



Samskruti Foundation
Our Culture Our Identity



SUPOSHAN

Strategy for Undertaking Participatory Outreach by Students for Health and Nutrition

The importance of a balanced diet to good health and nutrition has been documented in India more than 5000 years ago. Relevance to the current concepts of nutrition and balanced diet can be observed in Shrimad Bhagavad Gita as well as Charaka Samhita. Due to changing health issues are increasing. Children are becoming the most vulnerable. There is an urgent need to create public awareness and educate young children about the importance of a balanced diet.

ANCIENT INDIAN PRACTICES

There existed a profound connection between the food, culture, and ancient traditions of every region in India. Eating too much food or starving were not considered health-friendly. Food does play a central role in being a rich source of energy for our physical body, and it also impacts the mind. The kind of food we eat affects the three qualities, i.e. Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. In turn, these qualities influence the digestive system, our balanced state of mind, and holistic health. Cleanliness to ensure food safety is also important as explained in the Gita.

Bhagavad Gita lucidly states that freshly cooked meals with sattvic ingredients are easy to digest, aromatic, juicy and sweet to taste. Such meals promote strength, health, longevity, cheerfulness and happiness. Foods that are salty, oily, pungent, sour and spicy are rajasic foods. Such foods cause anger, excitement, pain, and grief. Foods that are stale, rotten, half-cooked, leftover, and re-heated are tamasic foods. Such foods promote slothfulness, laziness and lethargy.

UNDERSTANDING BASIC NUTRITION

The components of food that provide nutrition are called nutrients. Nutrients are broadly classified as macro and micronutrients. Macronutrients are nutrients that provide calories or energy and are required in large amounts to maintain body functions and carry out the activities of daily life.

The Dietary goals for achieving good nutrition are outlined as follows:

- ⇒ Achieve adequate intake of required nutrients and prevention of nutrition deficiency diseases.
- ⇒ Prevent chronic diet-related disorders.
- ⇒ Maintain positive health and optimal performance by maintaining ideal body weight.
- ⇒ Ensure adequate nutrition in pregnant women and lactating mothers.
- ⇒ Strive towards achievement of good health and nutrition of infants, children, and adolescents through improvement in birth weights and growth to achieve their full genetic potential.
- ⇒ Maintenance of the health of the elderly and increasing longevity.

MACRONUTRIENTS IN THE DIET

Macronutrients are essential nutrients that are needed in large amounts to provide the body with energy, help prevent disease, and promote normal function. They are classified as proteins, fats, and carbohydrates.

MICRONUTRIENTS IN THE DIET

Micronutrients important in the diet are Vitamins and Minerals

Nutritionally adequate, Healthy, and Balanced diet

Wholesome food in adequate quantities is important at all stages of life and for satisfactory growth during infancy, childhood, and adolescence.

A balanced diet important for the maintenance of health and nutrition

Diets high in **fruits and vegetables** are widely recommended for their health-promoting properties. Fresh Vegetables and fruits are rich sources of micronutrients and macronutrients. We have to eat a variety of foods among all food groups as well as within each group to get different nutrients to fulfill a balanced diet.

Key points for ensuring dietary diversity

- ⇒ Having dietary diversity is important to obtain all the essential nutrients through the diet.
- ⇒ Always select a variety of foods, consume in amounts appropriate for age, gender, physiological status and physical activity.
- ⇒ A combination of whole grains, pulses and greens helps in achieving essential nutrients.
- ⇒ Include jaggery or sugar and cooking oils to bridge the calorie or energy gap.
- ⇒ Give preference to fresh, locally available vegetables and fruits.
- ⇒ Include in the diets, foods of animal origin such as milk, eggs and meat, particularly for pregnant and lactating women and children.
- ⇒ Low-fat, protein-rich foods such as lean meat, fish, pulses and low-fat milk are often ideal for maintaining good health and nutrition in adults.
- ⇒ Develop healthy eating habits and exercise regularly and move as much as you can to avoid sedentary lifestyle.

Processed foods: Products made by adding salt, oil, fat, sugar or other ingredients to minimally processed foods, using preservation methods such as canning and bottling, and, non-alcoholic fermentation. Contain additives that prolong product duration, protect original properties, or prevent the proliferation of microorganisms.

Ultra-processed foods: Foods that are subjected to technological modifications either for preservation or for converting into ready-to-use/eat foods. Consumption of these foods frequently referred to as “junk foods” need to be restricted.

FOOD SAFETY

Keys to safer food

- ⇒ Adulteration is the most persisting problem in India
- ⇒ Always use safe potable water for cooking and drinking purposes.
- ⇒ Select fresh and wholesome foods
- ⇒ Choose foods processed for safety, such as pasteurized milk
- ⇒ Wash fruits and vegetables, especially if eaten raw
- ⇒ Do not use food beyond its expiry date especially perishable packed foods such as bread, cheese.

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