

# PREVENT NCDs

Stay Free From Diet-Related Diseases



## NCDs - A Wake-Up Call

With Dr Tee E Siong

It's Never Easy, but It's Achievable

From Heavy to Healthy

Nutritional Myths Debunked

Fight NCDs by Being Active

Hidden Traps in Food

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# Protect From NCDs From Young

The prevalence of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in our country has been rising over the past few decades. More Malaysians are being afflicted by NCDs such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease and cancer. Heart disease has been the number 1 killer for over three decades and this rising trend has been attributed to unhealthy lifestyle practices, including unhealthy diet and lack of physical activity.

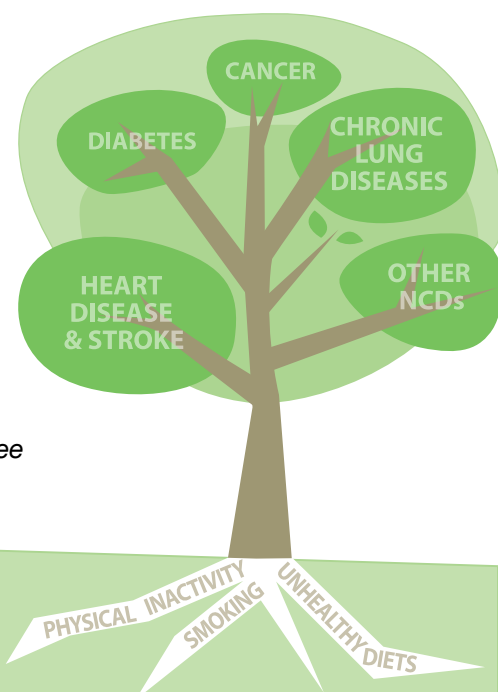
In recognition of this growing problem, Nutrition Month Malaysia (NMM) 2013 will focus on empowering Malaysians with the knowledge and practical tips to practice a healthier and active lifestyle. It is imperative that we take positive steps to prevent NCDs from a young age.

In this publication, we take a look at how serious NCDs are and their effects on Malaysians from all walks of life. Read on to learn about the risk factors and ways to improve your diet and lifestyle, as well as the experiences of two young adults in pursuit of a healthier lifestyle. You can also learn how to whip up healthier meals from our celebrity chef's story. Explore the other chapters that deal with the importance of a balanced and nutritious diet and the critical role that physical activity plays in a healthy life. Find out more about many other interesting topics pertaining to your health.

We hope our stories will inspire you to gain control of your health. The choice is yours! Take charge of your life now to positively influence your health.

Happy reading!

**Dr Tee E Siong,**  
Chairman of NMM Steering Committee





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# NCDs

## - A Wake-Up Call

The no. 1 killer of Malaysians – cardiovascular disease (CVD) - is still on the loose. Also known as heart disease, CVD is just one of the diseases categorized as ‘non-communicable diseases’ (NCDs) by the World Health Organisation (WHO). CVDs have become the main causes of death in many countries globally, and the same is true in Malaysia.

According to WHO, NCDs are diseases that are not transmitted through infection (hence the term non-communicable) but are instead closely related to lifestyle practices. The main causative factors of NCDs are unhealthy eating habits and lack of physical activity. These diseases often strike silently, building up slowly in our body without warning, from as early as childhood.

NCDs include a number of chronic serious diseases, but the most important ones are obesity, diabetes, heart disease and cancers.

Many have fallen victims to NCDs. It has become increasingly prevalent globally, including Malaysia. However, what is truly chilling about these diseases is the fact that they are now striking younger and younger Malaysians!

Read our interview with **Dr Tee E Siong**, President of Nutrition Society of Malaysia, who is the best person to explain more about how NCDs are affecting our families...

The combined number of overweight and obese people, makes up almost half of the Malaysian adults (47%).

### The Story So far....

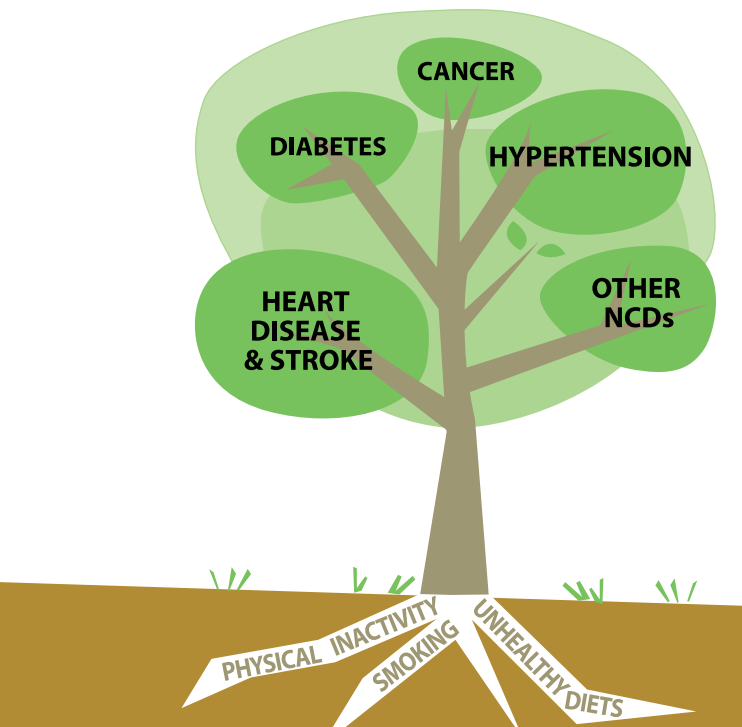
The ugly truth is that Malaysia has the unflattering distinction of being one of the ‘top’ countries in Asia in terms of NCDs. According to Dr Tee, the latest National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) 2011 revealed alarming statistics!

- **2.6 million** people suffer from diabetes (diabetes has increased from 11.6% in 2006 to 15.2% in 2011)
- **2.5 million** people are obese (obesity increased three-fold, from 4.4% in 1996 to 15.1% in 2011)
- **35.1%** have high cholesterol
- **32.7%** have high blood pressure

Source: National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) 2011

“It’s becoming a common sight to see so many overweight or obese people around us!” lamented Dr Tee. He also added, “Heart disease and strokes are now the top five causes of death in Malaysia. **25% of these deaths are premature** and could have been prevented. There is evidence to show that **60-70% Malaysians who visit clinics suffer from a form of NCD.**”

“Even the number of cancer patients have increased. Right now, the “top” cancers are colorectal and lung cancers for men, and breast and colorectal cancers in women.”



## The Root of the Problem

“Unhealthy lifestyles are rampant in our society and this is directly linked to the rising NCD statistics. Nowadays, many Malaysians lead sedentary lifestyles and have a tendency to indulge in unhealthy foods and bad eating habits,” observed Dr Tee. “I’m sure we’re all familiar with the greeting *“Dah makan ke belum?”* that most of us have a tendency to ask the moment we see our friends. This is a very big indication of just how large a role food plays in our lives.”

“We are a nation of food lovers who have become fixated on food. Meeting our friends, families, and acquaintances at restaurants, local cafes, coffee shops, the ‘mamak’ stall, or anywhere with food and/or drinks has become the norm,” stated Dr Tee. “Let’s not forget another typical Malaysian pastime; talking about food and the best places we can go for the best foods we’ve ever eaten. All these talk just feeds our obsession!”

## Too Much of a Good Thing

It’s an undeniable fact that we eat in excess, and this contributes to consuming excessive calories, fats, sugar, and salt. Add in our decidedly sedentary lifestyle into the mix, along with the usual excuse of “no time lah” for exercise, coupled with the sad fact that many Malaysians have a harmful tobacco and alcohol habit and voila! We have a ticking time-bomb in the form of NCDs, just waiting to go off.

## Knowing Your Risk

Many young people take their health for granted. Most would not think that NCDs could affect them, much less believe that they are just as vulnerable. After all, they are still in the bloom of youth.

