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# World of healthy eating



Each culture will have ideas about what constitutes a balanced diet. These will depend upon what is available in the area, what is known to be beneficial and what tastes good.

Aspects of some diets:

	British:	N. India:	Chinese:	Caribbean:	W. African
Staples:	Potatoes Bread	Rice Chappattis	Rice Noodles	Rice Yams Plantain	Yams & Cassava (gari) Plantain
Main protein :	Meat Fish Dairy Products	Meat Fish Cereals Pulses Dairy Products	Cereals Pulses Meat Fish	Fish Chicken Goat Meat Pulses	Meat Stews Chicken Goat Fish
Main fats:	Butter Margarine Lard Vegetable Oils	Ghee Vegetable Oils	Vegetable Oils Lard	Vegetable Oils, especially coconut oil	Vegetable Oils, especially palm oil

## **Chinese Dietary Considerations:**

The traditional Chinese diet very generally is one which is mostly vegetables and grains, with small amounts of everything else. It is therefore generally a healthy diet. Cooked and warm food is preferred as cooking is a form of pre-digestion on the outside of the body. Food should not be too sweet, as excessive sweetness is considered to overwhelm and weaken the spleen. Also food should not be excessively oily or too “damp”. “Dampness” refers to the extent to which different foods generate body fluids. Excessively damp foods are believed to interfere with the digestion.

In Chinese medicine some parts of the body are regarded as yin, and others yang and certain foods are seen to alter the body’s delicate balance, or restore it if it has been disturbed by illness.

Food is categorised in this way, and also described as “heating” or “cooling” foods. “Hot” food is said to stimulate the body system, so that too much of it can push the organs into over production, while “cold” or calming food does the opposite, having a sedative effect on the organs. The ideal is to balance the food in such a way that harmony is maintained. Normal practice is to have a selection of shared dishes with lots of rice.

## **Muslim Diets:**

Islam is as much a way of life as a religion and its regulations affect every aspect of living, including diet and hygiene. Islamic customs prohibit pork products and alcohol and insist on ritual slaughter of meat (sold as Halal meat). The consumption of fish is permitted.

Asian foods tend to be spiced and are usually cooked by frying or stewing. Ghee is used extensively which means the fat content may be high. Curries are cooked for a long time which may destroy folic acid, vitamin B12 and vitamin C.

In vegetarian diets, special attention needs to be paid to the protein content of meals. A wide variety of food containing protein needs to be eaten regularly. Vitamins and minerals of particular concern in Asian diets include vitamin D, B12 and folic acid. Suggestions could include using fortified dried milk, margarine and increased milk and yoghurt consumption.

## **Jewish Dietary Restrictions:**

Jews may not eat pork or pork products, shellfish and fish without fins or scales. All other meat must be kosher (where the throat of the animal is cut quickly and blood allowed to drain, then the meat is salted and steeped in water to remove any remaining blood). For more orthodox Jews, milk and meat must not be used together. Jews fast for 25 hours at the feast of Yom Kippur. In Passover they may not eat food containing yeast.

## **Healthy Eating Tips for African & Caribbean Food:**

Healthy eating is about eating more starchy foods, fruit, vegetables and beans and less fatty, sugary and salty foods.

### **Starchy Foods:**

Rice, ground rice, bread (including hard dough bread), yam, cassava, gari, cereals, plantain, fufu, sweet potato, cornmeal, kenkey, green banana, dumplings, dasheen, potato, breadfruit, cocoyma, pasta.

### **Fruit & Vegetables:**

Pumpkin, tomato, sweetcorn, eggplant, spinach, callaloo, ugu, cho-cho, cabbage, okra, green leaf, okazi, pineapple, guava, banana, pawpaw, mango, melon, strawberries, lime, apple, pear, orange.

***Eat at least 5 portions a day.***

### **Milk & Dairy Foods:**

Cheese, milk, yoghurt, fromage frais.

### **Meat & Alternatives:**

Peas and beans (such as black-eyed and kidney beans), fish, egg, chicken, port, lamb, egusi.

