



Adventist
Health Ministries
GENERAL CONFERENCE



Seventh-day
Adventist Church

LET'S CELEBRATE **NUTRITION**

N is for nutrition, the fuel of life



CELEBRATIONS
LIVING LIFE TO THE FULLEST

SPIRITUAL FOOD

A healthful diet can increase one's lifespan and quality of life. God loves us and desires for us to lead healthy, productive and happy lives. We can celebrate His goodness as we appropriately enjoy the many products of the earth that He has given us.

Just as we require physical food each day, we also need to spiritual food. We should not neglect the daily practice of feeding on God's Word. We have emphasized the need for variety, balance, and flavor in the foods we consume. We require balance in our spiritual food as well. We can feast on God's Word by contemplating His wonderful promises, reading inspirational stories and exhortations, and spending time in prayer. Let us do these things with praise in our hearts for the energy and health that God provides.



Nutrition, the fuel of life

Imagine with me that you have just come into possession of the sports car of your dreams! Money was no object in its design and manufacture. Even the smallest detail had been tended to with meticulous care. When you open the car door, you savor the smell of soft, supple leather. As you sink into the wonderfully padded seats and turn the ignition key to start the engine, you hear the purr from the powerful engine. The moment has come for you to take this — your car — for a drive!

After a few hours of pure enjoyment, you notice that the fuel gauge is reading close to empty, so you pull into the first gas station you find. Looking in the owner's manual, you see that the manufacturer has recommended only premium fuel for the high-compression engine. You decide, however, that any grade fuel will do, and you fill it with "regular" instead.

After all, you think, they look and smell the same. Later, when you check the engine oil, you top it off with a little water! With that kind of care, how long do you think your dream car will last?



Our bodies are far more beautiful and complex than the finest machine ever made by humans! Like a fine sports car, our bodies need fuel to power our lives, and that fuel comes from the food we eat. A balanced diet chosen from the best foods will provide the essential nutrients needed for growth, maintenance, and energy. If we choose low quality foods or do not eat enough of even the best foods, the body's machinery will suffer. Too much food may result in obesity, and excessive amounts of some nutrients can cause toxicity.

THE RIGHT BODY FUEL

Why wait for a special occasion to celebrate? Shouldn't we celebrate every meal with healthful food choices? In each meal one can enjoy the cornucopia of nutrient--dense, whole--grain breads and cereals, along with rich, colorful fruits and vegetables containing abundant amounts of vitamins, minerals, dietary fibers, and phytochemicals. Enjoy essential fats in crunchy nuts and seeds, bone--building calcium from low-fat milk or a fortified soymilk, and healthful proteins from satisfying legumes (beans, peas, and lentils) seasoned delicately with herbs and small amounts of salt, sugar, and vegetable oil as needed. These energizing, body-building foods consumed daily in appropriate quantities can reduce the risk of cancer, coronary heart disease, hypertension, intestinal disease, obesity, and osteoporosis. We can truly celebrate at every meal because of the abundance of good food God has given us!



UNDERSTANDING NUTRITION

Many people think that choosing good nutrition is difficult and understanding it is even harder! Both tasks, however, are really very simple. Let's start with the "understanding" part.

Our bodies get the nutrients we need from the food we eat as the food is digested and assimilated, beginning in the mouth, moving to the stomach, then to the small intestines, and finally to the large bowel. The nutrients our bodies need include:

- **Carbohydrates:** These should be eaten in as unrefined a form as possible. Whole grains, legumes, fruits, and vegetables are rich in these.
- **Proteins:** Every cell in the body contains proteins. Tissue repair and growth require them. While almost all foods contain some protein, particularly good sources are milk, eggs and other animal products. Legumes are excellent plant sources.
- **Fats:** These are a concentrated source of energy. We often get too much fat in our diet because we like the flavor.
- **Vitamins:** These can be either fat soluble or water soluble.
- **Minerals**
- **Trace minerals**
- **Antioxidants and phytochemicals:** These substances protect the body from disease and some of the effects of aging. They are found primarily in whole grains, fruits, vegetables and nuts.

ESSENTIAL FOOD GROUPS

There are five essential food groups. When we eat foods in appropriate amounts from all five groups, we will meet our optimal nutrient needs. Here are the five groups:

1. Cereals and Grains: These include whole-grain breads, pastas, rice and corn. When taken from unrefined (not white) sources, they are rich in dietary fiber and complex carbohydrates, as well as an array of vitamins and minerals. Depending on a person's age, weight, and activity level, six to twelve servings from this group should be consumed each day.

2. Fruits and Vegetables: These foods come in a wide variety of colors, flavors, and textures and are the richest sources of protective phytochemicals, antioxidants, and many vitamins and minerals. Depending on body size, age, and activity level, at



good health, good nutrition!



least five to ten servings of these foods, chosen from a range of colors, should be consumed daily.