Dr Tee highlights, “We have more cases than ever now of NCDs appearing in the younger age group – people

as young as 30 are showing signs of being affected by NCDs. This significantly contributes to premature deaths that are occurring in our population.”

“A very big part of why this happens is simply because of ignorance,” declared Dr Tee. “When you don’t even know what your blood lipid profile, blood pressure, or any of the other indicators of your vital stats are, this would mean that you are ignorant of your own health. It is this ignorance that leads to the NCDs gaining a secure foothold. By the time you know about it, it may be too late to reverse the condition.”

Malaysians tend to live in denial, and this is another major reason for the high occurrence of NCDs. They may know the ill effects of unhealthy eating and sedentary lifestyle, but do not translate this knowledge into healthier daily practices. Many also delay taking action to correct any of the detected signs; this procrastination often results in a significantly disastrous impact on their health.

## Go for Regular Check-ups

“If you have not checked your health status, now is the time to start. Find out if you have any of the risk factors of NCDs. Don’t remain in the dark; find out what these values are in order to be able to do something about them”, advised Dr Tee. He emphasized, “The key to controlling these chronic diseases is to detect early and take immediate steps to keep them within the healthy range”.

“I hope that this article will increase your awareness of how NCDs can affect young adults. More importantly, I certainly hope you will go beyond having the knowledge and start taking positive measures to make preventive or corrective measures from a young age.



Dr Tee remarked, “All these are unhealthy lifestyle choices that we have made. It’s true that they are risk factors for NCDs, but the good news is; **they’re all modifiable!** If we don’t get our eating pattern under control and if we don’t get enough physical activity daily, then we will inevitably be afflicted with one or more NCDs. It’s simply a question of making serious efforts to prevent NCDs. The only sensible option is to change our lifestyle.”



# Keeping Regular Tabs

How do you know if you are at risk? High blood glucose, high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, and being overweight or obese are some of the risk factors you should be aware of. Get yourself checked out if you want to keep your health on track.

# NC

Refer and aim for the healthy values below:



## BMI

(Body Mass index)

A simple, quick indicator to determine if your current weight is proportionate to your height

### WHO & WHERE :

- Do-it-yourself (DIY) at home
- Calculate your BMI with the formula:

$$\frac{\text{Weight (kg)}}{\text{Height (m)} \times \text{Height (m)}}$$

### TARGET :

18.5 to 24.9 (kg/m<sup>2</sup>)

If your BMI value is...

- < 18.5, *you are underweight*
- ≥ 25.0, *you are overweight*
- ≥ 30.0, *you are obese*

**WHEN :** Twice per month



## Blood Glucose Test

A quick test to find out your blood glucose level

### WHO & WHERE :

- DIY at home if you have a glucometer
- Clinic/Hospital by healthcare professionals
- Pharmacy by healthcare professionals

### TARGET :

Types of Measurement	Normal values
Fasting blood glucose	< 5.6 mmol/L
Random blood glucose	< 7.8 mmol/L

**WHEN :** Annually

# on Your D Risks



## Lipid Profile

A good indicator to check if you have high levels of blood cholesterol and triglycerides

### WHO & WHERE :

- Clinic/Hospital by healthcare professionals

### TARGET :

Parameters	Normal values
TG	< 1.7 mmol/L
HDL c	> 1.6 mmol/L
LDL c	< 2.6 mmol/L
Total cholesterol	< 5.2 mmol/L

**WHEN :** Annually

\* HDL c = Good cholesterol  
LDL c = Bad cholesterol  
TG = Triglyceride



## Blood Pressure Measurement

A very simple way to check if you are at risk of getting hypertension

### WHO & WHERE :

- DIY at home if you have blood pressure monitors
- Clinic/Hospital by healthcare professionals
- Pharmacy by healthcare professionals

### TARGET :

Below 130/85 mm/Hg

**WHEN :** Annually

# FIGHT CHRONIC

Be Risk-Free;

## START SMALL with These 10 Steps to an NCD-Free Life.



Follow the guiding principles of Balance, Moderation, and Variety as outlined in the Food Pyramid.

1



Eat less high-fat & high-cholesterol foods.

2



Cut down your sugar intake.

3



Use less salt; use herbs and spices to improve the taste of your food instead.

4



Maintain a healthy body weight.

5



# DISEASES, NOW!

**CHANGE Your Way of Living.**



**Be physically active; accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity exercises a day.**

6



**Stop smoking.**

7



**Drink less alcohol.**

8



**Learn to handle stress.**

9



**Get sufficient rest and sleep daily.**

10

# It's Never Easy, but It's Achievable

Balancing your life – work, family, health, and almost everything under the sun.

Most modern day families face many demands and pressures in life. Our challenges often involve busy work schedules, tight deadlines, long working hours, kids, social obligations, and household chores while struggling to keep your body and family healthy at the same time.

We had a chance to catch up with **Pn Muhaini Hussin**, a young career woman who has successfully integrated her career, a healthy lifestyle, and her goal of being the perfect wife and mother. It has certainly been a tough journey for this gutsy 'lil lady. We'd like to share her story with you.

## A day in my life,

by Pn Muhaini Hussin

"My day usually starts early; once I'm up, I will take a quick brisk walk or do some simple exercises like stretching or running up and down the stairs to get myself physically energised. Sometimes I will do some simple household chores instead before preparing a simple wholesome breakfast for my family," disclosed Muhaini. "After breakfast, my husband will head off to work and I'll drop my daughter off at her play-school before going to the office, where my hectic work day starts. At the end of the day, it's time to rush home to prepare some simple meals for my family."



In light of the hectic nature of her lifestyle, Muhaini believes that the only way to keep herself going daily is to keep herself fit and healthy. She focuses on two main aspects in getting her family to live a healthier lifestyle.

“The first is ensuring all of us eat right and healthily while the second is incorporating a fitness regime or exercise into our daily lives”, reveals Muhaini. “I must admit, it was tough at the beginning but it is something that is achievable, so it shouldn’t be too much of a challenge to get your family started on the road to healthy living.”

Here, she shares her two key principles and tips on how she keeps herself (and family) healthy, active, and happy.

## 1. Eat Healthily

Start by eating right and practise healthy habits. To maintain my energy levels, I take 3 main meals and avoid snacking in-between meals. If I’m hungry in-between meals, I’ll take fruits or plain wholegrain crackers.

For my family, whenever I can manage, I’ll prepare a simple meal so that we can have more home-cooked meals. I feel that it’s the best option simply because we have better control over what goes into our dishes.

Whenever I cook, I try to use healthier products such as brown rice mixed with some white rice, wholemeal bread, and pasta. I also minimise the usage of oil, sugar and salt in my dishes. With home cooked meals, I have full control over the cooking methods and portions that I cook and serve.

Of course there are days when time is a constraint. We will just take-away 1 main dish from outside, and cook rice and a simple vegetable dish.

The weekends are when we cook something more elaborate together. I take this time in the kitchen as my family bonding time. While my daughter helps in the kitchen with some simple task like washing vegetables or stirring what I cook, my husband will do the cleaning. Having my family involved in the kitchen makes them eat whatever healthy meals I cook. I believe this has also helped my daughter to be less picky in her foods too.



## Muhaini's time saving tips to cook healthier meals at home...

1. **Plan your family's menu ahead on a weekly basis.** Ensure they are balanced with all the important food groups plus variety.

2. **Plan out your grocery shopping list.** Be sure to include healthier food options (for instance, I usually make use of the food label on the packaged food to make sure I choose whole grains or foods higher in fibre or other nutrients for my family).

3. **Clean, cut, and pack in smaller portions the meal you plan to cook for the week** for easier defrosting and preparation for cooking.



4. **Prepare some of the ingredients in advance.** Chop/blend your onions, garlic, or chilli paste. You can even make a batch of your own home-made chicken stock for later use.

