

The main nutrients needed by the body

The body needs many nutrients in order to function. The nutrients carry out many body functions such as providing energy, insulation, development of bones and overall good health and growth.

Table 1. Main nutrients needed by the body

Food Nutrient	Benefits	Food sources
Protein	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Builds and repairs body tissues• Builds antibodies that protect against diseases	Meats, poultry, eggs, dairy, peas and beans
Vitamins and minerals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promotes healthy growth and development such as healthy functioning of the nerves and hardening of bones and teeth (calcium). Formation of haemoglobin which carries oxygen in the blood (iron). Boosts the release of energy (vitamin B12). Aids in the repair of damaged tissue and strengthens the immune system (vitamin C).	Fruits and vegetables
Fats and oils	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protects internal organs• Provides the body with energy when needed• Makes hormones• Needed for the development of brains in babies	Oils, butter, margarine, cheese
Carbohydrates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Main source of energy for the body	Starchy foods, pasta, rice, ground provisions such as sweet potatoes
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transports nutrients, waste and other products around the body• Maintains proper body temperature	Water, watery fruits and vegetables such as water melon and cucumber

Fiber	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allows for the easy elimination of faeces• Prevents constipation	Grains, green leafy vegetables, fruits
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