### **Cutting down on fat:**

- Grill, boil, bake, steam or microwave foods without adding fat. Unsaturated oils like corn, sunflower, soya, rapeseed and olive oils are good choices in small amounts
- If using oil, measure the amount with a tablespoon and try to cut down gradually
- Palm and coconut oils are high in saturated fats and should be used only occasionally
- Creamed coconut is high in saturated fat so use it sparingly
- Allow soups and stews to cool slightly after cooking and skim off the fat from the top

## **Cutting down on salt:**

- A diet high in salt may contribute to high blood pressure
- Salt fish, khobi, stockfish, salted mackerel, salt beef, salted pigs tail should be soaked to remove some salt before cooking
- Many all purpose seasonings have salt in them and should be avoided. For example, chicken and meat seasoning, monosodium glutamate, garlic salt, soya sauce and stock cubes. Use different herbs and spices to flavour foods
- Use less salt in cooking and try not to add salt at the table
- Try and eat fewer salty foods such as bacon, ham, cheese, cornbeef, crisps, salted nuts and packet soups

Research shows that there is a higher risk of high blood pressure, diabetes and stroke among people from African and Caribbean communities. The traditional African and Caribbean diets are often healthy, but can be high in fat, sugar and salt.

## **Foods commonly used include:**

- Callaloo – leafy green vegetable
- Cassava – a starchy root that's either sweet or bitter (which is poisonous until cooked)
- Chilli peppers – hot peppers flavour nearly every Caribbean dish
- Fruits – bananas, plantain, passion fruit, limes, mango, papayas, guavas, coconuts
- Legumes – beans and peas are served with rice for a simple dish that's a mainstay of many Caribbean diets
- Okra
- Salt fish

## **Here are some ways to cut down on sugar, oils and fats:**

- Gradually reduce the amount of sugar added to tea and coffee or instead use an artificial sweetener
- Replace fizzy and sweetened drinks with unsweetened, diluted fruit juice or “diet” drinks
- Try to make sure that puddings and ice-cream are only eaten on special occasions
- Cut down on all sweets and chocolates and avoid giving these foods as a reward to young children – fresh and dried fruit make good and nutritious alternatives
- Cut down on biscuits, cakes and pastries especially in-between meals and try fresh fruit instead
- Traditionally, water or lassi are served as drinks at meal times and this habit should be maintained
- Buy tinned fruit in natural juice rather than in syrup
- Use less oil or ghee in cooking. Measure the amount of fat you add with a tablespoon, rather than pouring straight from a container and cut down the total quantity used
- Cut down on deep fried foods such as samosa, pakora, bhaji and chips. Try more steamed dishes
- Avoid snacks – chevda, ganthiya, sev, crisps. Instead try dry-roasted chickpeas, peanuts and pop-corn
- Try making snack dishes with boiled pulses, e.g., chat made with boiled chickpeas and potatoes, chopped onions, spices and lemon juice
- Use butter and margarine in small quantities for spreading



## Healthy eating tips:

- Try to eat pulses and dals more often, sprouted pulses become even more nutritious
- Buy lean cuts of meat whenever possible and trim all visible fats from meat
- Remove skin from chicken and turkey before cooking because of its high fat content
- Mince is often very fatty, to remove the fat, heat the mince and drain off the excess fat
- Eat fish more often: grill, bake, steam or microwave it rather than deep frying
- Include more oily fish in the diet, e.g., herring, mackerel, sardines, tuna, kippers and salmon, they contain vitamins A and D and further help combat heart disease
- Try to cut down on amounts of butter, margarine, ghee and cooking oil
- Grill beefburgers, sausages and kebabs as this helps the fat to drain away
- When making curries, use the minimum amount of oil and fat
- Instead of making curries, use the oven to cook tandoori dishes and for dry roasting meats
- Invest in non-stick or heavy bottom saucepans because they require less oil in cooking and prevent food from sticking or burning
- Try using a pressure cooker or slow cooker as these require very little fat
- Nuts in large quantities are fattening. Try dry roasting them instead of deep frying but limit their consumption

## **Healthy eating advice:**

There are lower fat, lower sugar varieties available, which should be used where possible. Peas and beans, such as black-eyed beans, kidney gungo peas and baked beans are important sources of protein, high in fibre and low in fat. Limit pies, patties, fried fish, tails and trotters as they are high in fat.