5. **Prepare extra portions in advance for freezing.** Curry and stew are good for cooking in bulk and freezing. (For me, I cook my pasta sauces in advance on weekends so that it's ready to be heated up for instant meals).



## 2. Be More Active

I try to be active as much as I can because I want to be fit and have the stamina to keep up with my active 3-year old daughter. Despite a busy schedule, I make it a point to get as much physical activity as I can; every little bit counts in the long run. I also make it a point to move around the house a lot, regardless of whether I'm doing household chores or just walking up and down the stairs. At work, I always use the stairs as much as possible.

During weekends, I do more vigorous exercises such as jogging around the neighbourhood while my daughter cycles on her bike. Occasionally, I would drag my husband along so that the whole family can enjoy some outdoor activities together.



On weekdays, my first priority is to start my day early with some form of exercise. If I miss my morning exercises, I'll work out in the evening instead; I'll just hop on my elliptical trainer while watching TV. I usually alternate between using the trainer and some light-weights with my husband. I must say, the elliptical trainer was a great investment for us as it is so convenient! We can get our exercise while catching up on the news or our favourite shows on TV, and all in the comfort of our own home.

## What Keeps Her Going...



Muhaini admits there are times it is difficult to juggle all the demands of her life. "There is no way I can afford to fall sick. I have to be well in order to take care of my family," she exclaimed. "I want nothing more than to be there, and provide the best for them.

Muhaini also revealed that she has a female family member who is not yet 40, but is recovering from cancer. This incident made her realise even more that it is important to take care of our health from young. Don't wait until it is too late, as diet related diseases start developing over time due to our bad lifestyle choices.

## Get started now!

As a parting message, Muhaini emphasized "We have to make living a healthy lifestyle into a family affair; be sure to get your children and spouse involved. Someone has to take charge, so it might as well be you! Plan ahead and manage your time."

"Start off with baby steps in order to make it easier for everyone to stick to your plan", she revealed.

*"Every journey starts with a single step, but you'll never finish it if you don't start."*

# Find out Where You Stand!

We all know that eating healthily is a good thing, but what does it mean and where do you start? Take this short test to see whether you're eating healthily or if you need to improve your eating habits.

Choose the answers that best describe your typical behaviour.

- You are running late in the morning and haven't eaten breakfast. What do you do?**
  - Eat a bowl of sugar-coated cereal with milk
  - Grab two slices of white toast with butter
  - Eat sliced bananas with wholegrain cereals and milk
  - Skip breakfast altogether
- It's time for your morning break. What do you opt for?**
  - A glass of water and an apple
  - A cup of plain tea/coffee and two wholegrain oatmeal crackers
  - A cup of 3-in-1 coffee and a chocolate bar
  - A piece of fruit and a cookie
- How many servings of vegetables do you eat on a typical day? (1 serving = ½ cup of cooked or 1 cup of raw leafy vegetables)**
  - 0 serving
  - 1 serving
  - 2 servings
  - 3 servings
- When you grab a drink on the go, what will it most likely be?**
  - Carbonated soft drink
  - Water
  - Freshly squeezed fruit juice or 100% pure fruit juice
  - Juice drink (cordial)
- You're heading for lunch with friends. What would you most likely choose?**
  - Green salad without dressing
  - Fried rice/noodles
  - Burger and fries with a carbonated drink
  - Grilled chicken, potatoes, and green salad
- How often do you consume wholegrain products? (e.g. brown rice, wholemeal bread, wholegrain cereals or oat)**
  - Everyday
  - 4-6 times per week
  - 2-3 times per week
  - Once a month/close to never
- If you're buying takeaway with friends, what would you most likely choose?**
  - Sweet and sour chicken with steamed rice
  - Mushroom and beef pepperoni pizza with extra cheese and garlic bread
  - Stir-fry prawns, vegetable soup, and steamed rice
  - Nasi lemak* with chicken or beef *rendang*
- Which dessert would you most likely choose?**
  - A slice of cheesecake
  - A bowl of fresh fruit salad with yoghurt
  - A piece of traditional desserts (e.g. *kuih talam*, *kuih kochi*, *bubur kacang*)
  - A piece of fruit

Check your points here

1. a (1 point), b (1 point), c (0 point), d (2 points)  
2. a (0 point), b (2 point), c (2 point), d (1 point)  
3. a (2 point), b (2 point), c (2 point), d (0 point)  
4. a (2 point), b (1 point), c (0 point), d (1 point)  
5. a (0 point), b (2 point), c (2 point), d (0 point)  
6. a (0 point), b (2 point), c (1 point), d (2 point)  
7. a (1 point), b (1 point), c (2 point), d (2 point)  
8. a (2 point), b (1 point), c (2 point), d (0 point)

## 0-4 points:

**Well done!** Based on your answers, you're eating a healthy, well-balanced diet.

## 5-9 points:

**You're almost there!** Your diet can still be improved. Making some small changes now could help improve your health in the long term.

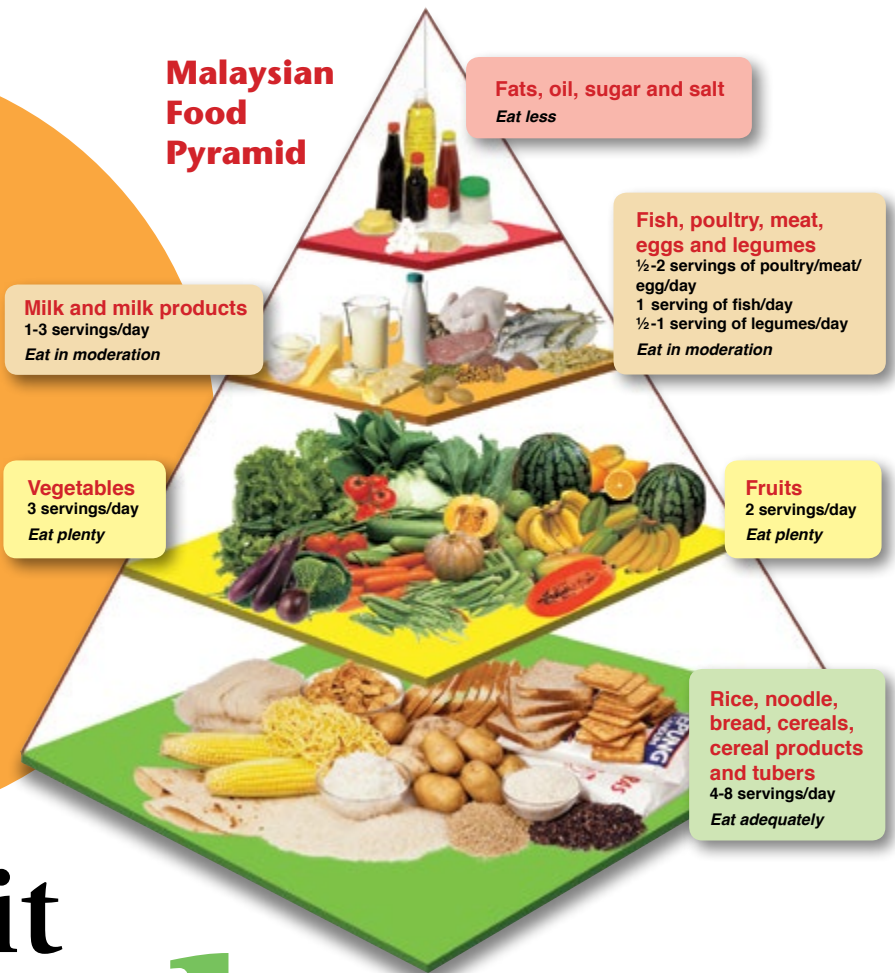
## 10-16 points:

**Your diet needs to be improved quickly** to reduce the risks of NCDs.

Your food choices affect the type and amounts of nutrients intake in a day. Most importantly, it determines the total energy (calorie) you consume. With the many lavish and abundant foods available in our country, we are often tempted to overeat. This frequently leads to excessive eating which eventually leads to the development of the risk factors for NCDs.

