

# Healthy Diet and Nutrition

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## Overview

A healthy diet supplies the body with essential nutrients—carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals, and water—in adequate proportions to sustain energy, repair tissues, and support immunity.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), unhealthy diets and physical inactivity are leading global risks to health, contributing to approximately 11 million deaths annually due to noncommunicable diseases such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and certain cancers.

Globally, only 1 in 4 adults consumes the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables daily. In India, the ICMR-NIN (National Institute of Nutrition) reports a rising trend in consumption of processed foods and sugar-sweetened beverages, especially in urban areas.

*[Source: WHO Global Health Observatory, 2023; ICMR-NIN, 2023]*

## Causes / Risk Factors

Poor dietary habits are influenced by urbanization, food marketing, limited access to affordable fresh produce, and changing lifestyles. Key risk factors include:

- High intake of processed foods, red meats, and trans fats
- Excessive salt and sugar consumption (average global salt intake is double the WHO recommendation of 5 g/day)
- Low consumption of whole grains, fruits, and vegetables
- Skipping meals or irregular eating patterns due to work stress
- Socioeconomic constraints and lack of nutrition education

*[Source: WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, 2023]*

## Symptoms / Indicators

Nutritional imbalance manifests through physical and metabolic symptoms:

- **Deficiency-related signs:** Fatigue, anemia, frequent infections, poor wound healing
- **Excess-related signs:** Weight gain, high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol
- **In children:** Growth delay, cognitive deficits, poor academic performance

Malnutrition can coexist with obesity—a growing problem in both high- and low-income nations.

[Source: UNICEF-WHO Joint Malnutrition Estimates, 2022]

## Prevention / Lifestyle

WHO and Harvard School of Public Health emphasize dietary diversity and moderation:

- Include at least 400 g of fruits and vegetables daily
- Replace refined grains with whole grains
- Limit free sugar intake to <10% of total daily energy, ideally <5%
- Consume healthy fats (nuts, seeds, olive oil) instead of trans fats
- Stay hydrated and reduce consumption of sugary drinks

Cultural adaptation is key—India's "Eat Right India" campaign by FSSAI promotes traditional home-cooked meals, portion control, and food safety.

[Source: WHO, 2023; FSSAI, 2024; Harvard Health, 2024]

## Screening / Diagnosis

Healthcare providers evaluate nutrition using:

- BMI (Body Mass Index) and waist-to-hip ratio
- Blood panels for iron, vitamin B12, D, lipid profile, and glucose
- Dietary recall and physical activity logs
- Anthropometric assessments in children (height-for-age, weight-for-age)

Community-level nutrition screening is recommended every 6–12 months for at-risk populations.

[Source: ICMR-NIN, 2022]

## Management / Public Health Perspective

Global and national nutrition programs emphasize awareness, fortification, and education:

- WHO's Global Action Plan for NCDs promotes salt and sugar reduction policies
- India's Poshan Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission) targets maternal and child undernutrition
- School-based nutrition education programs (Mid-Day Meal Scheme) have improved dietary diversity
- Nutrition literacy and behavior change communication are key to long-term improvement

[Source: WHO, 2023; Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, 2024]

## Summary Points

- Balanced diets prevent most chronic diseases
- Limit salt, sugar, and trans fats
- Eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains
- National and global initiatives aim to improve nutrition literacy

**Disclaimer:** This document is for educational purposes only and should not be considered medical advice.