bones, our teeth and our blood. We can eat small portions of these foods daily.



Vegetables and fruit supply lots of vitamins and minerals and other substances that are good for our health. We should eat at least 5 portions of vegetables and/or fruits a day. Add vegetables to the starchy food.

These foods are rich sources of protein - needed to build, repair and maintain our body's muscles and tissues. Eat these foods at least three times a week with starchy foods.



Other Guidelines

Add very little or no salt to foods at the table and during cooking. A high intake of salt has been linked with high blood pressure. High blood pressure damages the blood vessels and increases our risk for heart disease and stroke.

An eating pattern, which is high in fat, has been linked with overweight, high cholesterol levels, heart disease, diabetes and certain cancers. Therefore, we should eat fats sparingly.

Water helps with the digestion and absorption of food and with the removal of waste products. Drinking too little water can lead to concentrated urine, reduced sweating, constipation, and oedema or water retention. Water from taps is usually safe, but rather boil and cool water from a well, river or borehole before drinking it.



Alcohol is not an essential food for good health. A sensible limit is no more than two standard drinks per day for a woman and no more than three standard drinks a day for men. One standard drink is one can of beer (small) or one glass of wine (half a cup). Children, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and people who plan to drive or operate heavy machinery should not drink alcohol.

Food and drinks containing sugar should not be taken instead of mixed meals, but can be enjoyed in small amounts on special occasions or as a treat after a mixed meal.

Being active and eating healthily are the best ways to prevent us from gaining weight, or developing osteoporosis, high cholesterol, high blood pressure or diabetes.

Examples of good mixed meals:

Breakfast

Soft Porridge with
Milk/Sour milk/Maas
Tea with milk
Banana

Lunch

Brown bread sandwiches with pilchards
Margarine, thinly spread
Tea or coffee with milk
Orange

Supper

Samp and beans
Stewed tomato-and-onion
Spinach
Pumpkin

Brown Bread
Margarine, thinly spread
Jam
Tea with milk
Apple

Brown bread sandwiches with
baked beans
Margarine, thinly spread
Banana
Tea or coffee with milk

Stiff maize-meal porridge
Chicken stew with carrots
Green beans
Cooked cabbage

Remember to drink between 6 and 8 glasses of clean, safe water per day

For more information, contact:

The Department of Health: Directorate Nutrition

Private Bag x029 Pretoria 0001. Tel: 011 311 9000. Fax: 011 311 3111



Eat dry beans, split peas, lentils and soya regularly

To stay healthy, we should try to eat healthy. We should eat a variety of foods so that our bodies get everything they need. Dry beans, split peas, lentils and soya are rich sources of protein and can be eaten with other foods such as starchy foods and vegetables.

We can eat them instead of meat and still be healthy.

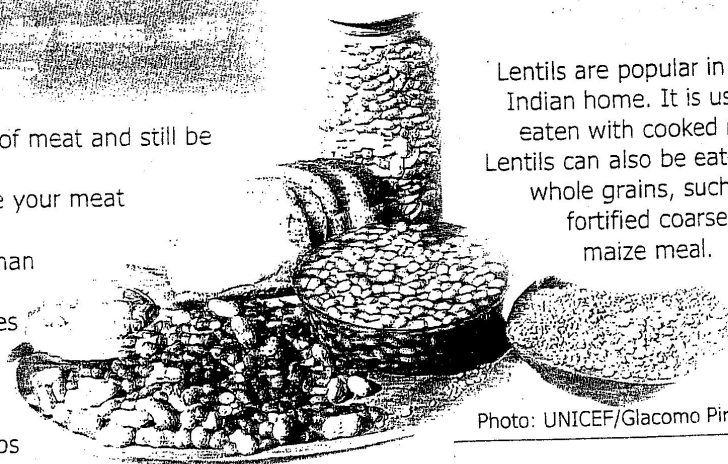
We can use them to make your meat go further.

They are much cheaper than meat.

They help prevent diseases such as heart disease and cancer.

They help to make our bowels work properly (helps us to go to the toilet regularly).

They contain very little fat, which is healthy for us.



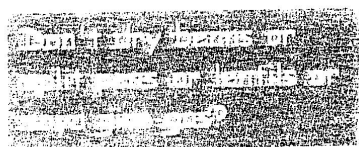
Lentils are popular in every Indian home. It is usually eaten with cooked rice. Lentils can also be eaten with whole grains, such as fortified coarse maize meal.

Photo: UNICEF/Giacomo Pirozzi

Regularly means at least three times a week.

If you never eat meat, fish, chicken, eggs or milk, you should try to eat dry beans or split peas or lentils or soya every day.

Eat them on the days that you don't eat meat.



Yes, they do, especially if you are not used to eating them. If you never eat these foods, don't start eating them every day straight away. First eat them once a week, then twice a week and then three times a week.

The gas will then stop. Your body gets used to these dry foods.