As a starchy food, yams are higher in fibre. Cook dumplings, plantain, sweet potatoes and yams without fat, boil or bake in the oven. Evaporated and condensed milk are both high in fat and sugar and should only be used occasionally.

## **Asian Specific Dietary Considerations:**

### Hinduism and Sikhism

Orthodox Hindus and Sikhs are strict vegetarians (not even taking fish or eggs). The cow is seen as sacred and will never be eaten. Some Hindus may eat mutton, poultry, fish and occasionally pork. Milk, yogurt, butter and ghee (clarified butter), are usually acceptable because no killing has been involved. There may however be restrictions on cheese because of the animal rennet used in its production. Vegetarian cheese is an alternative. Many orthodox Hindus and Sikhs will not drink alcohol but there are exceptions to this rule.

## **Asian Healthy Eating Information:**

Have plenty of starchy foods in your diet:

- Eat chapattis and different types of bread made with wholemeal flour or brown flour. Do not sieve the flour to remove the bran – it's good for you
- Try wholemeal bread, rolls, pitta bread
- Try making chapattis without the addition of oil and ghee
- Make rotis or dishes made with other flours such as millet, maize and rice as well as wheat
- Wholegrain breakfast cereals are healthier than those coated with sugar and honey
- Rice, particularly brown rice, is a good choice
- Try making dishes with puffed rice or flaked rice
- Sweet potatoes, cassava, green bananas are good choices
- Whenever possible, cook potatoes with the skin on
- Semolina and cracked wheat are also good sources of fibre
- Use more wholewheat crackers and crispbreads
- Try dishes made with wholewheat pasta and noodles
- Use wholemeal flour for making biscuits and cakes

### **Hints to help a healthy diet:**

- Choose semi-skimmed or skimmed milk rather than full fat milk. Children under the age of two years should continue to have whole milk as the fat which it contains is an important energy and vitamin source
- Try making yoghurt with semi-skimmed milk or buy low fat yoghurt
- Full fat cheese including paneer, is very fattening so instead use low fat cheese, e.g. Edam or Cottage Cheese
- Try curd cheese, low fat cheese or low fat cheese spread
- Ice-cream made from full fat milk is fattening so try low fat varieties

## **How to increase your fruit intake:**

- Have fresh fruit everyday and where possible eat fruit with the skin
- Try fruit tinned in its own juice rather than syrup
- Try using more dried fruit in baking and sprinkle on breakfast cereals and puddings, e.g., dates, sultanas, apricots, figs and prunes
- Treat yourself to fruit salad made from fresh tropical fruits, eg, mangoes, kiwi, melons and pineapple
- Try making milk shakes with fresh fruits and skimmed milk
- Use fruit as a dessert or a snack

## **Tips for making the most of vegetables:**

- Store them in a cool, dark place and use them as quickly as possible
- Wash the vegetables thoroughly before chopping. Do not peel them, or peel them very thinly as most of the nutrients are under the skin. Cut them into large pieces just before cooking
- Cook vegetables for the shortest possible time and serve immediately
- By steaming or using a microwave, more nutrients are retained
- Reheating cooked vegetables over and over again destroys all the vitamins
- Raw salad vegetables such as cucumber, carrots, lettuce, onions, peppers, spring onions, sprouted pulses and watercress are excellent and add variety to a healthy lifestyle
- Home made raita made with vegetables and fruit is much healthier than fruit yoghurt bought from the shop
- Chutneys made with coriander, mint, onions, chillies, mangoes and tomatoes are very nutritious as they contain valuable vitamins and minerals
- Avoid oily pickles