

Diet and Nutrition

Abstract: Diet and Nutrition are complementary to each other. For proper nutrition of body, a healthy and balanced diet is what that is required the most.

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INTRODUCTION

Diet is the sum of food that an individual consumes. For better functioning of the body, everyone needs food with proper nutritive values. A proper and nutritious diet would include all required elements including vitamins, minerals, carbohydrates, proteins and fats. And the diet of human being could be different from place to place, as per cultural food preferences and taboos. Individual preferences also play a major role in diversity of diet.

IMPORTANCE OF A HEALTHY DIET

Besides physical activities, diet is also a major factor that affects the health of a human being. Every individual should have proper weight / height ratio. Being overweight increases the risk of heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke and many other serious diseases. Similarly being underweight also can create health problems. A healthy diet can help one in getting physical characteristics in proper order, and hence can help to keep healthy and fit.

DIFFERENT PURPOSE, DIFFERENT DIET

Different people have different food habits, some prefer vegetarian food and others prefers non-vegetarian. In India, vegetarian diet would include various green vegetables, fresh fruits, cereals, milk and other milk products etc. The non-vegetarian diet include fish, egg, meat etc. Diet may also depend upon the body weight and the general health of the individual.

FATS

The body needs a certain amount of fat in the diet, which it stores as a quick energy source and to protect important organs. However, all fats and oils are high in calories. Fats provide 9 calories for each gram, while protein and carbohydrates each provide only 4 calories. While fat is essential, some types of fats

damage the cardiovascular system.

Artery-clogging fats that increase blood cholesterol include saturated fat and trans fat. Saturated fat mainly comes from animal sources like meat and dairy products, but it can also be found in coconut and palm oils. Trans fat comes from hydrogenated vegetable oils, like margarine and vegetable shortening. Both saturated fats and trans fats stay solid at room temperature.

The heart healthy fat is unsaturated fat, generally found in vegetables. This type of fat includes both monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. Monounsaturated fat is found in olive, canola and peanut oils. These oils are liquid at room temperature but start to thicken when refrigerated. Avocados and nuts also contain monounsaturated fat. Polyunsaturated fat is found in soybean, corn, safflower and sunflower oils. These oils are liquid at room temperature and in the refrigerator. This type of fat is considered the next healthiest fat that does not clog arteries.

However, when unsaturated vegetable oils are manufactured into solid form, they turn into trans fats. This type of fat is commonly called fully or partially hydrogenated vegetable oil in a food's list of ingredients. Trans fats are found in hundreds of processed foods, usually to protect against spoiling and to enhance flavour. Restaurants tend to use a lot of trans fat (hydrogenated vegetable oil), especially for frying.

Trans fats are even worse for the cardiovascular system than saturated fats. Researchers have conservatively calculated that trans fats alone account for at least 30,000 premature deaths from heart disease every year in the United States. Recent studies indicate that trans fats drive up the body's LDL, the bad cholesterol, even

faster than saturated fats. High levels of cholesterol have been linked to heart disease and stroke.

Diets high in fat, particularly saturated fat, also promote breast, colon, endometrial, lung, prostate and rectal cancers. Therefore, saturated fats and trans fats are the only fats that we should strive to eliminate from our diet. Replace these fats with monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends that daily fat intake should be less than 30 percent of total calories; saturated fat intake less than 8-10 percent of total calories and cholesterol less than 300 milligrams per day. Always read the Nutrition Facts label and list of ingredients to find out the amount of and the type of fat contained in any particular food.

COCONUT OIL

Coconut oil is the smarter fat that helps promote weight loss. Coconut oil can cure Hypothyroidism. In traditional medicine around the world coconut is used to treat a wide variety of health problems, like abscesses, asthma, baldness, bronchitis, bruises, burns, colds, constipation, cough, dropsy, dysentery, earache, fever, flu etc

FIBRE

Fibre is important for the health of our digestive system as well as for lowering cholesterol. Dietary fibre is a transparent solid carbohydrate that is the main part of the cell walls of plants. It has two forms: soluble and insoluble. Soluble fibre may help lower blood cholesterol and reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke. Insoluble fibre provides the bulk needed for proper functioning of the stomach and intestines. It promotes healthy intestinal action and prevents constipation by moving bodily waste through the digestive tract faster, so harmful substances don't have as much contact with the intestinal walls. We must consume 25 to 30 grams of fibre a day.

Unfortunately, many people are not eating this much fibre. The reason is the conventional animal-based Western diet, which is high in saturated fat and low in fibre. This type of diet is causing serious concerns. Heart disease and stroke have become major health problems in most developed countries, and are rapidly increasing in prevalence, in many lesser developed countries. This is mainly due to the global influence of

the typical Western diet.

Coronary heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States; mainly heart attack and angina. A blood clot that goes to the heart is considered a heart attack, but if it goes to the brain it is a stroke. The AHA ranks stroke as the third most fatal disease in America, causing paralysis and brain damage.