Therefore, to prevent NCDs, we need to go back to the basics of what healthy eating is all about.

## Malaysian Food Pyramid



# Getting it Right

## Back to basics of healthy eating

### What are the Basics?

The Malaysian Food Pyramid is a guide to healthy eating. It is a tool to assist us in choosing the appropriate types and portions of foods to be eaten in a day. It encourages everyone to eat **balanced** meals comprising of a **variety** of food in **moderate** amounts.

The basic idea of the food pyramid is that - as we move up to the higher (and narrower) levels, the lesser amount of food is recommended to be eaten.

### Balance

The four levels exist to show the necessity to take meals which are made up of food from all five food groups.

### Moderation

Serving sizes are as important as the types of foods eaten. It emphasizes the amount of food from a particular food group that should be eaten in a day.

### Variety

We should consume different foods from each food group and there should always be a variety of food from meal to meal. This will ensure you get all the nutrients you need.



# Getting the Ball Rolling

Try out these meal examples you could take throughout the day.

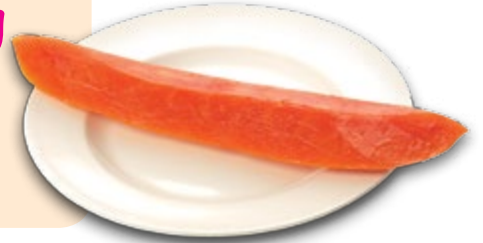
## Breakfast

- A** 1 glass milk
- B** 2 slices wholemeal bread
- C** 1 scrambled egg
- D** ½ cup lettuce & cucumber



## Morning Snack

1 slice papaya



## Lunch

- A** 1½ cups noodles
- B** 2 matchbox-sized lean meat
- C** ½ cup sawi
- D** 1 egg



## Afternoon Snack

6 pieces plain crackers



## Dinner

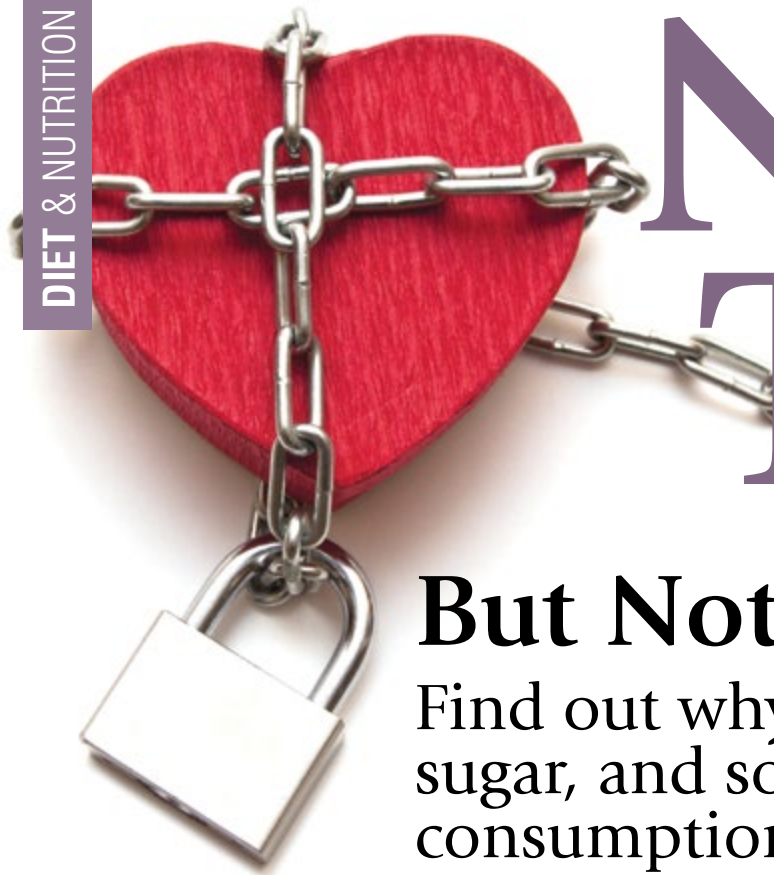
- A** 1½ cups rice
- B** ½ cup mix vegetables
- C** 1 medium sized fish or 1 medium-sized chicken drumstick
- D** ½ of a whole guava



## Supper

1 glass milk

Following the food pyramid, your meals will be balanced with all food groups, varied from meal to meal, and in just the right portions to meet your needs. See, it's actually simple and achievable!



# Need Them

## But Not Too Much

Find out why you need fat, sugar, and sodium; and why over consumption is bad for health



By Ms Indra Balaratnam, President of Malaysian Dietitians' Association

The tip of the Malaysian Food Pyramid comprises of salt, sugar, oils, and fat. They are not considered as a main food group and are usually added during food or beverage preparation. According to the Food Pyramid, these are the items we should be eating less amounts of. Not because our body does not need them, but because we only require them in small amounts.

### Can't live without them

Inevitably, our body needs fat, salt (which contains sodium), and sugar. They are important to our body as:

1. Sodium regulates some of our body's functions, such as maintaining normal blood pressure and the regular function of muscles and nerves.
2. Sugar is converted to glucose in our body and that provides us with energy for our daily activities.
3. Fat helps absorb fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, K), which we need for important processes in our body.

### 1. Salt

We do not need to add extra salt to our food. This is because sodium (the main component in salt) is naturally present in many foods, thus easily obtainable from our daily diet. However, as salt is the most commonly used seasoning or flavour enhancer, we have a tendency to use excessive amounts in food preparation. Ironically, it makes food taste better; this contributes to the excessive sodium intake amongst Malaysians.

According to our Malaysian Dietary Guidelines 2010, sodium intake should be limited to less

than 2000mg per day (equivalent to 1 teaspoon (5g) of table salt). Looks like that is impossible to exceed right? Yet according to the Malaysian Adult Nutrition Survey (MANS, 2003), it was reported that the average sodium intake of Malaysian adults was about 30% above the recommended intake.

If you think there is nothing wrong with eating lots of salt/sodium, think again. Too much sodium in your diet can be dangerous! Numerous studies have shown that eating too much salt can lead to high blood pressure (hypertension) and/or heart disease.

So watch out for food that is high in salt and sodium. Sauces, condiments, and processed or preserved foods are high in sodium. When buying foods, check the food label for words containing 'sodium' (E.g. sodium chloride, monosodium glutamate, sodium nitrate, etc.).

## 2. Sugar

Sugar is present in many forms. This includes simple sugars (like fructose and glucose), sucrose (also known as common table sugar), molasses, honey, and high fructose corn syrup. It is used as a sweetener, a preservative, and a flavour enhancer. It can also alter the texture or colour of foods. However, if looking at the nutritional aspects of sugar in our diet, it can actually be excluded. This is because we get enough from the digestion of foods that contain carbohydrate such as rice, breads, cereals, tubers, milk, legumes, and fruits.

Sugar is energy-dense, so eating too much of it can cause an excessive energy intake. This will contribute to obesity, if you do not balance that calorie intake with adequate physical activity. Obesity is a proven risk factor for developing NCDs. As a general guide, no more than 6-10% of your daily total energy intake should come from sugar (which is approximately 8 teaspoons).

Therefore, you should gradually reduce your intake of sugary foods and sweetened beverages.

## 3. Fat

Fat or oils are often used in our food as they provide better taste, consistency, and texture. There are three types of fat which we consume:

- **Saturated fat** is predominantly found in the fatty part of meat and poultry (e.g. skin), ghee, butter, and coconut oil or coconut milk. Saturated fat is recommended to be taken in small amounts because excessive intake can clog arteries over time. It can raise cholesterol and triglyceride levels too. All these are risk factors for heart diseases.
- **Unsaturated fats (polyunsaturated or monounsaturated)** can be found in nuts, seeds, fish, and vegetable oils such as soy bean oil, sunflower oil, and palm oil. These types of fat are better fat choices as they provide vitamins, antioxidants, and essential fatty acids which our body can't produce. We must get these essential fatty acids from our diet.
- **Trans-fat** is made when liquid vegetable oils are made into solid through the process of hydrogenation. Trans-fat is commonly found in shortening, margarines, high-fat baked goods, crisps, and commercialized deep-fried products. To see if a food product contains trans-fat, read the food label. If a food contains 'partially hydrogenated oils', it may contain trans-fat.

