



**Let's Commit to Better Health
& Adopt the
Dietary Guidelines
for Indians**

SCAN TO KNOW MORE ABOUT



Dietary Guidelines
for Indians



Nutrition Atlas 2.0



Nutrition Education



Nutrition Games



Nutrient
Requirements
for Indians



Nutrify India Now
App



My Plate
for the Day



Indian Food
Composition Table



What India Eats



Poshan Abhiyaan
e-modules



2025 Calendar



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Social Media

Adopt the
DIETARY GUIDELINES FOR INDIANS

Let's know our Dietary Guidelines



Guideline 1



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Eat a variety of foods to ensure a balanced diet

Rationale

Nutritionally adequate diet or a balanced diet should be consumed through a wise choice of food items from a variety (diverse) of food groups



Points to register

- ▶ Choose a variety of foods in amounts appropriate for age, gender, physiological status and physical activity.
- ▶ Use a combination of whole grains of cereals, pulses and millets.
- ▶ Prefer fresh and a variety of locally available vegetables in plenty.
- ▶ Include foods of animal origin such as milk/eggs and meat, particularly for pregnant & lactating women, children and adolescents.
- ▶ Choose nutrient-rich foods such as pulses (lentils, beans, peas), lean meat, fish & low-fat milk for elders.
- ▶ Develop healthy eating habits and exercise regularly and be physically active to avoid a sedentary lifestyle.
- ▶ Sugar should be less than 5% of the total energy per day for adults.
- ▶ No added sugar for children <2 years old.

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Guideline 2



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Ensure provision of extra food & healthcare during pregnancy & lactation

Rationale

“ Additional nutritious food and care are required during pregnancy and lactation ”

Points to register

- Follow healthy dietary habits and active lifestyle before conceiving, during pregnancy and lactation.
- For health and wellbeing of a pregnant woman and her offspring, ensure the woman has appropriate BMI and normal hemoglobin levels.
- A woman must be at least 21 years of age at the time of her first pregnancy.
- Include a variety of pulses, nuts, fish as well as milk and eggs as part of the daily diet to ensure adequate intake of protein, minerals, vitamins, essential fatty acids and essential amino acids (protein).
- High fat, high sugar, high salt (HFSS) foods should be avoided.
- Do not use alcohol and tobacco in any form. Take medicines only when prescribed by a doctor.
- A folic acid supplement (500 μ g or 0.5mg) is advised during the first 28 days of pregnancy.
- After 12 weeks of pregnancy, a calcium and an iron-folic acid (IFA) supplement is recommended, which should be continued during lactation. The recommended dosage for the prevention of anemia is one IFA tablet daily.



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Guideline 3



Ensure exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months & continue breastfeeding till 2 years & beyond

Rationale

“ Exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months ensures nutritional adequacy for infant growth & development & also the health of the mother ”



Points to register

- ▶ Early initiation of breastfeeding (EIBF) i.e. within an hour of birth is crucial.
- ▶ Colostrum i.e. milk secreted in the first 3-4 days, is rich in nutrients and should not be discarded.
- ▶ Infants should be exclusively breastfed (EBF) for the first 6 months. Do not give any other feed, not even water.
- ▶ Infants should be breastfed frequently and on demand, to establish and maintain adequate breast milk supply.
- ▶ Breastfeeding should be continued in addition to nutrient-rich complementary foods (weaning foods), preferably up to 2 years.
- ▶ Lactating mothers with any disease should continue breastfeeding unless medically advised.
- ▶ The family should actively support breastfeeding.
- ▶ Ensure that the mother is counseled on how to hold a baby while breastfeeding. Additionally, mothers must be informed regarding the appropriate method of latching the baby to breast.
- ▶ Ensure nutritionally adequate diet is consumed both during pregnancy and lactation.
- ▶ During the pregnancy and lactation period, medicines must be taken only on physician's advice.
- ▶ A lactating mother should avoid addictive substances like tobacco (smoking and chewing), alcohol and psychotropic drugs.

