

## Healthy Diet for Improving the Overall Health

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**Introduction.** A healthy diet provides the body with essential nutrition: fluid, adequate essential amino acids from protein, essential fatty acids, vitamins, minerals, and adequate calories. The requirements for a healthy diet can be met from a variety of plant-based and animal-based foods. A healthy diet supports energy needs and provides for human nutrition without exposure to toxicity or excessive weight gain from consuming excessive amounts. Where lack of calories is not an issue, a properly balanced diet (in addition to exercise) is also thought to be important for lowering health risks, such as obesity, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, hypertension and cancer. Various nutrition guides are published by medical and governmental institutions to educate the public on what they should be eating to promote health. Nutrition facts labels are also mandatory in some countries to allow consumers to choose between foods based on the components relevant to health. The World Health Organization (WHO) makes the following 5 recommendations with respect to both populations and individuals[3]:

- Eat roughly the same amount of calories that your body is using. A healthy weight is a balance between energy consumed and energy that is 'burnt off'.
- Increase consumption of plant foods, particularly fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains and nuts.
- Limit intake of fats, and prefer less unhealthy unsaturated fats to saturated fats and trans fats.
- Limit the intake of sugar. A 2003 report recommends less than 10% simple sugars.[4]
- Limit salt / sodium consumption from all sources and ensure that salt is iodized.

Other recommendations include:

- Essential micronutrients such as vitamins and certain minerals.
- Avoiding directly poisonous (e.g. heavy metals) and carcinogenic (e.g. benzene) substances.
- Avoiding foods contaminated by human pathogens (e.g. E. coli, tapeworm eggs).

**Conclusions.** This healthy diet is replete with a wide range of various non-starchy vegetables and fruits, that provide different colors including red, green, yellow, white, purple, and orange.

### **References:**

1. The Bottom Line: Choose a fiber-filled diet, rich in whole grains, vegetables, and fruits". World Health Organization release. 2012.
2. "Expert Report on diet and chronic disease". World Health Organization release. 2011.
3. "Protein: Moving Closer to Center Stage". World Health Organization release. 2014.