
General Nutrition Concepts

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SELF HELP IS THE BEST POSSIBLE ROAD TO HEALTH.

NO ONE EXCEPT YOU IS MORE INTERESTED IN YOUR HEALTH.

Nutrition – is an important component of health. It is Science of food and its relationship to health. Life can't be sustained without adequate nourishment. Next to the air we breathe, water we drink, food is - prime necessity of life, as it provides energy for all work; as well as for growth of the body. The challenge is to learn how to continue to improve the palatability and quality of our diet while doing so in a more healthful manner.

Some basic principles for understanding and practicing good nutrition.

Calorie: Calorie is a unit of energy. One Calorie is the amount of heat that increases the temperature of one kilogram of water by 1 degree Celsius (scientific definition). In context of food, a calorie represents the amount of energy a particular food provides in our body once it is digested. A person utilizes calories/energy through physical activity & the rest of excess calories/energy produced upon food digestion are stored as fat. The storage of extra calories over time leads to increase in weight.

Nutrient Density: Nutrient density is defined as, “ratio of nutrient content (in grams) to the total energy content” of a food. It means that compared to the Calories, how many nutrients is provided of the food. Nutrient density is a good indicator of how “healthy” a food is. Higher the nutrient density better of the food. Example: Spinach is a very nutrient dense food.

Calorie/Energy Density: Calorie/energy density is the amount of calories a food provides per volume measure. Example: Ice Cream is a Calorie dense food. Carrots are a low Calorie dense food.

Energy Balance: While understanding energy balance, think of a weight balance with one side (e.g. left side) representing all the food and drink consumed within one day and the other side (e.g. right side) representing the amount of energy used in a day. If you want to



maintain your body weight; both sides should be in balance- thus, food intake energy equaling the required energy by the body & thus energy balance is neutral. To lose weight; you utilize more energy than the food intake energy/calorie & thus creates a negative energy balance. On the other hand, in case of gaining weight, there is a positive energy balance. That is, the energy through food which the body receives exceeds the requirement for the day.

Variety: “Variety is the spice of life” is quite true for achieving optimal nutritional status. As every food provides different nutrients; we should take a variety of foods and not depend on one food. In addition, have a variety of foods within the same food group as well. For example, in vegetable group, don't eat just one vegetable like potatoes, but eat a variety of leafy green vegetables, carrots, peas, and so on. Similarly in the cereal group; have a variety like wheat, barley, semolina, oats, rice etc. Mix it up and have fun trying new foods and recipes and benefit your body at the same time.

Balance: For a “balanced diet” you should daily have foods from all the main food groups – cereal, pulse/meat, vegetables, fruit, dairy products, Nuts& oils daily. Instead of having just one kind of food e.g. chicken for dinner, have green beans and a roti/rice/baked potato with it. Balance the proteins, carbohydrates, and fats in each meal.

Moderation: A major contributor to the overweight/obesity problem is the portion size of the food we eat. The key is to incorporate moderation in the foods in our diets. Instead of eating a big portion size; opt for smaller portion size. You will be surprised to see how much total calorie intake you can reduce by practicing moderation in your food portions.

These three principles -**variety, balance, and moderation** are important for establishing healthy eating habits, maintaining a neutral energy balance, and also in improving your body's overall nutritional status.

Actual Daily Intake/Food Journal: To improve your nutritional status & to assess your intake; it is

good to record everything you eat for three days in a food journal. You need to honestly record every meal, every lick, and every bite of food you take. After recording your intake for three days, compare your actual intake to your recommended intake with the help of a dietician or website resources on food pyramid.

Healthy Lifestyle: Every day one makes choices and our lifestyle affects those choices. If we follow and have a healthy lifestyle; we are more likely to make wise decisions about the food intake and activities we undertake. Thus a healthy lifestyle helps in

practicing healthy eating choices.

Nature's prescriptions for good health

- Eat to live, do not live to eat(maintain body weight)
- Clean up the oily mess(reduce total fat)
- He who follows nature (natural grown, coarse grains, vegetables)is never out of the way
- Nature is bountiful, so stay close to it(eat fresh fruits & vegetables)
- Don't get reduced to ashes(Don't smoke)
- The wise depend on exercise for fitness

