

# Healthy Eating for South Asian People





**South Asian people living in New Zealand are at high risk of developing diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure. Weight gain, especially around the waist, increases the risk of developing these diseases.**

**This booklet can help you and your family choose healthy foods so that you will:**

- **feel great – have more energy**
- **look great – better body shape**
- **live longer – be there for your family**
- **be healthy – have better quality of life**

**If you have diabetes or heart problems it is best to seek individual advice from your doctor or dietitian.**

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MANATU HAUORA

# Enjoy a variety of

## Choose the recommended number of servings

**Vegetables and fruit**  
**5 + servings\***



**Have just small amounts occasionally of food and drinks high in fat, sugar and or salt**

**Meat, legumes & pulses (dahls)**  
**1-2 servings\***



# of food every day.

servings from each of the four food groups.



**Roti, chapatti, naan, rice and other starchy food**  
**6 servings, more if you are active\***

**Milk and milk products**  
**2-3 servings\***

\*Recommended number of daily servings based on New Zealand Ministry of Health Food and Nutrition Guidelines.

# Vegetables



**3+** servings a day

There is no limit on serving size **except** for starchy vegetables such as aloo (potato) and suran (yam). These should be limited to smaller servings.

## Vegetables to enjoy and eat freely

- Baingan (eggplant)
- Bhindi (okra)
- Broccoli
- Chukander (beetroot)
- Doodhi / lauki (bottle gourd)
- Fansi/ bakla/ Pharas (green beans)
- Gajar (carrots)
- Gawar (cluster beans)
- Phool gobi (cauliflower)
- Kaddu (pumpkin)
- Kakadi / kheera (cucumber)
- Karela (bitter gourd)
- Methi (fenugreek leaves)
- Mooli (radish)
- Palak (spinach)
- Patta gobi / Band Gobi (cabbage)
- Pyazz (onion)
- Shimla mirch (capsicum)
- Tamatar (tomato)

## Tips

- ✓ include vegetables of many different colours as these are most health protective. Colourful vegetables, especially green leafy vegetables, are also low in calories so great to fill up on
- ✓ try different methods of cooking and serving vegetables such as steaming, stir fry or salads including vegetables roasted in very little oil. This will add variety and interest
- ✓ frozen and canned are just as good as fresh and sometimes cheaper
- ✓ be adventurous – try new varieties



# Fruit



**2+** servings a day

Fruit protects your health and is low in calories. A serving is about a handful.

Serving size examples:

- 2 small plums, apricots or kiwifruit
- 1 small banana
- 1 medium apple, orange or pear
- 1/2 cup stewed fruit/canned in juice
- 2 tablespoons raisins or 3 dates

## Tips

- ✓ enjoy a range of colours and types of fruit
- ✓ avoid juice as it is high in sugar, even if the label states 'No Added Sugar'
- ✓ buy what is in season, that way you will save money



## Roti/chapatti, naan, rice, bread, pasta and other starchy food



**6** servings a day, more if you are active

These foods provide energy for the body.

Serving size examples:

- 1/2 cup cooked rice (or the amount that fits in the palm of your hand)
- 2 phulkas (thin rotis) or 1 medium roti or paratha (made with minimal oil)
- 2 idli or thin dosas
- 1 slice bread or 1 small roll
- 2 wheat biscuits or 1/2 cup cooked dalia (porridge) or upma (rava/semolina)



### Tips:

- ✓ **wholegrain or grainy cereals are best.** They provide fibre to prevent constipation and essential nutrients which are removed during the processing of grains. Wholegrains include dalia, grainy bread, and whole wheat breakfast cereals
- ✓ prepare roti with wholemeal flour
- ✓ six servings a day from this food group is enough if you are not very active
- ✓ limit starchy food to a quarter of your plate especially at your evening meal



# Milk and milk products



## 2 - 3 servings per day

Milk provides essential nutrients including calcium, protein and some vitamins. The calcium is needed for strong bones and teeth.

Serving size examples

- 1 glass milk (250 mls)
- 1 pottle or small cup yoghurt (curd) (150g)
- 1 glass of thin chaas (buttermilk) (250 mls)
- 2 thin slices cheese (40g)
- 1/3 cup paneer (40g)

### Tips

- ✓ reduced fat (light blue top) or low fat (green, yellow top) is best for most adults
  - children over two years old should have reduced fat (light blue top).
  - children aged 1-2 years should have full fat (dark blue top)
- ✓ do not avoid milk because you are trying to lose weight. Change to a low fat variety instead
- ✓ use reduced or low fat milk for homemade yoghurt (curd). Choose non creamy yoghurts if low fat varieties are not available when buying
- ✓ if you have a raised blood cholesterol level, have low fat milk and milk products
- ✓ if you use soy milk, choose one with added calcium
- ✓ lassi (thick buttermilk) is high in sugar. Prepare it with low fat yoghurt and use fruit or artificial sweetener so that it is a healthy drink



Vitamin D is needed for healthy bones, muscles and teeth as it helps with the absorption of calcium. Food (meat, egg yolk, fish) provides only small amounts of vitamin D. We need to make the rest through sunlight acting on skin. It is important to spend 20 - 30 minutes (more if you have darker skin) in the sun, before 11am and after 4pm, with parts of your body (for example face, arms and legs) uncovered. Talk to your doctor about a Vitamin D supplement if you are unable to do this.