Similar to sugar, fat is energy-dense, thus excessive consumption can lead to obesity. Did you know 1g of fat gives you double the energy of 1g of carbohydrate? In addition to that, studies have



shown that food containing high saturated fat and trans-fat can cause high blood cholesterol levels, which can clog our arteries. This may lead to heart disease and stroke. It's recommended to limit fat intake to around 20% - 30% of the total energy requirement per day (equivalent to 44-67g of fat or about 3 - 5 tbsps of oil for a normal adult eating 2,000 calories a day).

### On the lookout

Now that you know the dangers of eating too much fat, sugar, and sodium, strive to control your intake of them. The more you are aware of the consequences, the more you'll be able to practice moderation.

When you buy food, always make it a habit to read the labels. Also, be mindful of the amount of salt, sugar, and fat that you add to your cooking. Do watch your portions when you eat. Large portions of food can cause weight gain, especially when you are not physically active.

Remember that you need to eat to live; don't let your appetite overwhelm you by living to eat!





Have you been over-indulging in foods that are high in calories, fat & salt unknowingly? Use the following lists of your favourite foods to guide you in identifying foods you should consume less of.

# Hidden Traps in Foods





## HIGH CALORIE Foods

Types of Food	Portion Size	Calorie (kcal)
<b>Main dishes</b>		
Western fast food set (2 pieces fried chicken, 1 bun, 1 mashed potato, 2 potato wedges, 1 carbonated drink) 	1 set	762
Fried <i>mamak mee</i>	1 plate	660
Biryani rice with chicken curry and dhal gravy	1 set	632
Chicken rice	1 set	565
<i>Mee rebus</i>	1 bowl	556
<i>Nasi lemak</i> (with dried chilli paste, ½ egg (boiled), fried anchovies and fried groundnuts)	1 set	480
Penang <i>laksa</i>	1 bowl	436
Beef burger with fries and carbonated drink	1 set	422
<i>Lor mee</i>	1 bowl	383
<b>Snacks</b>		
Cheese cake	1 piece	281
Idli with dhal gravy and coconut chutney	1 set	236
<i>Kuih lapis</i> 	1 piece	152
<i>Cucur udang</i> 	1 piece	144
<i>Vadai</i>	1 piece	143
<i>Pisang goreng</i> 	3 small pieces	131
Currypuff	1 piece	128
Fried spring roll	1 piece	91
<b>Drinks</b>		
Mocha Frappuccino 	1 cup ( <i>Grande</i> )	400
Bubble milk tea with pearls	1 cup (large)	340
Orange and other juices 	1 bottle (355 ml)	170
<i>Teh tarik</i> (milk tea)	1 glass	300
Cola drink	1 can (330 ml)	150

### TIPS:

- Excessive calorie (energy) intake will bring about undesirable weight gain, resulting in overweight and obesity.
- Balance your calorie intake (food intake) with your actual calorie usage (physical activity) to maintain a healthy body weight.
- Look out for sugary or fried foods as they tend to have higher calorie content.

## HIGH FAT Foods

Types of Food	Serving (weight in g)	Fat content (g/serving)
Chinese fried rice 	1 plate (392g)	51.7
Rojak (mamak-style)	1 plate (330g)	51.2
Cantonese fried kuey teow ( <i>Kong Foo Chow</i> )	1 plate (662g)	49.6
Curry laksa	1 bowl (650g)	41.6
Satay 	10 sticks (353g)	38.1
Curry mee	1 bowl (410g)	36.9
Fried kuey teow (with cockles)	1 plate (300g)	36.4
Mutton curry	1 plate (200g)	28.2
Cokodok pisang	5 pieces (355g)	22.5
Fried chicken (thigh)	1 piece (120g)	18.0
Tandoori chicken (thigh)	1 piece (120g)	15.0
Chicken rice 	1 plate (315g)	14.5
Ghee	1 tbsp (13g)	12.4
Palm olein (cooking oil)	1 tbsp (12g)	12.0
Currypuff	2 pieces (80g)	11.2
Margarine	1 tbsp (13g)	10.6
Papadam	5 pieces (30g)	9.5
Pisang goreng 	3 pieces (195g)	8.7
Butter	1 tbsp (14g)	7.9
Doughnut	1 piece (75g)	7.8

### TIPS:

- High fat foods are generally higher in calorie (energy).
- Limit your fat intake to around 20% - 30% of your total energy intake per day (for adults). That's about 44g - 67g (or 4-6 tablespoon) of fat per day if you eat 2,000 Calories a day!
- Reduce your intake of fried foods, foods cooked with 'santan', buttery/oily foods and fatty meats.

## HIGH SODIUM/SALT Foods


(more than 480 mg sodium in each of the serving sizes)

Types of Food	Portion Size
Soya sauce 	> 1 tbsp
-thick	> ¼ tbsp
-light	> ¼ tbsp
Mixed nuts, salt added 	> ½ cup
Cabbage, chinese, salted ( <i>humchoy</i> )	> 1 tbsp
Dried anchovies 	> ¼ cup
Dried salted fish	1 piece, 25g
Chicken broth cubes ( <i>kiub pati ayam</i> )	> ½ cube
All types of instant flavouring & seasoning	1½ tsps/ > ¼ cube
Oyster sauce	> ½ tbsp
Fermented shrimp ( <i>cencaluk</i> )	> ½ tsp
Shrimp paste ( <i>belacan</i> )	> ½ piece
Fish sauce ( <i>budu</i> )	> ¼ tbsp

### TIPS:

- Limit to 1 teaspoon (5g) of salt per day (equivalent to 2000mg of sodium).
- Preserved and salted foods and sauces are generally high in salt (sodium). Although some may not taste salty, it may have high levels of sodium.

## CHOLESTEROL Content of Foods

Types of Food	Cholesterol content (mg/100 g food)	1 serving	mg/ serving
Brain	2176	-	-
Egg	500		
- hen		1 medium whole	141
- duck		1 medium whole	243
Anchovies	308	½ cup	86
Liver	200	½ cup	459
Seafood	100-200		
- Prawn 		5 whole	27
- Crab		1 whole	89
- Sotong		1 medium body	90
Butter	120	1 tbsp	17
Chicken	100	1 pc	101
Mutton	100	½ cup chopped	63
Cockles	105	20 cockles	26
Fresh milk	19	1 cup (250ml)	49
Fish	< 100	1 medium	40

### TIPS:

- If you already have high blood cholesterol, restrict your total cholesterol intake to not more than 300 mg per day.
- Limit consumption of internal organs.

# The Sweet Traps

**Spot the sugar!**  
Sugars also have other names, like honey, raw sugar, confectioner's sugar, brown sugar, corn sweetener, corn syrup, fruit juice concentrate, fructose, dextrose, maltose & sucrose.

Excessive sugar intake contributes to unnecessary calories (energy) to the body. Find out how much sugar is in your favourite drinks & desserts.