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Guideline 4



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Start feeding homemade semi-solid complementary foods to the infant soon after 6 months of age

Rationale

“ Home-made preparations are economical, easy to cook, safe and healthy for a growing baby ”



Points to register

- Breast milk alone is not enough to meet the increase in requirements for a child after 6 months of age.
- Complementary foods should be introduced soon after 6 months of age, in addition to breastfeeding.
- Prefer home-made complementary foods.
- Feed complementary food at least 2–4 times a day depending upon the child's age.
- Provide milk, locally available fruits and vegetables as well as eggs and meat.
- Observe hygienic practices while preparing and feeding complementary foods.
- Complementary feeding along with breastfeeding should be continued even during diarrhea or other common illnesses to prevent malnutrition.
- Limit use of salt in complementary food preparation & avoid sugar.
- Avoid foods (biscuits, cakes) and beverages (fruit juices and cold drinks) with added sugar.

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Guideline 5



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**Ensure adequate and appropriate diets for children and adolescents
both in health and sickness**

Rationale

“ Balanced diets for children above 2 years and adolescents help optimum growth and boosts their immunity ”

Points to register

- ▶ Include pulses, nuts, oilseeds, vegetables, seasonal fruits, eggs & flesh foods in the regular diet.
- ▶ Give adequate milk or curd or yogurt to children and adolescents.
- ▶ Ensure appropriate diet & physical activity during childhood, as it is essential for optimum body composition, BMI, prevention of micronutrient deficiencies & reduction in the risk of diet-related chronic diseases in later life.
- ▶ Discourage overeating as well as indiscriminate dieting.
- ▶ Restrict consumption of foods high in fat, salt and sugar & ultra-processed foods.
- ▶ Include more fibre-rich foods such as whole grains, millets, pulses, nuts & vegetables in the diet.



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Guideline 6



Eat plenty of vegetables and legumes

Rationale

“Vegetables and green leafy vegetables provide several vitamins & minerals and offer protection from micronutrient deficiencies & various diseases”

Points to register

- To achieve consumption of at least 400g of vegetables per day, include fresh vegetables and green leafy vegetables in every meal.
- Incorporate green leafy vegetables in complementary feeds of infants.
- Eat a variety of vegetables and fruits in all your meals in various forms (raw salad, curry, dry cooked vegetables, soups, as raita mixed with curd, or added to pulse and cereal preparations).
- Increase intake of vegetables and fruits during pregnancy.
- Eat plenty of legumes, as they are good sources of protein, fiber, and folic acid.
- Prefer root vegetables to tubers.



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Guideline 7



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Use oils/fats in moderation; choose a variety of oil seeds, nuts, nutricereals, and legumes to meet daily needs of fats and essential fatty acids (EFA)

Rationale

Using a diverse variety of oil seeds, nuts and whole grains, provides a balance of all fatty acids (lipids). Refined or extracted oils are processed products; hence it is best to use them in moderation



Points to register

- ▶ Include foods rich in alpha-linolenic (ALA)/n-3 PUFA such as nuts/ oil seeds, soyabean, grains/millets, green leafy vegetables and fenugreek seeds.
- ▶ Prefer marine fish such as salmon, mackerel, trout and tuna (~200gm/week) which are good sources of preferred LC n-3 fatty acids.
- ▶ Moderate the use of high n-6 PUFA containing oils.
- ▶ Limit the use of high saturated-fat containing oils/fats such as ghee, butter etc.
- ▶ Minimize consumption of ready-to-eat fast foods, bakery foods and processed foods which may contain trans fats and saturated fats.
- ▶ Avoid using partially hydrogenated fats (ex - vanaspati) as the cooking medium as they contain trans-fats and saturated fats.
- ▶ Repeated heating of cooking oils generates harmful oxidative (polar) compounds and hence must be avoided.

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Guideline 8



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Obtain good quality proteins and essential amino acids (EAA) through appropriate combination of foods and avoid protein supplements to build muscle mass

Rationale

Maintaining good muscle mass is crucial for good health. Consuming good quality protein (that provides all the EAA) and following resistance exercise routine for greater muscle mass development and preservation



Points to register

- ▶ Combining cereals with pulses in the ratio of 3:1 will improve the quality of protein in a meal.
- ▶ Vegetarians can meet their quality protein needs by taking recommended levels of pulses, beans, peas & milk/curd.
- ▶ Non-vegetarians can meet their quality protein needs by taking recommended level of fish/poultry/meat/egg.
- ▶ Most athletes can get the recommended amount of protein through appropriate selection of food items. Protein powders are unnecessary for normal healthy life.
- ▶ Indiscriminate use of excess protein as supplements for prolonged periods can affect health.