**Legumes,  
lean meat,  
poultry,  
seafood,  
eggs,  
soy/tofu**



**1 - 2 servings a day**

These foods are a good source of protein and provide the building blocks for your body. They also give you iron, zinc and other important nutrients. If you are vegetarian, eat a wide variety of pulses/legumes or dahls to ensure you are getting enough protein.

Serving size examples

what fits in the palm of your hand e.g.:

- 1 medium fillet fish
- 1 chicken leg or breast or 2 drumsticks
- 2 eggs
- 1/3 cup nuts (small handful)
- 3/4 cup meat curry (190g)
- 1 cup cooked legumes / thick dahl
- 1 1/2 cups thin dahl

### **Tips:**

- ✓ a strength of South Asian meal patterns is the use of legumes and dahls. Include these on a regular basis, especially if you have diabetes or heart disease. The fibre in them helps lower blood sugar and cholesterol levels
- ✓ soya (chunks or minced) or paneer (cottage cheese) could be added as options. These can be mixed easily into vegetable or rice dishes, or stuffed in a bread roll or roti for lunch packs
- ✓ choose lean meat and trim fat off before cooking. Boil mince and drain fat off before further cooking or serving
- ✓ remove the chicken skin and fat underneath before adding to a curry
- ✓ aim for two fish meals a week if you are not vegetarian. Oily fish, e.g. surmai (salmon), paaplet (pomfret) and canned fish, e.g. salmon and tuna, have heart protective omega 3 fatty acids (refer page 9 for vegetarian omega 3 sources)
- ✓ nuts are a good source of protein as well as being heart healthy. However, limit snacking on nuts if you are overweight

## Fats & oils



There are three types of fat- saturated, polyunsaturated and monounsaturated. All fats are equally high in calories.

- Saturated fat increases your blood cholesterol level. Avoid as much as possible as a high cholesterol level increases your risk for heart disease
- Poly and mono unsaturated fats have different health benefits. Use a mixture of these but in small amounts only

Avoid	Use these instead (in small amounts only)	
<b>Saturated fats</b>	<b>Polyunsaturated oils and spreads</b>	<b>Monounsaturated oils and spreads</b>
Coconut	Sunflower	Olive
Palm	Safflower	Groundnut (peanut)
Ghee	Linseed	Peanut butter
Vanaspati	Sesame	Canola
(hydrogenated fat)	Corn	Ricebran
Butter	Soybean	

Omega 3 is a type of fat which is heart-protective. Oily fish is the best source. Rich plant sources include canola oil and spread, sunflower margarine, walnuts, soy, rai (mustard seeds and oil), methi (fenugreek), alsi (linseeds) and flax seeds.

## Salt (sodium)

Salt or sodium can cause high blood pressure so keep your intake low. If you use a little in cooking, do not add any salt at the table. Pickles and pappadums are extremely high in salt. Check the information on the label to find the brand which is lowest in sodium.

## Tips for healthy cooking



Fat (including oil) is the most concentrated source of calories in our diet and makes a big contribution to people being overweight.

- ✓ see if you can reduce the amount of oil or ghee you use in cooking. Depending on the number in your household, for example for two adults and two children, two litres of any fat or oil should easily last for a month or more. Refer to page 9 for the best oils to use
- ✓ avoid deep frying food for both meals and snacks
- ✓ pressure cooking, boiling, steaming, microwaving, grilling, stir frying, tandoori, or barbecuing are better cooking methods than frying or sautéing. Non stick pans or using an oil spray help to keep the oil down
- ✓ as ghee is a saturated fat, its use (or that of butter) should be kept to a minimum when spreading, for example, on roti or paratha
- ✓ coconut milk is high in saturated fat. Reduce the amount you use in a curry or use 'lite' coconut milk
- ✓ use herbs, spices, lemon or ginger to flavour your food rather than adding extra salt or oil. Home made chutneys and pickles like coriander/mint chutney, garlic and red chilli pickle or tomato chutney are healthy accompaniments if prepared with minimal salt. These can be made in large quantities and frozen or refrigerated for use later
- ✓ raita (yoghurt salad) is a healthy way to add salad to meals



## Healthy eating for vegetarians

If you are vegetarian, your food may be low in iron, zinc, calcium, vitamin B<sup>12</sup> and/or protein. This could cause anaemia and osteoporosis (weak bones) in later life. Alternative food sources are listed below:



### Sources of:

#### protein

legumes & pulses  
nuts  
soy milk,  
soya chunks  
tofu  
textured vegetable protein (TVP)  
cow's milk,  
cheese & paneer

#### iron

legumes & pulses  
breakfast cereals with added iron  
soy milk (iron fortified)  
dark green leafy vegetables  
wholegrain bread  
poha (rice flakes)  
dried fruit