\* **NOTE: 1 teaspoon sugar = 5g**

<b>Carbonated drinks</b> (325ml per tin) 	 7-10 teaspoons (35-50g sugar)
<b>Chocolate cake</b> (110g per serving) 	 15 teaspoons (75g sugar)
<b>Kuih koci</b> (40 – 50g per piece) 	 2 ¼ teaspoons (11g sugar)
<b>Doughnut</b> (45 – 55g per piece) 	 1 ¾ teaspoons (9g sugar)
<b>Ice cream (chocolate)</b> (11 – 15g per popsicle) 	 2-3 teaspoons (10-15g sugar)
<b>Candies</b> (28g per serving) 	 4 teaspoons (20g sugar)
<b>Cookies</b> (34g per serving – approx. 3 pieces) 	 2 teaspoons (10g sugar)
<b>Cup cake</b> (110g per serving) 	 6 teaspoons (30g sugar)
<b>Bingka ubi kayu</b> (70 – 90 g per piece) 	 4 ¼ teaspoons (21g sugar)

**You now realise how much sugar you have been consuming through your favourite desserts and drinks? Here are some tips on how to reduce your sugar intake:**

- Have a piece of fresh fruit instead of snacking on sugary snacks (doughnuts, cakes, pies)
- Read the food label and choose low sugar or reduced sugar products
- If you decide to have canned fruits, opt for canned fruit in natural juice instead of in syrup



# Guide to Eating Out



With our busy lifestyle nowadays, it is almost impossible for Malaysians, especially working adults, to not eat out most of the time. However, you don't need to abandon healthy eating principles when eating out. It is still possible to make healthier choices. Here are some simple rules to follow:

## Go For It!

- ✔ Choose food prepared with healthier cooking methods (grilled, steamed, baked, roasted, and braised meals).
- ✔ Always balance your meals with all the major food groups (cereals & cereal products; fish, poultry, meat & legumes; vegetables) and remember variety.
- ✔ Always include more vegetables when buying "nasi campur" or "economy rice".
- ✔ Always include fruits in your meals by getting them from a fruit stall nearby.
- ✔ Moderation is the key! Go for smaller portions and stick to the recommended serving sizes.
- ✔ Sharing is caring! Share your meals (main meals, appetizer, and desserts) to lessen the calories you consume especially if the portion is big.
- ✔ Drink plain water instead of sweetened beverages.

## Things To Avoid!

- ✘ Eating foods that are high in fat (e.g. deep-fried foods, cooked with a lot of *santan*/ghee/butter).
- ✘ Adding extra salt, sauces, or heavy salad dressings.
- ✘ Ordering desserts that are high in sugar or fat (e.g. cakes, local *kuihs*).
- ✘ Consuming all the gravy or soup that comes with your meals.
- ✘ Eating late night suppers (after 10 pm).
- ✘ Ordering fast foods (either western or hawker) too often (e.g. *roti canai*, fried noodles).

## Healthier Picks

Below are some examples of healthier choices that can help you choose wisely. Just remember to consume everything in moderation even if it is healthier.

Dishes	Healthier option
Fried fish	Steamed fish
Curry noodles or fried noodles	Noodles in clear soup
<i>Roti canai</i> , <i>roti tisu</i> , <i>roti boom</i>	Plain thosai, naan or chapati
Fried chicken	Roasted or grilled chicken
Pasta with cream-based gravy	Pasta with tomato-based gravy
Chicken burger	Tuna sandwich
<i>Nasi lemak</i> with fried chicken	White rice with grilled chicken
Fried <i>popia</i> or banana fritters	<i>Popia basah</i> , <i>pau</i> or steamed <i>apam</i>

# Fibr

Dietary fibre is plant material that cannot be digested by our digestive system. It is also extremely important for promoting normal bowel function. Your diet should contain 20-30 grams of dietary fibre each day.

Numerous scientific studies have demonstrated that dietary fibre also helps to reduce your NCD risks in many ways.

## Discover Your Fibre Sources

### Get the Most from LEGUMES

Legumes like peas, lentils, and beans are the best source of dietary fibre. They are also a great source of protein. Did you know that one cup of chickpeas (164g) provides 12.5g of fibre? That's 50% of your daily-recommended intake. Here are some ideas on how you can add them to your diet:

- Take chickpeas as your afternoon snack or add them to your salads.
- Add beans, green peas, or lentils (dhal) to soups, stews, curries, and casseroles.

It is recommended to consume ½ – 1 serving\* a day for legumes (approximately 1 cup).

### Go WHOLE Grains!!

Nowadays, most of us tend to consume polished or refined grains instead of wholegrain products. What many of us fail to realise is that in polishing or refining the whole grains,

## More Fibre Goodness

- Facilitates the smooth functioning of the digestion process. This helps reduce constipation and indirectly **reduces the risk of colon cancer**.
- Aids in **stabilising blood glucose levels**. Dietary fibre helps slow down the absorption of glucose in the small intestine, thereby helping to reduce the risk of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus.
- **Lowers blood cholesterol levels**. Fibre (especially beta-glucan) which is found in oats and barley, helps lower total blood cholesterol and LDL- cholesterol (bad cholesterol), thereby reducing the risk of heart disease.
- **Helps in weight management**. High-fibre diet causes you to feel full faster and for a longer period of time. This will help to avoid eating too much at once and eat lesser throughout the day. A high-fibre diet is also generally lower in calories.

# e UP

many of its nutrients are lost, including fibre! A good example is that brown rice gives you 8 times more fibre than white rice. That's why you should aim to ensure that half of your intake of grains is derived from whole grains/wholegrain products (approx. at least 2 servings\*/day).

It's not as difficult as you may think! Brown rice, whole rolled oats, corn, wholegrain breads, wholegrain cereals, whole wheat/wholegrain crackers, are examples of foods that have the wholesome benefits of whole grains.

## Fruits and veggies – simply 'Fi-brant'

It's widely known that fruits and vegetables are "good for you". However, many people, especially children, do not consume enough of these. Other than fibre, fruits and vegetables also contain vitamins, complex carbohydrates, minerals, and phytochemicals which have antioxidant properties believed to fight certain NCDs.

Guava, apple, and pear (if eaten with their skin) are examples of fruits that have higher fibre content. One cup of guava (164g) gives you about 8g of fibre! Vegetables, especially leguminous types (French beans, four-angled beans, snow peas), and other vegetables with stem, provide you with fibre too. One cup of broccoli (150g) contains 5.2g of fibre! Therefore, don't forget to take at least 2 servings of fruits\* & 3 servings of vegetables\* daily.

## Start small

Want to start but don't know how? It's easy! You don't need to make drastic changes. Just gradually ease into things, and you'll be on your way to a healthier you in no time! As long as you take your legumes, wholegrain products, fruits, and vegetables daily, it is not impossible to reach the recommended intake. Here are some tips to help you get started:

- It's important to start your day right; have some wholemeal bread, whole oats, or wholegrain cereal for breakfast.
- Go for brown rice or wholegrain pasta for your lunch or dinner. Start by replacing half of non-wholegrain foods with whole grain versions.
- Feel like having a snack? Have one serving of fresh fruit or legumes instead.
- Thirsty for fruit juices/concentrates? Go natural! Eat more whole unpeeled fruits instead.
- Want to make a great tasting soup/gravy that's healthy as well? Add whole grains, such as oats or wholemeal flour to thicken soups and gravies instead of using corn flour.

## Keep in Mind:

When you increase your intake of dietary fibre, do it gradually to avoid gastric distress, and drink plenty of fluid (8 glasses per day) to avoid stomach discomfort.

\* Refer to pages 28-29 for more information on serving sizes.





# Healthy

## and TASTY as well

By Anis Nabilah

Whether a meal is healthy (or unhealthy), really depends on how you prepare it, the ingredients you use, and the portion you serve/eat. Healthy meals have always been perceived to be bland and boring, with little 'excitement' or taste. Well, let me share a few tips on how you can whip up something that's not only healthy, but great tasting as well!

Well, for starters, you can use your existing cookware and some simple cooking methods to prepare foods in healthier ways. What's more, you can take things a step further by adapting those familiar old recipes to use healthier ingredients.

Remember, to be healthy doesn't mean giving up delicious foods; it just means cooking them in slightly different, but infinitely healthier ways. Eat well and enjoy life!

### Deliciously Healthy Ways

These are some simple cooking methods which will capture the flavour and retain the nutrients in food. The best part is not just in the taste, it's also healthier! Cook away without the worries of consuming too much fat, sugar, or salt.

