

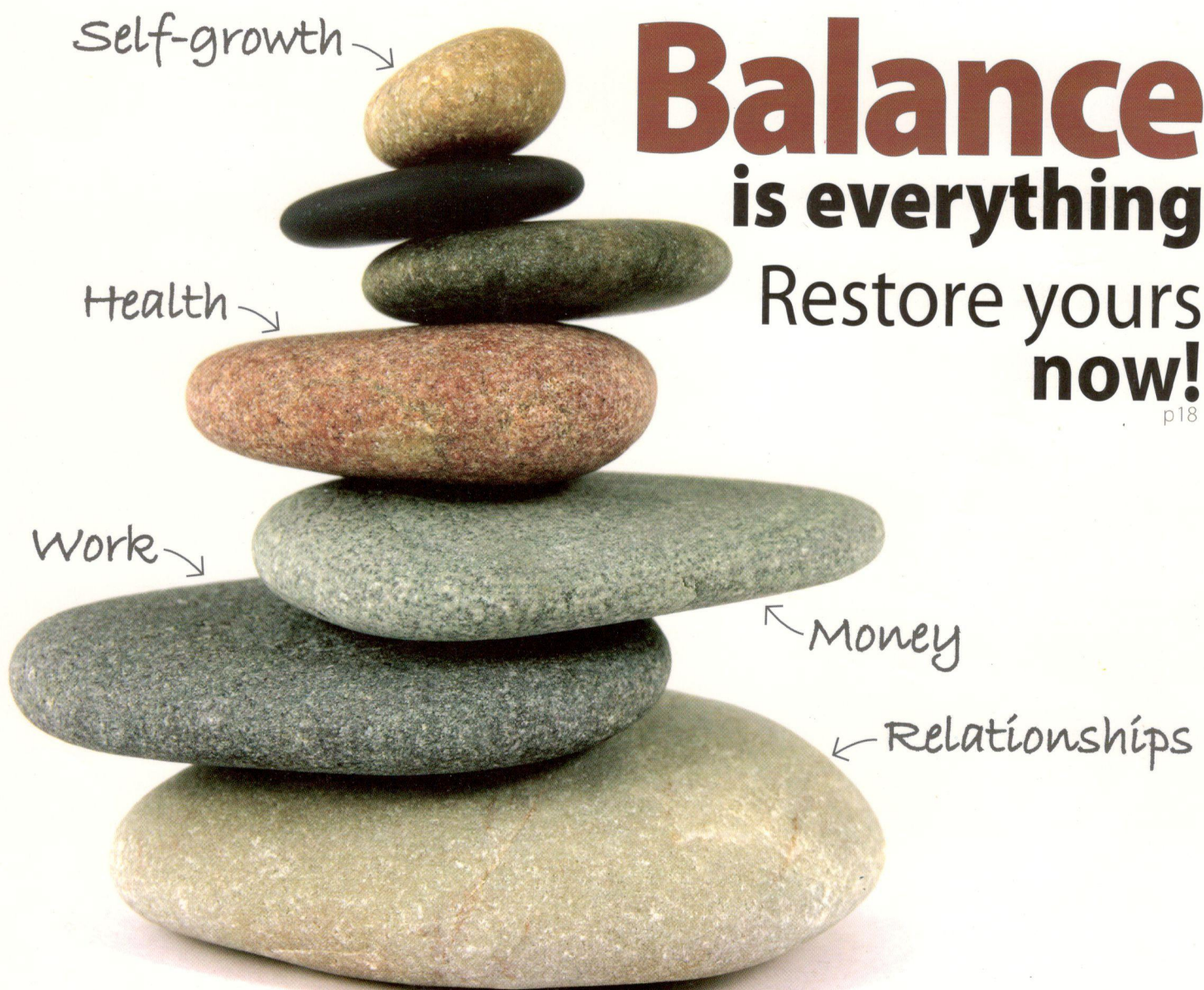
FINE-TUNE YOUR » Diet ■ Fitness ■ Relationships ■ Finances