Eating a high-fibre diet can significantly lower our risk of heart attack, stroke and colon cancer. The November 2001 issue of the Archives of Internal Medicine indicated that increasing bean and legume intake may be an important part of a dietary approach to preventing coronary heart disease. Soybeans and legumes are high in protein and soluble fibre. Another issue of the Journal of the American College of Cardiology also suggests that increasing our consumption of fibre-rich foods like whole grains, fruits and vegetables, can significantly lower the risk of heart disease. Additionally, results from recent studies at the American Institute of Cancer Research indicate high-fibre protein-rich soy-based products, such as textured soy protein and tempeh, help in preventing and treating colon cancer.

An average serving of cooked dry beans contains about 10 grams of fibre. Whole soybeans and foods made from them, such as soy flour, textured soy protein (also known as TVP) and tempeh, are extremely rich in fibre. However, some soy foods, like tofu and soymilk, contain very little fibre due to the way they are processed. Tofu, for example, leaves most of its fibre behind in processing when the milk is squeezed from the soybean. Reading the Nutrition Facts label to find out the amount of, and the type of fibre contained in any particular food is always wise.

FRESH OIL

Fresh oil is one of the most beneficial foods for the health. Fresh oil is a source of essential fatty acids, which help keep the skin healthy and the hair shiny. The human brain is almost entirely composed of unsaturated fatty acids. Fats add taste to meals and give one a feeling of fullness when eaten.

Fresh oil becomes rancid fairly quickly, even when kept in a refrigerator. Modern technology solved this problem by using high temperatures and preservatives. These techniques change the molecular

structure from one that is very healthy (the cis configuration) to one that is unhealthy (the trans configuration). The result is oil that can be kept for extended periods at room temperatures without going rancid.

Oils made from safflower, sunflower and corn are rich in linoleic acid (LA), an omega-6 fatty acid. Oils made from flax seed, walnut and soy are rich in alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), an omega-3 fatty acids. Fish oil contains eicosapentanoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), which are omega-3 fatty acids.

Omega-3 fatty acids form prostaglandin E3 which has been found to decrease inflammation, platelet aggregation and triglycerides and increase HDL cholesterol. The omega-6 fatty acids form prostaglandin E1 which has been found to inhibit cholesterol synthesis and decrease blood pressure.

TIPS FOR HEALTHY DIET

Proper diet needs proper planning. Following are some of the useful diet tips that could be pretty helpful.

The diet should contain a substantial amount of green vegetables and fresh fruits. According to the nutritionists, every adult individual should take 2 cups of fresh fruit and 2 cups of green vegetables per day. Diet should also include whole-grains and fat-free elements. Whole grains are the good source of fibre that is necessary for good health. One's diet should also consist of milk and milk products. The diet should consist of foods that are low in saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol. The total fat intake should be in between 20 and 35 percent of calories. Take fish, nuts and vegetable oils for this. The diet should also include small quantities of calories from added sugars such as cookies, cakes, candy etc. The food should not contain higher amount of sodium or salt. Usually 2,300 mg of sodium and one teaspoon of salt per day is sufficient. Sufficient amount of water should be drunk daily. Water plays a major role in the good health of human beings.

Restaurants and fast food joints don't usually cater to health-conscious consumers. Here are some tips for making the most of these 'dangerous' mealtimes! Some of the highest calorie- and fat-content foods at restaurants will contain:

- Mayonnaise
- Cheese
- Sour cream
- Many meats such as beef, pepperoni, sausage, etc.
- Breading (such as most fast food chicken sandwiches), which usually means the food is fried
- Guacamole or avocado (although this fat is less harmful than other types)

Here are several suggestions for eating out at different types of restaurants when you want to stick with a nutritious eating style:

PIZZA

Opt for: Veggie toppings, thinner crust, light on the cheese, fewer slices, add salad with low-fat dressing

Watch out for: High-fat meats, olives, extra cheese, cheese bread and wings.

BURGER JOINTS

Opt for: Unbreaded chicken sandwiches minus mayo and cheese, plain hamburgers, salads with low-fat or fat-free dressings, frozen yogurt.

Watch out for: Large burgers with cheese and mayo, French fries, shakes, breaded chicken and fish sandwiches

SANDWICH SHOPS

Opt for: Lean cuts of meat, lots of veggies, vinegar, mustard, pepper, 'baked' potato chips

Watch out for: Cheese, mayo, mayo-based salads, bacon, oil, potato chips

CUT DOWN STIMULANTS

Stimulants such as tea, coffee and depressant such as smoking and alcohol. Aim at drinking at least 2.5 lt. of water a day.

EAT FOODS RICH IN ANTIOXIDANTS

Eating foods rich in antioxidants aid the natural detox mechanisms. Foods like broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, Brussels, sprouts and soy products. Nutrients that enhance our immune systems are Vit C, Vit E, Vita B, Zinc and Magnesium.

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