Bean and fish cakes

(4 portions)

1 cup cooked or 1 tin (410g)

brown beans

1 tin (410g) pilchards

½ cup cake flour

1 small onion, grated

1 egg beaten

Salt and pepper to taste

2 table spoons parsley

2 teaspoons Worcester sauce

2 to 3 table spoons of sunflower oil for shallow frying.

Method:

Mash the beans and the pilchards

Mix the beans and pilchards with the flour and the onion

Mix the rest of the ingredients, into the beans mixture

Form flat fish cakes

Fry in heated oil until golden brown and done.

Drain fish cakes on brown paper

Serve together with starchy foods and vegetables.

Dry beans, lentils and peas should be cooked very well before eating. Once cooked, beans can be kept in a covered container in the refrigerator for up to five (5) days. If you don't have a refrigerator, don't keep them longer than one (1) day.

How to cook dry beans, split peas, and lentils?

Before cooking, pick through the beans and remove any stones and broken beans.

Soak overnight in water to soften the beans.

or

Put the beans in a large pot and cover with fresh water. Water should be three to six times the amount of beans.

Bring water to the boil and then turn off the heat. Leave the beans for one to two hours or until you want to cook them.

When starting to cook, don't add salt. It will make the beans dry. Only add a little salt when the beans are soft.

Simmer beans slowly. If they cook too fast the skins will break.

Lentils and black-eyed beans can be cooked straight from the packet.



Make dry beans, split peas, lentils and soya tasty to eat

Try beans in a salad.

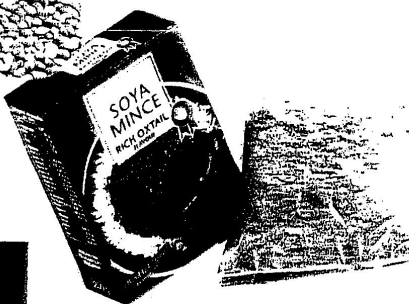
Include beans, peas and lentils in soups or pasta dishes or rice dishes. Beans absorb the flavour of spices and herbs, making them fun and tasty to eat.

Beans need a little salt to bring out their true flavour.

Eat beans with chakalaka or with samp.

Use soya mince and dry beans to make mince meat and mince stews go further.

Mix different kinds of dry beans to make a bean salad.



Tip

To save on electricity or fuel when cooking dry beans and lentils, use a hay box.

Make your own hay box.

Take a big cardboard box and fill it with balls of newspaper.

After the beans have cooked for 30 minutes, take the pot with lid from the stove, wrap in a thick towel and place in the hay box.

Pack balls of newspaper around and on top of the pot. You can also use cushions or blankets instead of just newspaper. Leave the pot in the box for about four hours.



How much do you know?

How often do you and your family eat dry beans, split peas, lentils or soya?

Which other foods do you eat with eat dry beans, split peas, lentils or soya?

What does 'eating regularly' mean to you?

What do you think the message of this pamphlet is?



For more information, contact:

The Department of Health; Directorate Nutrition; Private bag x828; Pretoria, 0001

Tel 012 312 0000; Fax 012 312 3112

Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits every day

63

Vegetables and fruits are foods that we should eat every day. They have lots of nutrients (especially vitamins and minerals) that are good for our health. Vegetables and fruit also add colour and variety to our meals. Unfortunately, most South Africans do not eat enough vegetables and fruit and therefore do not get all the vitamins and minerals they need.

Why should we eat plenty of vegetables and fruit?

Vegetables and fruit are important to

Help our eyesight

Help our bodies to fight against illnesses like colds, diarrhoea and tuberculosis.

Help our bowels to work properly (going to the toilet easily).

Help to protect our bodies against illnesses such as heart disease, stroke, and certain types of cancer.



What does 'plenty' mean?

Plenty means that you should eat at least 5 portions of vegetables and fruits every day. For example:

Eat a fruit with breakfast.

Add raw vegetables such as carrots or shredded cabbage to your lunch. You can also eat a fresh fruit or fresh vegetables as a snack in between meals.

Eat a yellow vegetable (carrots, pumpkin, squash) and a green vegetable (wild spinach, spinach, cabbage, green beans) with your main meal of the day.

Eat a fruit instead of a pudding after dinner.



All photos by UNICEF/Giacomo Pirozzi

What do the words mean?

Nutrients

Something that provides nourishment.

Minerals

Nutrients which our bodies need to work properly.

Vitamins

Nutrients that are found in foods and which protect our bodies

- Double your normal serving of vegetables
- Add extra vegetables to salads, soups, stir-fries, stews and curries.
- Eat a vegetarian meal (without meat) at least once a week
- Add vegetables to egg dishes (scrambled eggs or omelet).
- You can cook most vegetables in just a few minutes if you boil, steam, stir-fry or microwave them.
- Get children into the habit of eating fruit when they are hungry between meals.

Eat healthy for less

To eat plenty of vegetables and fruits every day costs money. You can be wise and

Buy vegetables and fruit that grow in your area. They are cheaper.

Buy more vegetables if they are cheaper than fruit.

Buy fresh vegetables and fruit as they are the healthiest and cheapest.

Buy wisely. If fresh fruit is very ripe, buy only enough to use right away.