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VOL V ■ ISSUE 07
MAY 2011
Rs 75

Stay Well



Balance
is everything
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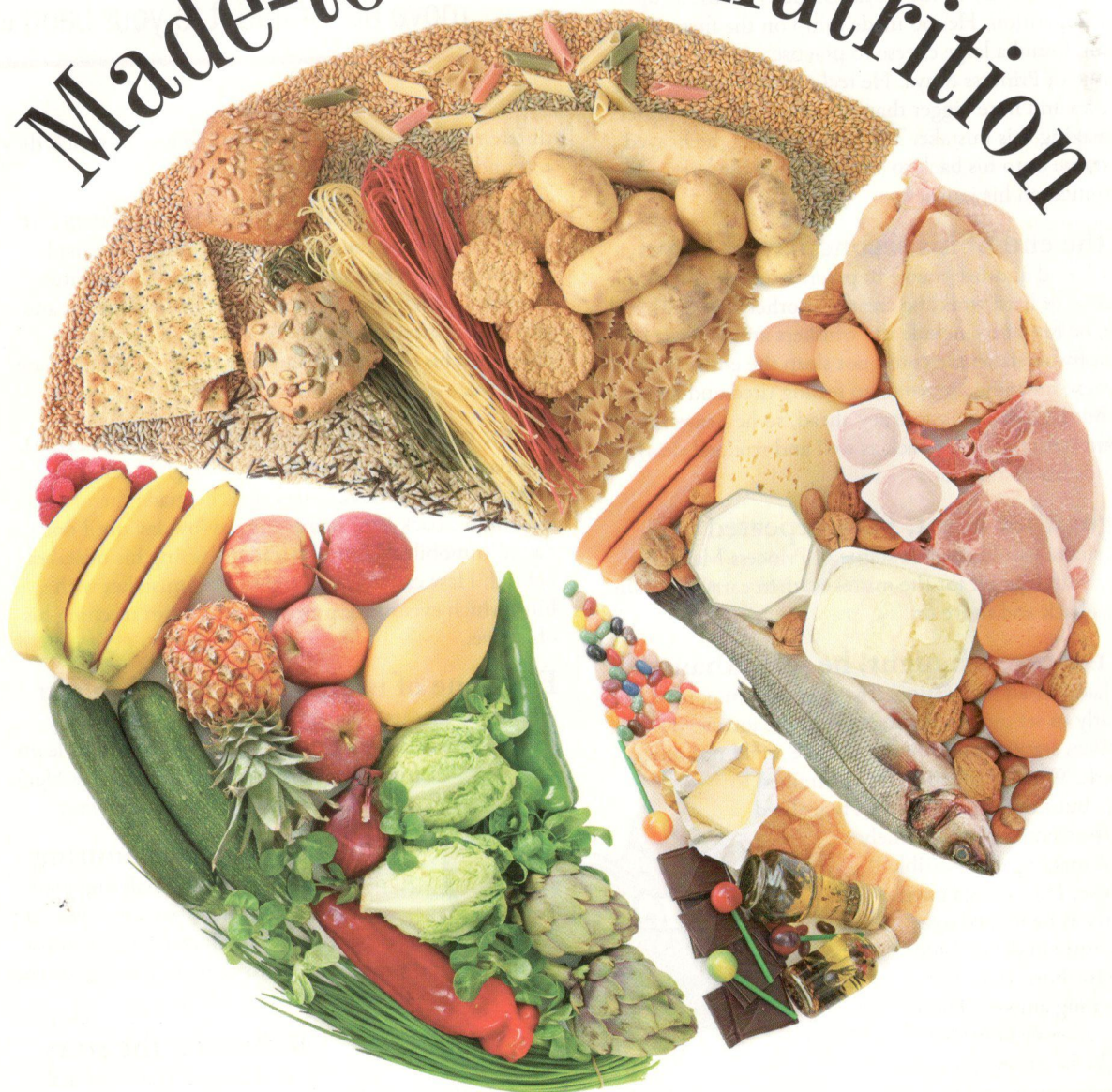
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Made-to-order nutrition



The concept of balanced diet is different for every individual.
Here's how to create a plan that is ideal for you

FOOD AND NUTRITION / By Hiteshi Dhami-Shah

From childhood, the importance of eating a balanced diet has been reiterated to us by our parents, teachers and doctors. But what we need to understand is that a diet that is balanced for one may not be so for all. The amount and type of food needed per day is individualised and depends on age, sex, body size, level of physical activity, presence of any illness or deficiency and critical periods such as pregnancy, lactation or convalescence.