3. Legumes, Nuts, and Seeds: Legumes such as beans, peas and lentils are an important source of good protein, along with minerals, vitamins and other protective elements. Three to five servings of these should be included in the daily diet, depending on a person's age and weight. Nuts and seeds are excellent sources of essential fats, but because they are a concentrated source of calories, they should be limited to no more than one to two servings per day. Nonvegetarians would include fish, fowl, and meat in this group, but these should be consumed only in moderate amounts.

4. Dairy and Eggs (or fortified equivalents): These animal sources provide many important nutrients, including calcium and vitamin B12. Vitamin B12 is found only in animal products and prevents pernicious anemia and neurological disorders. It also promotes normal cellular division. Individuals who choose not to consume any animal products need to eat foods fortified with vitamin B12 or take it in supplement form.

5. Fats, Oils, Sweets, and Salt: These foods are required only in small amounts. Essential fats and sodium are needed for optimum health. Also important is iodine, is a necessary trace mineral and is easily supplied if iodized salt is used; it can also be obtained from sea salt, seaweed, or a supplement. Refined sugar is not required for good health, but small amounts add palatability and flavor to our foods.

One of the most important keys to eating a balanced diet is selecting a variety of foods whose color, texture, and flavor add interest to the diet. These foods are best when consumed as they come from nature: not refined, not pulled apart, not fractionated. Whole foods should be the goal.



"Use plant foods as the foundation of your meals. Eating a variety of grains (especially whole-grains), fruits and vegetables is the basis of healthful eating."¹ This recommendation has been simplified in the 2010 "Dietary Guidelines for Americans" to "Make half your plate fruits and vegetables."²

Today the world is recognizing the advantages of a vegetarian diet, which is:

- Low in fat, particularly saturated fat.
- No cholesterol (with a total vegetarian diet).
- High in dietary fiber.
- Low in refined sugar.
- Contains rich sources of vitamins and minerals.
- Contains high amounts of protective substances such as phytochemicals, antioxidants, and so on.





LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

Take the time to consider these questions and apply what you are learning in your life.

1

What foods did I choose for my three most recent meals? What proportion of what I ate consisted of cereals and grains; fruits and vegetables; legumes, nuts, and seeds; and dairy and eggs? Did I make wise choices, or did I eat too much of one group and too little of another? How much of my plate contained fruits and vegetables? How colorful was my plate?

2

What portion of these meals consisted of highly processed products? Which of these can I start cutting back on, and which of the cereals, grains, and legumes can I eat more regularly?

3

How often do I consume essential fats and oils? Do I eat enough to ensure that I get the fat-soluble vitamins I need? Do I use include much fat or oil in my meals? How can I still have palatable food without using so much fat? How can I use herbs more creatively?



4

Do I routinely use too much salt? Do I reach for the saltshaker without having first tasted my food? Have I read the labels of the processed foods I use to ensure that they are not hiding a great deal of salt (sodium) that would be harmful?

5

Is my body getting adequate amounts of vitamin B12? How do I make sure I supplement these before I develop symptoms of irreversible neurological damage? Do I get adequate calcium in my diet, or am I at risk of bone loss?

6

Susie's friend Nathan noticed that Susie was a vegetarian. He asked her about the advantages of such a lifestyle. If I were Susie, what reasons would I give for my choice? If a nonvegetarian friend invites me to his home for a meal but expresses concern about how he could cook a meal without meat, what simple recipes would be easy for him to prepare but would fulfill the concept of the balance that I would like him to grasp?

7

Do I place too much emphasis on my own dietary habits? Do I want a healthy body so that I can glorify God? Do I praise Him with the spiritual diet that I choose?



GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF FOOD CHOICES

A healthful diet needs to be based on sound principles. Here are five suggestions:

1. Variety: Perhaps the most important principle of eating right is selecting a variety of foods from the five groups discussed earlier. This ensures a wide range of nutrients, and the various textures, tastes, and colors enhance the pleasure of eating.

2. Quality: Focus on whole foods, not refined foods, for the majority of your meals. These foods are nutrient-dense rather than calorie-dense.

3. Balance: Obesity is a growing problem worldwide. There needs to be a balance between the amount of energy we eat (foods) and the energy we expend (physical activity) if we are to remain at a healthy weight.

4. Moderation: Some important components of a healthful diet need to be eaten only in small amounts. We require adequate amounts of the essential fats. Fats are the vehicle for fat-soluble vitamins. We also need small amounts of salt to maintain our electrolytes.

5. Avoidance: Highly refined foods that have large amounts of their nutritional elements removed should be avoided, as should foods and beverages that have no nutritional value (alcohol, coffee and sodas).

Many excellent online tools are available that allow you to track and analyze what you eat every day. One of the best is SuperTracker,³ which is free for anyone to use.

1 US Department of Agriculture, Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2000, accessed June 19, 2012, www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dgac/ 2 US Department of Agriculture, Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010, accessed June 19, 2012, www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/fruits.html. 3 US Department of Agriculture, SuperTracker; www.choosemyplate.gov/SuperTracker/default.aspx. Photo by Naim Ahmed on Unsplash. Photo by DICSON on Unsplash. Photo by Yogendra Singh on Unsplash



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