

Nutrition and vegetarian diet



A Balanced diet is a wholesome meal that essentially contains all of the basic ingredients needed for sustenance of a healthy life in appropriate amounts. These basic ingredients include Carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals, fibre and water. In other terms it means eating a variety of foods in correct proportions and drinking enough fluids to achieve and maintain weight that is in accordance with the Body Mass Index.

Food groups are broadly classified into five categories a) Fruit and vegetables b) Starchy foods, such as rice, pasta, bread and potatoes c) Meat, fish, eggs and beans d) Milk and dairy foods e) Foods containing fat and sugar. A balanced diet is a meal that contains one portion from each of the five categories. Figure 1: A pyramid containing the components of a healthy diet. Diets could be prepared and recommended according to one's own needs and requirements.

Based on different requirements some of the types are as listed below:
Belief-based diets: These are diets based on religious, spiritual or philosophical beliefs of people who consume it. For example Hinduism and certain sects of Hindus follow a lacto-vegetarian diet that relies on their faith of Ahimsa (non-harming). Such diet includes dairy products like milk in their vegetarian diet. Muslims eat Halal meat where the meat is killed by the Islamic method of religious slaughter. Only such meat is permissible under the Islamic law.

Vegetarian diets: A vegetarian diet is a diet that excludes meat and by products of meat from their diet . Subtypes of vegetarian diet includes Lacto-vegetarian diet, one that consists of milk but excludes egg, a Lacto ovo vegetarian that includes eggs in diet and a Vegan diet that contains

vegetarian diet but excludes all dairy products that has milk and eggs. Weight control diets: These diets contain foods that are used for specific purpose like weight loss and weight management purposes. Where this is the case, it is noted in that diet's entry.

The subclasses include Low-calorie diets which have calorie controlled foods with specific ratios of fats, proteins and carbohydrates that is needed for reaching and maintaining the desired weight, Very low calorie diets that contains food lesser than 800 calories per day. These diets are usually followed under supervision of a dietician or a doctor, Atkins diet a low-carbohydrate diet as proposed by nutritionist Robert Atkins. However it is highly debated that low-carb approach poses increased health risks.

A Dukan Diet is a meal that consists of high protein and limited carbohydrate. This diet is usually prescribed for short term weight loss programmes, and usually followed by a diet plan meant to consolidate these losses and finally a more balanced long-term diet. Detox Diets: Detox diets are meal plans that recommend or attempt to flush out substances that are considered harmful. Diet plans include restricting foods with colourings or preservatives, taking supplements, and drinking large amounts of water.

However, it is debated has drawn a lot criticism, as drinking excessive amounts of water can cause hyponatremia a condition where sodium levels in serum is lesser than normal. Low Glycaemic Index Diet: A low-glycaemic diet is a diet targeted at weight loss by controlling blood sugar levels. G. I. one of the metrics that quantifies short-term changes in blood glucose levels in humans after consumptions of carbohydrate-containing foods. Foods that are easily digested and quickly absorbed in the bloodstream have a high G. I.

, and foods that are digested and absorbed more slowly have a lower G. I. Switching from white bread and pastas to whole meal grain, eating breakfast cereals from oats, bran or barley, add more fruits and vegetables to diet and reducing potato consumption can all aid in lowering glycaemic index.

The Montignac diet is a weight-loss diet invented by Frenchman Michel Montignac aimed at people who wish to lose weight efficiently. The Zone Diet: The Zone Diet aims at a diet that contains a balance of 40% carbohydrates, 30% fats, and 30% protein each time one eats. It aims at controlling insulin levels that result in successful weight loss and body weight control.

The Zone Diet encourages consumption of good quality carbohydrates - unrefined carbohydrates, and fats, such as olive oil, avocado, and nuts that are essential for optimum functioning of our body. Mediterranean Diet: The Mediterranean Diet is a Southern European diet pattern focussed more on plant based foods fresh fruits as dessert, beans, nuts, cereals, seeds, olive oil as the main source of dietary fats, moderate amounts of fish and poultry, small amounts of red meat, and low /moderate amounts of wine. In this kind of a diet cheese and yogurts are the main dairy foods.

It is essential to ensure healthy dietary habits for reasons that recent obesity statistics for England are alarming. The data, compiled by the Health and Social Care Information Centre, relates to information gathered during 2011. The data points that 1) there has been a marked increase in obesity rates over the past eight years 2) The proportion of adults with a healthy body mass index (BMI) – defined as being between 18.5 and 25 – fell to just 34%

in men and 39% in women during 2011 and 3) For children attending reception class (aged 4-5 years) during 2011-12, 9.5% were obese.

Projections for health outcomes have shown that in 2011, 53% of obese men and 44% of obese women were found to have high blood pressure and there were 11,736 hospital admissions due to obesity which is almost 11 times higher than during 2001-02. One needs to realise that consuming processed foods would lead to serious life threatening ailments like Cancer, Hypertension, Blood Pressure, Osteoporosis diabetes and heart diseases. Further, it brings our confidence down in achieving set goals of life. There many ways to promote healthy eating and living .

Some of the ways could be by involving oneself in family group activities like gardening. Although it might be physically tiring, it ensures burning of calories and healthy discussions amongst family thus promoting a relaxed mind. A relaxed mind in turn promotes health benefits. One could also think of holding a pyramid pot-luck whereby one could invites friends and family for lunch and dinner and ask each family to cook a novel and a healthy food that's creative and colourful. It is also handy to maintain logs of foods purchased over weekly shopping so that one could keep an eye on the amount of calories consumed.