You can customise your diet to suit your needs. To get started, get your basics right, starting with the types of food groups.

Energy foods: Carbohydrates are the primary source of energy for our body, without which none of the bodily activities will be possible. Whole grain cereals, rice, jowar, bajra, nachni, barley, buckwheat, oats, durum wheat pasta and sugar are sources of carbohydrates.

Growth foods: Protein is essential to build new tissues and repair damaged tissues. Fish, chicken, egg, milk and its products are animal sources of protein, whereas pulses, soy, beans and nuts are plants sources of protein.

Protection foods: Fats form an insulating layer below the skin to protect the vital organs. They are also carriers for vitamins A, D, E and K. Milk, eggs, nuts, fish, cereals, pulses contain invisible fat and ghee, butter, cream and cooking oil contain visible fats. Additionally, fruits and vegetables are an important source of vitamins and an assortment of plant-derived molecules called antioxidants that help protect our bodies from disease.

On your platter

Your meal plan should contain these five basic groups.

- Cereals, grains and their products
- Pulses and legumes
- Fruit and vegetables
- Milk, lean meat, fish, eggs
- Oil and sugar.

A balanced diet should provide 50 – 70 per cent of total calories from carbohydrate, 10 – 15 per cent from protein and 20 – 25 from fat. To simplify that, here's a way to divide your plate and make sure you're eating the right foods, and in the right amount.

Lunch and dinner

1. To begin with, your plate should be around 9" in diameter [This is the size of standard plates we use for our meals].
2. Imagine two equal halves of the plate. Divide one half into two more equal sections.
3. Fill the largest portion of the plate with non-starchy vegetables such as tomato, onion, cabbage, cauliflower, green beans, carrot, broccoli, leafy vegetables.
4. In one of the smaller sections, put starch foods made from wheat, *jowar*, *bajra*, *nachni*, oats, rice, corn and potato. In the other smaller section, place protein foods like fish, chicken, egg, tofu, soy beans and pulses.
5. Finally add 240ml or 2 cups of low-fat milk or yoghurt along with a piece of fruit or half cup of fruit salad.

SERVING SIZE

	Servings per day	One serving includes
Cereals	6 – 11	1 slice of bread ½ cup cooked rice 1 thin <i>roti</i> 12cm in diameter
Dairy	2 – 3	2 cups milk or curd 150 – 200g cottage cheese
Protein	2 – 3	1 medium egg 1 medium-size piece of fish or chicken ½ cup cooked beans 1/3 cup nuts
Vegetables	3 – 5	1 cup leafy vegetables ½ cup other vegetables ¾ cup vegetable juice
Fruits	2 – 4	1 medium size fruit ½ cup chopped, stewed, canned ¾ cup fruit juice

Breakfast

Your breakfast plate should be smaller to ensure that you keep your portions small. Use half your plate for cereals.

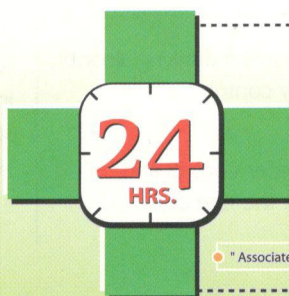
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Add fruit in one quarter and fish, chicken, egg, sprouts, milk or its products in the other part. Apart from meals, also ensure that you drink enough water.

Smart meals

Avoid skipping meals and eat 5 – 6 meals in a day, which include breakfast, mid-morning snack, lunch, afternoon snack and dinner. Remember, do not go without food for long hours.

