

Human nutrition



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Nutrition The one thing that all humans have in common is that we all eat. Differences in foods consumed and the quantities or quality of food that we consume decide how healthy or unhealthy we are. The human body needs some broad categories of essential nutrients like carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals and water. Insufficient or excess quantities of any of these vital nutrients results in a slow eroding of our health. The macro nutrients consisting of carbohydrates, proteins and fats form the largest part of our food, giving us energy, building strong bones and muscles and protecting the organs of our body. An unhealthy diet or crash dieting can lead to severe deficiencies and diseases of malnutrition. It is advisable to include plenty of whole grains, cereals, poultry, fish, eggs, vegetables and fruits and milk and milk products in our diet for a strong healthy body. Health is said to be man's greatest wealth. Being healthy is choosing the right food. The dictum "What we are is what we eat", is truer than most of us realize. Our body needs food for growth, energy, maintenance, repair and reproduction. Although extremely resilient, the right foods in the right quantities, are essential for the smooth functioning of all the body's vital parts. We need to consume adequate quantities of food that provide the six essential nutrients - carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals and water to ensure a healthy mind and body. Whole grains, vegetables, fruits, milk and milk products as well as meat and fish or pulses and legumes are essential to supply these vital nutrients. The American Medical Association's Food and Nutrition council very aptly defines nutrition as "the Science of food". (Kovacs 2008 Diet & Nutrition page 1) According to my recorded food intake for three days, All three varieties -carbohydrates, proteins and fats - seem to be over the required dietary intake as prescribed by the DRI . Food

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from which I obtained carbohydrates were breads and cereals as well as vegetables like mashed potatoes. My main sources of proteins were eggs, meat and milk and milk products like cheese and yogurt. A major part of my lipid consumption came from eggs and peanut butter. According to DRI estimates my carbohydrate intake should be about 130 gms and my protein and lipid intakes should be about 56 and 35 gms respectively. In order to maintain a healthier diet, I think I should eat six small meals instead of my present three big meals. Including more fruit, salads and nuts in my diet should help me eat better and healthier meals. Since my diet consists of meat, eggs and fish, these should provide adequate amounts of complete protein. However, I have also added cereal with nuts where the combination of the two turns it into a complete protein. It is very important to include complete proteins or see that incomplete proteins are combined so that the body is supplied with all the nine essential amino acids that are present in complete proteins. I have overshot the recommended macro nutrient intake and will have to curb my craving for unhealthy foods like pizza and cheese. I must also add more fruits, nuts and vegetables and legumes to my diet. My fiber intake also was too low. I need to add more raw fruit instead of the juices and cokes that I include, and also more raw vegetable salads. The recommended range of macro nutrients is very important. The three major macro nutrients comprising of carbohydrates, proteins and fats are necessary because they provide energy to the body. Carbohydrates are the primary source of energy for the body and this energy is used for physical and mental functions. Naturally, too little carbohydrate results in fatigue both physical and mental. Proteins are known as the building blocks of the body. They are used to build muscle tissue and are also useful to build

strong bones. Hence having adequate amounts of protein in the diet is of paramount importance. Excluding fat totally from our diet in the belief that this leads to obesity is harmful to health. Fat is necessary to protect the body's organs and also to supply heat to the body. My intake of high fiber foods in the fruits and vegetables group needs to be increased. I lack fiber especially from vegetables. Since I do not like vegetables, I think this fiber group is most inadequate, however the cereal group that makes up the greatest part of the fiber in my meals is adequate. Although I do eat fruits, I could add more servings of fruit. I could add a fruit to most meals and add small servings of salads with beans and vegetables. An adequate quantity of carbohydrates ensures fuel for the body's various activities as well as energy for the brain. It also ensures optimum use of proteins and fats as well as fiber for the body's needs. Inadequate intake of carbohydrates can result in Ketosis, whereas over consumption is detrimental to cardiac health. In addition to supporting growth and maintenance of the body, proteins help regulate body functions such as clotting of blood, fluid balance, hormone production and the very important function of building antibodies for the immune system. Insufficiency of certain proteins lead to Protein Energy Malnutrition (PEM) diseases like Rickets, Kwashiorker and Marasmus. Over consumption of proteins in an effort to reduce weight can lead to a buildup of toxic ketones and put pressure on kidneys to flush these out; in turn leading to dehydration. Fats and fibers too are essential to our daily diet. Fats are essential in maintaining healthy skin, for energy and break up and transport of fat soluble vitamins. Some fatty acids like Omega3 are very essential because the body cannot produce these. Too little fat in the body can lead to skin problems as well as reduce energy required for brain cells, on the other

hand excessive intake of fats can cause diabetes, and other diseases related to obesity. The benefits of a healthy diet are manifold. Besides giving one a healthy body and mind, it ensures a lifetime of smoothly functioning body systems and a build up of a good immune system to counter disease. The World Health Organization defines health as “ A state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. (WHO definition of health) That must be the goal of every one of us. References Kovacs Betty , MS, RD Editor: Melissa Conrad Stoppler, MD, Chief Medical Editor, eMedicineHealth. com Diet and nutrition Nutrition Overview eMedicinehealth Last Editorial Review: 3/19/2008 Retrieved from http://www.emedicinehealth.com/nutrition_and_diet/article_em.htm World Health Organisation Definition of health Retrieved from <https://apps.who.int/aboutwho/en/definition.html>