

How to Eat Healthily

Tutor's Handbook



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What Different Diets Teach Us?

We will begin by telling you that the food pyramid can serve as a basis for all healthy diets. It is a simple roadmap that we can all follow to ensure that we are getting enough of all the right foods in our diet. If you would like to learn more about the food pyramid, or to introduce the food pyramid to your group, please visit our resource on this topic in the ON-CALL resource library. In this handbook, we will present different types of diets that are followed by individuals, and the benefits of each of them. You can introduce these different diets to your group and invite them to share information about the type of diet they follow and why.

The Mediterranean Diet

We begin with the Mediterranean diet. This focuses on the varied consumption of food, fruits, vegetables, cereals This diet is based on eating small quantities of every food group and choosing better quality products that are in season. This diet also advises to grill or boil food as the main means of cooking, so it is healthier than diets which contain a lot of fried food. It might be advisable to introduce this short overview of the diet to your group and to ask them to suggest what types of foods belong in this diet – so that you are sure

that group members understand the make-up of a Mediterranean diet.

To make sure that you are enjoying a healthy version of the Mediterranean diet, you should include the following items in your diet:

- **Fruit and Vegetables:** Eat plenty of tomatoes, broccoli, spinach, kale, cauliflower, carrots, onions, Brussels sprouts, cucumbers, apples, bananas, pears, berries, oranges, and melons.
- **Nuts and seeds:** Each day, eat a handful or more of almonds, walnuts, macadamia nuts, hazelnuts, cashews, sunflower seeds, or pumpkin seeds.
- **Lentils and Legumes:** This will be a major source of fibre and protein for followers of this diet. Try to eat more beans, peas, lentils, peanuts, chickpeas, and more.
- **Whole grains:** Avoid refined carbohydrates, but eat small servings of things like whole grain pasta, etc.
- **Fish and other seafood:** Enjoy eating salmon, sardines, trout, tuna, mackerel, shrimp, clams, crab, oysters, or mussels.
- **Poultry:** Ensure you incorporate some chicken, duck, turkey, or other birds.

- Eggs and dairy: Cheese, yogurt, and eggs are a great source of healthy fats and protein.
- Herbs and spices: Accentuate your meals with garlic, basil, mint, rosemary, sage, nutmeg, cinnamon, and pepper.
- Healthy fats: This is an important part of the Mediterranean diet, so make sure you're getting plenty of fats from olive oil, nuts, and avocado.

So, what are the benefits of the Mediterranean diet? Due to the combination of vitamins, minerals, good fats and oils you consume as part of this diet, it has been proven that following a Mediterranean diet:

- Reduces the risk of type 2 diabetes.
- Helps to maintain a healthy heart.
- Reduces the risk of Alzheimer's Disease
- Halves your chance of getting Parkinson's Disease
- Helps your body to fight cancer
- Protects cognitive health
- Keeps you more agile as you age.

Vegan Diet

Another diet that is also well known, and very controversial, is called the Vegan diet. When following a vegan diet, individuals do not consume any food product that is produced or taken from an animal. This

roughly translates to no meat, fish, dairy products, eggs, honey, gelatin, etc. Because often this diet is followed for its ethical and environmental concerns, rather than its nutritional value to individuals, many people think it is more a philosophy of life not a diet. As well as not consuming animal products in their food, people who follow a vegan diet also won't use cosmetics, clothes, household goods or any products that are produced using animals. Several scientists classify it as a healthy diet because followers can find alternatives to meat, fish, etc. Also, the vegan diet tends to be low in saturated fat and rich in nutrients, which is good for cardiovascular health. However, being vegan requires a lot of effort and planning to ensure that you get the right amount of nutrients from non-animal sourced foods.

When seeking alternative sources of nutrients and protein, those following a vegan diet often find the nutrients they need in products like tofu, tempeh, and mushrooms. These three have similar nutrients to those found in meat. However, for some nutrients found in meat that cannot be sourced elsewhere – like the B-12 vitamin – vegans are advised to take supplements so that they don't become deficient.

Veganism eliminates all animal fats and products from the diet, and this can have huge health benefits, as animal fats are linked to a range of illnesses and diseases, including, heart disease, various types of

cancer, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, hypertension, etc. As such, by following a vegan diet, you are eliminating the impact of animal fats on your body. Vegans also tend to have better bone health than non-Vegans and this is attributed to the amount of calcium they get in their diet from eating kale, spinach, figs, black-eyed peas and turnip greens.

Organic Diet

People are tempted to follow a purely organic diet as a result of the many stories and issues of using fertiliser, pesticides, growth hormones and other toxins in the mass production of our food today. As such, this diet is based on the consumption of organic products. This means that the cultivation of the product is completely natural and without additives that improve the product, or pesticides to prevent pests, hormone-producing animals to produce more but of lower quality, etc. In short, this diet eliminates the feeding of processed products. This diet is based on the consumption of macronutrients based above all on carbohydrates, proteins and fats in each meal. In this diet it is advisable to make 5 structured daily meals in which 40% are carbohydrates, 30% proteins and 30% healthy fats. The only stipulation for the type of food you consume in this diet

How to use this Resource with your Local Health Group?

This handbook presents some introductory information on three diets that are

increasingly popular today, but there are far more diets to choose from! The aim of this resource is to open people's minds to the different types of diets that they can follow, and to explain the benefits of each diet to their overall health and feeling of well-being.

To accompany this handbook, you will also find a short PowerPoint presentation that can be used with your local health network to introduce some of these different diets. This presentation gives some of the basic information that is included in this handbook. To use this resource with your local group, we recommend that you first play the short video lecture, talk through the PowerPoint slides given and then lead a group discussion on the topic of diets. Some hints for questions are included below.

Group Activity

Once you have shared the digital resource and the PowerPoint presentation with your group members, you can start a group discussion about different diets. For this, ask people to discuss all of the different diets they have followed so far – even include fad diets like shakes, etc. For each example shared, ask how the diet made the person feel and did it contribute to their sense of well-being?

Next lead a group discussion on whether people in the group think they have a balanced diet? And take a poll of which diet they would most like to follow. As a follow-

up activity, ask group members to research some of the following diets online, in their spare time, and you can discuss the merits of all of these diets at the next group session:

- Atkins Diet
- Ketogenic Diet
- Raw Food Diet
- The Zone Diet
- Western Diet





ON CALL

Lay Community Health Advisors



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