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Guideline 9



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Adopt a healthy lifestyle to prevent abdominal obesity, overweight & overall obesity

Rationale

Besides overweight and general or overall obesity, abdominal obesity (increased waist circumference) that is indicative of excess fat in the peritoneum (abdominal cavity) with accumulation of fat in and around the internal organs is associated with risk of lifestyle diseases



Points to register

- ▶ Prevention of overweight/obesity is important.
- ▶ There is a tendency to gain weight mostly around 20 years of age; and among women after childbirth because of less physical activity and excess calorie intake. Obesity is also rapidly increasing among children and adolescence and therefore, one should be watchful during these periods.
- ▶ Eat healthy and maintain appropriate body mass index or weight for height.
- ▶ Regular yoga and physical activity are essential.
- ▶ Slow and steady reduction in body weight is advisable. Extreme approaches for weight loss may lead to health hazards.
- ▶ Cut down consumption of sugar, salt, excess refined oil, deep fried foods and refined foods. Avoid soft drinks and alcohol.
- ▶ Increase consumption of fruits, vegetables and pulses. Prefer whole grains and millets to refined grains / ultra-processed foods.
- ▶ Minimize non-essential screen time.
- ▶ Healthy sleeping pattern (6–8 hrs/day) is necessary to avoid unhealthy eating behaviors and resultant weight gain.

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Guideline 10



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Be physically active and exercise regularly to maintain good health

Rationale

“ Regular physical activity, yoga and exercise keep one physically and mentally fit and promote good health ”



Points to register

- A minimum 30–45 minutes brisk walk / physical activity of moderate intensity among adults helps in maintaining good health.
- Regular physical activity of 60 minutes per day among children can prevent overweight/obesity.
- Physical activity controls body weight, reduces fat mass, increases muscle mass and improves immune function.
- Physical activity builds strong muscles, bones, joints and improves flexibility.
- Being physically active can reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, osteoporosis, arthritis and certain types of cancer.
- Even among people with chronic diseases, physical activity helps in maintaining health.
- It creates a sense of wellbeing, increases confidence and avoids depression.
- Yoga is a holistic, structured and planned physical activity that also includes breathing exercises as well as physical and mental relaxation (meditation).

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Guideline 11



Restrict salt intake

Rationale

Increased salt (sodium chloride - NaCl) intake poses a health risk & may lead to hypertension & related heart diseases and stroke



Points to register

- ▶ Restrict the intake of added salt (sodium chloride) to a maximum of 5g per day.
- ▶ Use iodized salt.
- ▶ Develop a taste for foods/diets that are low in salt from an early age.
- ▶ Restrict intake of processed and preserved foods such as snack foods, sauces, ketchup, biscuits, chips, cheese and salted fish.
- ▶ Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits. These are good sources of potassium, which helps in excretion of sodium and helps maintain the blood pressure.

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Guideline 12



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Consume safe and clean foods

Rationale

“ Contaminated and adulterated foods cause several food-borne illnesses, chronic diseases and may also contribute to malnutrition ”

Points to register



- ▶ Wash hands with soap and water before touching food, utensils or cooking.
- ▶ Buy food items from reliable sources after careful examination.
- ▶ Wash vegetables and fruits thoroughly before use.
- ▶ Wash the surface of eggs thoroughly before preserving and before preparation.
- ▶ Wash and cook meat thoroughly.
- ▶ Store raw and cooked foods separately and properly to prevent cross-contamination.
- ▶ Refrigerate perishable food items.
- ▶ Maintain good personal hygiene and keep the cooking and food storage areas clean and safe.
- ▶ Always use thoroughly cleaned utensils, knives, chopping boards.
- ▶ Consume cooked foods within 4–6 hours of preparation. If left at room temperature, reheat thoroughly before consuming.