Eat trans fats and sugar sparingly as they provide empty calories. The foods to avoid include salad dressings, oils, cream, butter, *ghee*, margarine, mayonnaise, sugars, soft drinks, candies, sweet desserts and *mithai*.

Read the nutrition labels to know the content of saturated fat, trans fat, unsaturated fat, fibre, vitamins, minerals, proteins, and carbohydrates in the food. Start with the calorie content of each serving. If the fat content is five per cent or less, it indicates low-fat and 20 per cent or more indicates high fat content.

Limit your cholesterol and sodium intake and increase your consumption of dietary fibre, vitamin and minerals.

Consult a dietician or a qualified nutritionist to chalk out a diet plan that is right for you.

SPECIAL CASES

The diabetes diet

- ◆ Never skip a meal. Timely intake of three main meals and 2 – 3 in-between meals is essential to maintain blood sugar levels.
- ◆ Include good amount of low GI [glycaemic index] foods in your meal plan—oats, barley, buck wheat, pulses, legumes, peas, beans, milk, curd, green, red, yellow and oranges fruits and vegetables like cherries, strawberries, tomatoes, oranges, apple, mushroom, onions, lettuce and cabbage.
- ◆ Make high biological value protein like milk, egg, fish a part of your diet.
- ◆ Decrease the intake of animal fat like butter, margarine, cheese, meat. Instead, opt for products like skimmed milk and low-fat curd. Replace fried food items with baked, steamed or grilled foods.
- ◆ Eat 4 – 5 servings of fruits and vegetables, but know your portion count and distribute it well throughout the day.
- ◆ Restrict sugar and sugary food items.
- ◆ Limit the intake of alcohol. Also avoid drinking alcohol on an empty stomach, as it may contribute to hypoglycaemia.

On the whole, keep your weight under control and if you are overweight, aim to lose at the rate of 0.5 – 1 kg/week.

The hypertension diet

- ◆ Limit salt intake to one tsp per day. This is achieved by not adding salt while cooking. Minimise the intake of ajinomoto, baking powder, pickles, canned foods, chips, ketchup, chutney, cheese, salted butter, salted nuts, frozen peas, dry fish, shell fish, biscuits, cookies, cakes and pastries.
- ◆ Include food rich in calcium, potassium and magnesium like milk and its products, green vegetables, pulses, oranges, sweet lime, strawberry, apricots, banana, almonds and pumpkin seeds in your diet.

In addition, do aerobic exercises such as brisk walking for 30 minutes a day, at least five days a week.

The cholesterol diet

People with high blood cholesterol and triglyceride levels should maintain a slightly lower than standard weight. They also need to reduce the total caloric intake accordingly.

- ◆ Consume a high-fibre diet with an emphasis on the intake of complex cereals like wheat, *jowar*, *bajra*, *ragi* [*nachni*], oats, barley, buckwheat, raw salads and green leafy vegetables.
- ◆ Include five servings of fruits and vegetables, 2 – 3 servings of skimmed milk and yoghurt in your meals. Avoid drinking whole milk and its products like paneer and cheese.
- ◆ Prefer egg white than egg yolk and eat eggs 2 – 3 times a week in any form—omelette, scrambled or boiled.
- ◆ Avoid eating fried foods, sweets, chocolate, carbonated beverages, alcohol, sugar, pastries, cakes, ice-cream, meat, pork and coconut.
- ◆ Include soybean, fenugreek, garlic, onion and turmeric as they have a hypocholesterolemic [cholesterol-lowering] effect.
- ◆ Add foods rich in omega-3 like salmon, flaxseeds and walnuts to your diet as they help build good cholesterol.

Even the best planned diet is incomplete if not complemented with physical activity. Physical activity helps in building good cholesterol and muscle mass, maintaining weight, and controlling blood pressure and blood sugar in diabetics. Be it jogging, running, swimming, playing a sport, or weight training, incorporate a physical activity in your daily schedule.

Stay Well

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