



# Common nutrition terminologies

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### Glossary of nutrition related terms

**Allergic reaction :** Immunologically induced tissue response to a foreign substance (allergen).

**Alpha-linolenic acid :** 18 carbon fatty acid with three double bonds; the first double bond is on the third carbon atom from the methyl end and therefore it is called n-3 fatty acid. It is abbreviated as 18: 3 n-3.

**Amino acid :** The fundamental building block of proteins.

**Anabolism :** Process by which complex materials in tissues and organs are built up from simple substances.

**Antioxidants :** A group of substances that prevent the damage caused by the oxidation of fatty acids and proteins by oxygen free radicals.

**Balanced Diet :** A diet containing all essential (macro and micro) nutrients in optimum quantities and in appropriate proportions that meet the requirements.

**Beta-Carotene :** A yellow - orange plant pigment which yields vitamin A by oxidation in the body.

**Bifidus factor :** A substance in human milk which stimulates the growth of a micro-organism (*Lactobacillus bifidus*) in the infants' intestine.

**Body Mass Index :** Body weight in relation to height. Body weight in kilograms divided by 2 height in metres .

**Calorie :** Unit used to indicate the energy value of foods. Quantitative requirements are expressed in terms of energy, i.e., kilocalories (Kcals). Newer unit for energy is Kjoules.

**Catabolism** : Process of breakdown of complex organic constituents in the body.

**Cholesterol** : A lipid constituent of blood and tissues derived from diet as well as from synthesis within the body.

**Colostrum** :The milk produced by mammals during the first few days after delivery.

**CU : Consumption Unit.** - One unit represents Recommended Dietary Allowance of energy for a sedentary man.

**Empty calories** : Term used for foods that provide only energy without any other nutrient, eg. white sugar and alcohol.

**Enzymes** : Biological catalysts which enhance the rate of chemical reactions in the body.

**Essential fatty acids (EFA)** : Fatty acids like linoleic acid and alpha linolenic acid which are not made in the human body and must be supplied through the diet.

**Fatty acids** :Fundamental constituents of many lipids.

**Fibre** : Collective term for the structural parts of plant tissues which are resistant to the human digestive enzymes.

**Flavonoids** : Pigments widely distributed in nature in flowers, fruits and vegetables.

**Food Exchange** : Foods are classified into different groups for exchange. Each "exchange list" includes a number of measured foods of similar nutritive value that can be substituted inter-changeably in meal plans.

**Free radicals** : Highly reactive oxygen-derived species formed in the body during normal metabolic processes. They have the capacity to damage cellular components by oxidation.

**High-density lipoproteins (HDL)** : These transport cholesterol from the extra-hepatic tissues to the liver. They are anti-atherogenic.

**Hormones** : Substances produced by a gland (endocrine) which are secreted directly into the blood stream to produce a specific effect on another organ.

**Hyperlipidemia** : An increase in the concentration of blood lipids (triglycerides and cholesterol).

**Invisible fats** : Fat present as an integral component of plant and animal foods such as in cereals, legumes and spices.

**Lactoferrin** : Minor protein of milk containing iron. Lactose intolerance : Disorder resulting from improper digestion of milk sugar called lactose, due to lack of an enzyme, lactase, in the intestinal mucosa.

**Linoleic acid** : Fatty acid containing 18 carbon atoms and two double bonds. The first double bond is on the sixth carbon atom from the methyl end. Therefore it is called n-6 fatty acid and is abbreviated as 18:2 n-6.

**Lipids** : A technical term for fats. They are important dietary constituents. The group includes triglycerides, steroids, cholesterol and other complex lipids.

**Lipoproteins** : Lipids are not soluble in blood; they are therefore transported as lipid and protein complexes.

**Low-density lipoproteins (LDL)** : These transport cholesterol from the liver to tissues. High blood levels indicate that more cholesterol is being transported to tissues.

**Macrocytic anaemia** : Anaemia characterized by red blood cells which are larger than normal.

**Macronutrients** : Nutrients like carbohydrates, proteins and fats which are required in large quantities.

**Metabolism** : Includes catabolism and anabolism.

**Microcytic anaemia** : Anaemia characterized by red blood cells which are smaller than normal.

**Micronutrients** : Nutrients which are required in small quantities, such as vitamins and trace elements.

**Monounsaturated fatty acids** : Unsaturated fatty acids with one double bond. n-6 PUFA : Linoleic acid and its longer chain polyunsaturated fatty acids are collectively called n-6 PUFA. n-3 PUFA : Alpha-linolenic acid and its longer-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids are collectively called n-3 PUFA.

**Phytochemicals** : General name for chemicals present in plants.

**Polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFA)** : Unsaturated fatty acids with two or more double bonds.

**Processed foods** : Foods that are produced by converting raw food materials into a form suitable for eating.

**Protein Energy Malnutrition (PEM) :** A marked dietary deficiency of both energy and protein resulting in undernutrition.

**Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA) :** The amounts of dietary energy and nutrients considered sufficient for maintaining good health by the people of a country.

**Refined foods :** Foods which have been processed to improve their appearance, colour, taste, odour or keeping quality.

**Saturated fatty acids :** Fatty acids containing maximum number of hydrogen atoms that each carbon atom can carry. They do not have double bonds.

**Satiety :** Feeling of satisfaction after food intake.

**Trans-fatty acids :** Are mainly produced during hydrogenation of oils; a few also occur naturally in very small quantities.

**Triglycerides (Neutral fat) :** The major type of dietary fat and the principal form in which energy is stored in the body. A complex of fatty acids and glycerol.

**Unsaturated fatty acids :** Fatty acids in which there is a shortage of hydrogen atoms. The carbon atoms then become linked by double bonds. Unsaturated fatty acids are less stable than saturated fatty acids.

**Visible fats :** Fats and oils that can be used directly or in cooking.

**Weaning foods :** Foods which are used during gradual transition of the infant from breastfeeding to a normal diet.

**Source : Dietary Guidelines for Indians by National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad**

## Related Resources

1. [Nutrition glossary by UNICEF](#) 
2. [Dictionary of Nutrition by American Heart Association](#) 

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**Source** <https://data.vikaspedia.in/short/lc?k=0WGMo9JNcouynvs62LgdQ>