#### calcium

legumes & pulses  
almonds  
broccoli, spinach  
soy milk (calcium enriched), tofu  
cow's milk,  
cheese & paneer

#### zinc

legumes & pulses  
nuts & seeds  
wholegrain bread & cereals  
yeast spreads  
cow's milk & cheese

### It is important that you:

- ✓ drink tea away from meal times as tea reduces iron absorption from food
- ✓ include a good source of vitamin C at meal times; for example citrus fruit, berries, tomatoes, kiwifruit, tamarillos, feijoas, capsicum, lightly cooked dark green leafy vegetables. Vitamin C helps iron absorption
- ✓ if on iron supplements, do not take them with milk or calcium supplements as this limits absorption
- ✓ include a wide variety of legumes and pulses, wholegrains, soy and milk to make sure that you have enough protein

Vitamin B<sup>12</sup> is only found in meat, fish, chicken, eggs, milk and milk products and fortified plant products, e.g. yeast extract spreads, textured vegetable protein (TVP). A vitamin B<sup>12</sup> supplement or injection is therefore sometimes necessary for vegetarians especially vegans. If you are vegan, ask your doctor to check your vitamin B<sup>12</sup> blood level.

## Snacks

Many favourite South Asian snacks are high in fat, sugar and/or salt. The following table will guide you to healthier choices:

### Healthier choices

- ✓ Idli served with vegetable chutney
- ✓ Dhokla
- ✓ Roti, grainy bread or roll
- ✓ Popcorn (little oil or fat) / dry bhel
- ✓ Chikki, till ladoo
- ✓ Fresh fruit lassi with yoghurt
- ✓ Low fat flavoured yoghurt
- ✓ Baked pattice
- ✓ Bhelpuri / missal (legume bhel)
- ✓ Raita
- ✓ Baked samosa/ kachori
- ✓ Fruit, especially fresh

### Best avoided

- ✗ Idli served with coconut/peanut chutney
- ✗ Vada / pakoda
- ✗ Paratha, puri / bhatura
- ✗ Farsan, bhuja mix
- ✗ Burfi, gulab jamun / rasogulla
- ✗ Lassi with icecream / kulfi falooda
- ✗ Kheer / basundi
- ✗ Pattice/ tikki- deep fried
- ✗ Paani puri / batata puri
- ✗ Dahi vada /dahi boondi
- ✗ Fried samosa / kachori
- ✗ Coconut / dried fruit barfi

## Choosing drinks



**Aim for 6 - 8 cups of fluid each day.**

### Tips

- ✓ tap water is the best drink and it is safe to drink in New Zealand
- ✓ chai (Indian tea) is usually milky and sugary. It is best to use reduced or low fat milk and avoid sugar or limit to 1 teaspoon per cup or use artificial sweetener
- ✓ choose herbal teas including lemon leaf, jal jeera (cumin seed water), diet drinks or soda water instead of sugary drinks such as fruit juice, fizzy drink and cordials
- ✓ encourage children over two years and teenagers to drink reduced fat milk (1-2 glasses/day)

# Tips for healthy weight

Check whether you are in the healthy weight range for your height. You could ask your doctor or health professional to help you work this out. You can also check your waist measurement. For women this should be below 80cm and for men below 94cm. If you are overweight, use the following tips:

## Food habit tips

- ✓ don't skip meals. Make sure you have breakfast to kick start your day
- ✓ have plenty of vegetables and salads but keep to the servings of protein and starchy foods recommended in this booklet
- ✓ use as little fat or oil as you can in preparing food, including roti, and at the table
- ✓ when eating out, choose tomato or vegetable based sauces or curries rather than creamy options such as kormas or masalas
- ✓ limit snacks and nibbles as it is easy to eat lots more of these than you need
- ✓ if buying take-aways, look for low fat options e.g. stir fries, kebabs, salad filled rolls and sandwiches, soups and salads
- ✓ don't have sugary drinks e.g. juice, cordial, fizzy drinks
- ✓ gur/jaggery or honey have the same calories as sugar – use sparingly
- ✓ if you drink alcohol, limit your intake as alcohol is high in calories



# Keep as active as possible

As well as helping with weight loss, regular activity will have many benefits for your body and make you sleep better. Do at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity on most if not all days of the week. If possible, add some vigorous activity for extra health and fitness. The best activity is one that is enjoyable enough to do regularly.

- Add as much activity to your usual day as you can:
  - ✓ walk to the shops instead of driving
  - ✓ use the stairs and not the lift
  - ✓ have 'walking meetings' with workmates or friends
  - ✓ walk up and down whilst you are on the phone
- Plan some leisure exercise:
  - ✓ take up Bollywood dancing
  - ✓ walk around the park with a friend or family member
  - ✓ join a walking group
- Begin gradually. Set a small goal each day that you can achieve. Ten minutes several times a day is fine. Build up slowly.
- Ask your doctor or practice nurse about Green Prescription (GRx). A Green Prescription is a health professional's written advice to a patient to be physically active. It is a simple and cost-effective way to help people stay healthy.

