



MEAL PLAN INTRODUCTION

The enjoyment of food is one of life's pleasures. Eating is about more than satisfying hunger, it is a part of family life, social events and celebrations. Having a variety of food helps to ensure that an eating plan supplies all the nutrients you need and it makes meals more interesting.

Food is a source of nutrients or certain building blocks needed for life and health. Healthy food choices help the body to stay healthy; it improves the ability to do everyday tasks, improves mental ability and overall sense of wellbeing. A healthy eating plan provides the body with energy to function and helps prevent short and long-term illnesses.

To ensure a variety of food we all have to eat mixed meals. Mixed meals refer to a plate of food consisting of food from at least two or more food groups. These are usually eaten three times a day at breakfast, lunch and supper. Eating regular mixed meals, of a similar size, is key to having a healthy eating plan.

A meal plan serves as a guideline based on daily allowances for different foods selected from certain food groups. Foods are grouped together according to their specific characteristics.

South Africa has its own unique set of Food Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDG) that was developed to guide the South African population to make healthy food choices and eat a variety of food. According to the FBDG foods are grouped together in 7 groups.

-  Starchy foods
-  Fruit and Vegetables
-  Milk, maas & yoghurt
-  Fish, chicken, meat and eggs
-  Dried beans and legumes
-  Fats
-  Water

Energy obtained during the day needs to be distributed evenly and in correct proportions within these food groups to ensure a healthy diet. This will ensure sufficient intake of all macronutrients (carbohydrates, protein and fats) and micronutrients (vitamins and minerals).

Food items such as salt and pepper, herbs and spices, artificial sweeteners and diet cold drinks, Worcester sauce, soya sauce and tomato sauce contribute only slightly to the total energy of the diet. They may be added in moderation.

Added sugars from sweets and cold drinks have not been calculated as part of the daily energy within the meal plan. Added sugar will contribute to extra energy and a possible risk of weight gain.

You can use the meal plan as a guide to a healthy menu. Alter foods within each food group for day-to-day variation. For convenience, a calcium calculating column has been added to show how easy it is to meet the Dietary Reference Intake (DRI) for calcium when you follow a healthy diet.