Buy vegetables and fruit which are in season - they are cheaper.

Collect and use wild traditional vegetables and fruit.

Remember to always wash fresh vegetables and fruit before using.



Grow your own vegetables and fruit



If you have a yard and enough water, make your own vegetable garden.

Loosen the soil and work in old leaves and compost. You can start your own compost heap - dig a trench and gradually fill it with raw peels, skins, bones and other green leftovers.

Seed is not very expensive and can give you lots of vegetables at little cost.

Follow the instructions on the seed packages. Don't sow everything at once. Sow with one or two week intervals.

This way you will have fresh vegetables all the time.

Many plants produce their own seeds. Harvest the seed and sow again.

Plant some fruit trees if you have the space.

Water well in the early stages of growing.

If you don't have a yard, you can try to grow vegetables and herbs in pots or black bags.

Mix your vegetables and fruit with starchy foods and protein foods such as beans, lentils, chicken, fish, meat or eggs. Remember to eat a variety of foods.



For more information, contact:

The Department of Health

Directorate Nutrition

Private bag x828, Pretoria, 0001

Tel 012 312 0000, Fax 012 312 3112



- What does the word plenty mean to you?
- Which fruits do you and your family usually eat?
- Which vegetables do you and your family eat often?
- Why is it important to eat plenty of fruits and vegetables every day?

Starchy foods are foods such as
maize (mealie) meal,
bread,
rice,
sorghum (mabella),
samp,
pasta (macaroni, spaghetti),
potatoes,
sweet potatoes,
porridges and
breakfast cereals.

Starchy foods contain some of the nutrients that
our bodies need to stay healthy. Starchy foods are
also sometimes called staple foods.

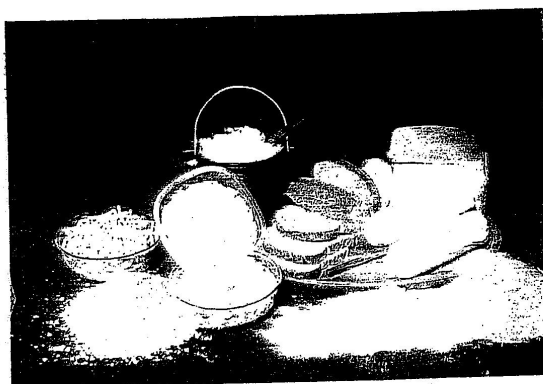
Eating starchy foods makes us feel full.
This means we won't get hungry easily.

Unrefined starchy foods have fibre,
which helps our bowels to function
properly (going to the toilet easily).

Starchy foods are widely available.

Starchy foods are cheaper than animal
foods.

Starchy foods are low in fats, which
make them good for us.



What the words mean

Energy

The power that our bodies need to keep going.

Starch

The part of the food that makes us healthy and gives
us energy.

Staple food

The food that we eat the most, such as bread and maize
meal.

Healthy

To be well and free from illness.

Fibre

Roughage

Fortified foods

Foods that are strengthened with vitamins and minerals.

Mixed meal

A meal with more than one type of food.

Did you know?

Unrefined (coarse) starchy foods
is best for us, for example
coarse maize meal and whole
wheat bread.

All maize meal and white and
brown bread flour (and bread
baked with this flour) are
fortified. This means that even
more nutrients are added to
them.

Soured porridge made from
sorghum or maize meal is good
for children.

Remember to add variety to your
meals by eating other foods with
starchy foods

Micronutrients are vitamins and minerals that people need to keep their minds strong, and their bodies healthy to fight off diseases and have healthy babies. If you do not have enough of even one micronutrient, you will get a deficiency (having too little) and become sick.

Most South Africans do not have enough money to eat enough of a variety of foods to provide all the micronutrients they need. The only way that they can get extra micronutrients is if they eat foods that have been fortified (strengthened).

All maize meal and white and brown bread flour (and bread baked with this flour) are fortified with the following micronutrients: **vitamin A, thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, pyridoxine, folic acid, iron and zinc.**



Starchy foods should be the biggest part of each mixed meal.

You should eat more of the starchy foods than of the other foods in a mixed meal.



Starchy food is not fattening as long as you don't eat too much of it and it is not prepared with lots of fat and sugar. If you do lots of physical activity during the day you need more starchy food than if you are inactive. Starchy food does not give your body everything that it needs. Therefore, mix starchy foods with other foods.

Hints

Other foods that can be mixed with starchy foods are:
Vegetables and fruit,
Dry beans, Soya,
Meat, Fish,
Chicken, Eggs, Milk,
Milk products, such as maas.
Remember to use fat and salt sparingly with these foods.



How much do you know?

What does the word 'starchy' mean to you?
Which starchy foods do you and your family usually eat?
Which other foods do you eat with your starchy foods?
Why do you think starchy foods are healthy?

For more information, contact:

The Department of Health,
Directorate Nutrition,
Private bag x828,
Pretoria, 0001
Tel 012 312 0000, Fax 012 312 3112



Photos: UNICEF/Giacomo Pirozzi
and J de Klerk