- **Baking:** This method isn't limited to just breads and desserts, you can bake seafood, poultry, lean meat, vegetables and pieces of fruits. Bake your food in a pan or dish (covered or uncovered).

*Chef's Tip:* Baste the food with broth, low-fat marinade, or juice to keep it from drying out.

- **Braising:** Braising involves first browning the meat in a pan on the stove top. This is followed by slowly cooking it with a small amount of liquid such as water or broth.

*Chef's Tip:* Keep the liquid for use afterward to form a flavourful, nutrient-rich sauce.



## New Ways to Add Flavour

Be creative! I prefer to enhance the flavour of my foods with a variety of herbs, spices, and low-fat condiments instead of salt, sugar, or butter. Whether it is a local Malay, Chinese, Indian, or western style, there are plenty of herbs and spices to choose from!

You can poach fish in low-fat broth or fresh herbs. Or how about broiling some chicken breast and putting some fresh salsa for a topping?



- **Grilling:** Exposing fairly thin slices of meat or fish to direct heat allows fat to drip away from the food. This is a very effective method of cooking that I love using as it eliminates most of the fat from food.

*Chef's Tip:* When grilling vegetables, be certain not to overcook them in order to keep most of their nutrients intact.

- **Poaching:** Is a method where you gently simmer ingredients in a covered pan filled with water or a flavourful liquid such as broth, vinegar, or juice until cooked through and tender.

*Chef's Tip:* Choose an appropriate-sized pan and use minimal amounts of liquid.

- **Roasting:** Using dry heat at high temperatures to cook food in an oven will also allow the excess fat to drip away during cooking.

*Chef's Tip:* Use a baking sheet or a roasting pan to catch the excess fat/oil. Place a rack inside the roasting pan for poultry, seafood, and meat to allow the fat to drain while cooking.

- **Sautéing:** Use a good-quality non-stick pan to cook. Depending on the recipe, use low-sodium broth, cooking spray, water, or wine in place of oil or butter.

*Chef's Tip:* Use this method to quickly cook small or thin pieces of food, especially meats like beef or chicken.

- **Steaming:** One of the simplest cooking techniques is steaming food. Just use a perforated basket suspended above simmering liquids.

*Chef's Tip:* Use a flavourful liquid that has an infusion of herbs, as it subtly flavours the food while it cooks.

- **Stir-frying:** Stir-frying quickly cooks small, uniform-sized pieces of food while they're rapidly stirred in a wok or large non-stick frying pan.

*Chef's Tip:* Use only a small amount of oil for this cooking method. This method is best for cooking vegetables.

If you're preparing fish or meats, you can enhance its flavour by marinating it with some flavourful low-fat marinades or spices before grilling (like bay leaf, chili powder, dry mustard, garlic, ginger, lemongrass, green pepper, sage, marjoram, onion, oregano, pepper, or thyme).

For baking, you can add some vanilla, cinnamon, or nutmeg to your baked foods to enhance the taste.

## Adapting Recipes

For any recipes, you can always modify it to make it healthier. Don't be afraid to make changes. If a recipe calls for butter, margarine, or oil, I would reduce the amount used. Other things you can do for:

- marinades, replace with diluted fruit juice or balsamic vinegar.
- cakes, replace half of the fat or oil required with unsweetened applesauce, prune puree, or other fruit puree.

Other healthy substitutions are:

- **Sugar** – can be reduced by  $\frac{1}{2}$  the amount without affecting texture or taste in most baked goods.
- **Sour cream or cream cheese** – use fat-free, low-fat, or light varieties in dips, spreads, salad dressings, and toppings. Take note that fat-free, low-fat, and light varieties do not work well for baking.
- **Soups** – add more vegetables and beans. You can also add oats to thicken your soups!
- **White flour** – replace  $\frac{1}{2}$  (or more) of white flour with wholemeal flour.
- **Salt** – use herbs (1 tbsp fresh = 1 tsp dried =  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp powder) instead. Add the herbs towards the end of cooking; you can add more herbs if you want a stronger flavour. However, salt is required when baking yeast-leavened items. Salt is not needed when boiling pasta.



# Quick Meals

**BREAKFAST:**

• PREPARATION TIME: 20 Min • SERVES: 4

## Chicken Wraps


**Ingredients:**

180g (2) small potatoes  
 10ml (2 tsps) olive oil  
 2 stalks of spring onions  
 90g (1) onion  
 200g (¾ cup) chicken fillets  
 60g (1) capsicum  
 150g (2) tomatoes  
 1 pinch pepper to taste  
 4 eggs  
 4 tortillas

} chopped

} diced

**Method:**

1. Pierce potatoes with skewer 4 or 5 times and then put in microwave (on high heat) until cooked. Cool down, chop, and keep aside.
2. In a non-stick fry pan, heat oil.
3. Cook diced chicken fillets.
4. Add spring onions and continue stirring for another 2 minutes.
5. Add chopped potatoes and pepper.
6. In a separate bowl, beat eggs and season with pepper.
7. Add egg mixture to pan, stir until ¾ cooked and take off heat.
8. Place tortillas on flat surface and spread mixture on half the tortilla.
9. Top with tomato and capsicums.
10. Roll up tortillas.
11. Serve.

**Note:**

- Add a dash of milk to the bowl of eggs, if desired.
- You may place folded burrito into sandwich press and heat for 1 minute or serve untoasted.

**DINNER:**

• PREPARATION TIME: 20 Min • SERVES: 4

## Spicy Prawn Pasta

**Ingredients:**
**Ingredients A:**

400g (2 ½ cups) prawns, deveined  
 30g (2 tbsps) cajun spice  
 30g (2 tbsps) paprika  
 15g (1 tbsp) basil leaves  
 15g (1 tbsp) cayenne pepper  
 10g (2 tsps) garlic, chopped  
 350g whole-wheat spaghetti  
 60g (4 tbsps) olive oil  
 30ml (2 tbsps) low-fat cream/milk  
 45g (3 tbsps) garlic  
 30g (½ cup) yellow/red capsicums  
 190g (2 cups) broccoli  
 125ml (½ cup) water

} chopped

**Ingredients B:**

15g (1 tbsp) basil leaves  
 1 pinch of ground pepper to taste  
 5g (1 tsp) parsley leaves  
 15g (1 tbsp) cajun spice  
 15g (1-2 tbsps) chilli flakes  
 2 pieces of bay leaves

**Note:**

- You may substitute the prawns with chicken fillets.



# in 30 Minutes

**LUNCH:**

• PREPARATION TIME: 16 Min • SERVES: 4

## Oriental Stir-Fry Chicken



### Ingredients:

250ml (1 cup) home made chicken stock  
15g (1 tbsp) vegetable oil

### Ingredients A:

200g (¾ cup) chicken fillets, cut into 1-inch pieces  
25g (2 tbsps) garlic  
10g (2 tsps) ginger ]chopped

### Ingredients B:

25g (1) medium onion, cut into thin wedges  
120g (1 cup) carrots, diced  
30ml (2 tbsps) thin soy sauce  
15ml (1 tbsp) thick soy sauce  
10g (2 tsps) sugar  
190g (2 cups) fresh broccoli, florets  
100g (1 cup) fresh mushrooms, sliced  
60g (1) red/yellow capsicums, chopped  
10g (2 tsps) cornstarch  
Hot cooked brown rice

### Method:

1. In a non-stick pan, heat oil.
2. Add ingredients A and stir until chicken is slightly brown.
3. Stir in ingredients B and ¼ cup of chicken stock and wait until simmer.
4. Stir in broccoli, mushrooms and capsicums. Cover and cook for about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until chicken is no longer pink in center and vegetables are crisp-tender.
5. In small bowl, mix corn starch and remaining ¼ cup broth; stir into chicken mixture.
6. Stir frequently until sauce thickens.
7. Serve with brown rice.