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Guideline 13



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Adopt appropriate pre-cooking and cooking methods

Rationale

“ Healthy cooking practices are important for good health ”

Points to register

- ▶ Do not wash food grains and legumes repeatedly before cooking.
- ▶ Do not wash vegetables and fruits after cutting or peeling.
- ▶ Do not soak the cut vegetables in water.
- ▶ Do not cook in excess water and discard it after cooking. Use only enough water for cooking.
- ▶ Always cover cooked foods with lids.
- ▶ Prefer pressure/steam cooking instead of deep frying/roasting
- ▶ Consume more sprouted or fermented foods.
- ▶ Do not use baking soda while cooking pulses and vegetables as it adds to the sodium content (just like salt) of foods.
- ▶ Avoid reheating and reuse of left-over heated oils.
- ▶ Prefer earthen cookware over others.



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Guideline 14



Drink adequate quantity of water

Rationale

“ Adequate water is important for maintaining good health ”

Points to register

- ▶ Drink adequate quantities of safe water to meet the daily fluid requirements.
- ▶ Boil water, when safety of the water is in doubt.
- ▶ Consume fresh fruits rather than in juice form.
- ▶ Prefer butter milk, tender coconut water, lemon water etc., as beverages in hot weather. Avoid synthetic soft drinks and carbonated beverages.
- ▶ Synthetic soft drinks are not substitutes for water and therefore should be avoided.
- ▶ Avoid alcoholic beverages.



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Guideline 15



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Minimize the consumption of high fat, sugar, salt (HFSS) and ultra-processed foods (UPFs)

Rationale

“ Ultra-processed foods (UPFs) are often high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS). Regular consumption of UPFs or HFSS are known to increase the risk of non-communicable diseases like diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, etc.



Points to register

- Ultra-processed foods are usually high in fats/sugar/salt and or low in micronutrients and fibre and mostly calorie dense.
- Restrict consumption of HFSS and UPF foods: sauces, cheese, mayonnaise, jams, fruit pulps, juices, carbonated beverages, biscuits, cookies, cakes, pastries, breakfast cereals, cool drinks, health drinks, packaged fruit juices, etc.
- Always prefer fresh and minimally processed foods: whole grains such as cereals, millets, pulses and fresh vegetables, fruits, nuts and seeds.
- Even home-made foods may become unhealthy if prepared with high fat, high sugar or salt.
- Choose carefully when consuming foods prepared outside the home.
- Avoid deep fried, fatty, sugary and salty foods and bakery products.
- Food with high salt increases the risk of hypertension and burden the kidneys. Hence, they are unhealthy choices.
- Enriching and fortifying UPFs with nutrients does not make them wholesome or healthy.

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Guideline 16



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Include nutrient-rich foods in the diets of the elderly for health and wellness

Rationale

To remain healthy and active, elderly persons need foods rich in vitamins and minerals along with adequate physical activity



Points to register

- Eat a variety of nutrient-rich foods, as elderly people require less energy but more micronutrients from vegetables, fruits, beans, nuts, eggs and fish.
- Ageing is often accompanied by a loss of appetite & changes in taste and smell, which can lead to lower intake of required foods.
- Ensure healthy food habits & regular physical activity, as they are required to maintain good health and improve the quality of life.
- Avoid HFSS and ultraprocessed foods with high amounts of salt, sugar and fats.
- Consume adequate water to avoid dehydration.

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Guideline 17



Read information on food labels to make informed and healthy food choices

Rationale

“Most food items are now available in pre-packaged forms. Therefore, the consumer needs to know what is inside the pack.

Food labels on a package provide information about contents, ingredients and nutritional information as well as shelf life.

Reading labels can help to make an assessment of the nutritional quality and safety of the foods and thus make informed choices.



Points to register

- Nutrition and health claims are regulated by FSSAI.
- Always read food label information to know about content of foods inside a pack.
- A food label should display the name of the food, brand name, list of the ingredients, date of manufacture, use-by/expiration dates, allergen declaration, etc.
- The ingredients are presented in a descending order, with the food item that has been used in highest quantity stated as the first item.
- The nutrient content declaration is usually printed on the back of the pack. This nutrient content provides nutrients per 100gm, 100ml or serving size to help the consumer make informed choices.
- Now, percent RDA per nutrient for every serving of food is also mandatory on the label.
- Although nutrition and health claims are regulated by FSSAI, consumers are advised to exercise caution by cross-checking the claims with ingredients and nutrition information on the label.



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