\* tbsp = tablespoon  
tsp = teaspoon

### Method:

1. Marinate ingredients A and set aside.
2. Boil the whole wheat spaghetti for 10 minutes until *al dente*.
3. In a separate non-stick wok, heat oil and sauté the garlic.
4. Add ingredients A, stir-fry until cooked. Add capsicum, broccoli and a bit of water and stir-fry until tender.
5. Add low-fat cream/milk, and the spices (Ingredients B) and wait until simmer.
6. Toss in pasta and stir well.
7. Serve.



# Nutritional Myths Debunked!

## Skinny people are not likely to have high blood cholesterol.

**FALSE!** High blood cholesterol does not just occur among overweight or obese people. Those in the healthy weight range and thin people can also develop high blood cholesterol due to various factors, including a high intake of saturated fat, lack of exercise, smoking, as well as genetic factors. So, have your blood cholesterol checked now, as it may be accumulating in your blood vessels unknowingly. It is a silent killer! High blood cholesterol may lead to atherosclerosis (narrowing and hardening of blood vessels) which can lead to a stroke or heart attack if left untreated.

## Eating rice is fattening!

**FALSE!** No single food can cause a person to become fat. Instead, it is the total amount of calories consumed that can lead to becoming overweight/obese. Brown rice (and other complex carbohydrates, e.g. wholegrain cereals and wholemeal bread/pasta) is a source of carbohydrate and should be the main source of energy as it is the preferred energy for the body and brain. It is not about what you eat, but how much you consume. Follow the Malaysian Food Pyramid for the recommended portion sizes.

## Skipping meals or “dieting” is a good way to lose weight.

**FALSE!** Although you might see yourself losing weight initially, this may not be sustained for a long time as skipping meals may cause you to overeat during your next meal or snack heavily throughout the day. Eventually, the total calorie consumed in a day is not reduced at all. Instead, eat smaller main meals throughout the day, with an option of incorporating a healthy snack in the morning and evening, to help control your appetite.

## Taking too much ‘santan’ will not increase your cholesterol levels as it does not contain cholesterol.

**FALSE!** Although *santan* does not contain cholesterol, it has a high content of saturated fatty acids (SFA) which can raise the LDL (bad) cholesterol level. Hence, limit intake of foods with coconut milk. Use low-fat or evaporated milk for cooking instead!

## Wholegrain products taste horrible!

**FALSE!** They can taste as great as other refined varieties. Furthermore, whole grains are also a good source of dietary fibre, vitamins B and E, minerals, and phytochemicals. There are many foods that contain whole grains to choose from besides brown rice. Try to incorporate wholegrain breakfast cereals, wholegrain breads, wholewheat pasta, noodles made with whole grains, and corn in your daily diet. As a start, mix them with other foods. Children should also be trained from young to love whole grain foods.



### Red meat causes cancer.

**FALSE!** Cancer can occur due to many reasons, including smoking, certain substances in food (carcinogens), pollution, radiation, and genetic factors. Eating meat (whether red or white) within the recommended limits does not cause cancer.

### 'Family history' is a risk factor for diabetes.

**TRUE!** If both your parents have diabetes, your risks of diabetes doubles. However, lifestyle factors do play a major role as it can either work against or in favour of delaying the occurrence of diabetes. Hence, eat healthily and exercise regularly as it will counter your increased risk of diabetes.



### Fad diets - A quick weight loss programme.

**FALSE!** Fad diets might sound like a good idea but it can also be dangerous to your health. It can cause dehydration, fatigue, severe digestive problems, and cause nutrient deficiencies. Instead, adopt a healthy diet and kick start a good workout plan. In this way, you will lose weight AND gain a healthy lifestyle.

### All types of fat are bad for you.

**FALSE!** All nutrients, including fat, have an important role in our body. Fat only becomes problematic when it is consumed in excess or in the wrong proportions. There are basically 2 types of fat: saturated and unsaturated, and we need a mixture of both. To keep it simple, go for foods which contain more unsaturated fat such as fish and certain vegetable oils. It can help reduce your risk of heart disease.

### Cancer patients cannot drink milk.

**FALSE!** Milk is the richest source of calcium in the diet and contains nearly all the important nutrients you need. There is no strong evidence that milk may affect the severity of cancer. Anyone can drink milk regardless of age or whether they have cancer.



### Sugar causes diabetes.

**FALSE!** Sugar itself does not directly cause diabetes. Excessive body weight, resulting from consuming too many calories from fat or sugar, is a risk factor for Type 2 diabetes. A sedentary lifestyle is also a major cause of overweight and obesity.

### Taking supplements are necessary in order to get all the nutrients you need!

**FALSE!** We do not actually need to take supplements. We can obtain all the nutrients we need by eating a variety of foods which provide us with different nutrients in different quantities. Hence, all we need is to go for balanced meals that comprise a variety of food in moderate amounts following the Malaysian Food Pyramid.

### I exercise regularly, so I can eat whatever I want.

**FALSE!** Being physically active doesn't mean you can overindulge in food. Yes, you burn more calories, but to maintain a healthy body weight you need to balance the number of calories you consume and the calories you burn when exercising. Besides that, exercise has many other benefits such as reducing the risks of getting heart diseases, diabetes, and cancer. Hence, it is important for everyone to exercise and not only those who are overweight or obese.







# From Heavy to Healthy

The journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step

At just ten years of age, Faizal Ariff was a popular kid because of his chubbiness, and he thought it was a “cool” thing.

What wasn't so ‘cool’ was that he'd been hospitalised four times for kidney stones! He didn't realise the main culprit was his lifestyle. His diet was unhealthy for he loved fried foods, frequently ate enough for four persons and it felt “normal” to him. His favourite ‘activity’ was watching television and exercising wasn't in his thoughts at all.

In school, there were incidences where he was stuck in his chair because of his girth. More embarrassing was when the chairs simply broke apart under his weight.

## The wake up call

Throughout his childhood, he lived in denial and refused to acknowledge that he had a health problem.

“It had finally reached the point where I was constantly feeling weak, lethargic and sluggish. I couldn't walk far or go up a flight of stairs without gasping for breath,” Faizal mused. But it was only after he had entered University Malaya that he finally decided to do something. “At that time, I weighed around 125kgs and had a 52” waist,” Faizal revealed.

Adding to his problems were his poor health; his doctor had also highlighted that he had **high blood pressure** and **high cholesterol**. He was told in no uncertain terms

that if he continued living like this, he could expect to have heart disease by age of thirty five.

## Uphill struggle

He started his weight loss journey by making effort to walk more, from his dorm to the library, canteen, or classes, for at least 2 hours daily. It became a common sight to see Faizal huffing and puffing around campus.

“It was a tough journey; most of the people I knew were not supportive of my effort. It was thanks to this one single friend that I managed to stay focused. He would constantly advise me to keep up my effort.”

Progress was slow, but Faizal kept at it single-mindedly. He shrugged off all snide comments. He even

proved his critics wrong by keeping up his daily regimen of walking. Within a month, he had lost 5kgs.

“Dropping from 125kg to 120kg may not seem like much, but it got me pumped! It just made me more determined than ever to keep going,” he exclaimed. “I think that, the hardest part of getting started was, well, actually getting started! I spent a long time just thinking about doing something about my weight, but obviously, **nothing happened until I started doing something.**”

### Get serious, hard work pays

That 5kg drop was the catalyst that sparked his enthusiasm. He began to get more serious not just about losing weight but about becoming healthy too. He pushed himself harder; instead of an easy pace during his daily walks, he walked at a faster pace. To his delight, he was physically able to endure it. “I felt like a new man,” Faizal stated.

Faizal took the initiative to consult a dietitian on what sort of foods to eat or avoid and how he could cut down on his over-eating problem. This helped his efforts to eat right by cutting down on excessive portions, and he learnt to make healthier food choices – no more deep-fried foods and sugary treats for him!

“It took three long years to trim my weight; and another couple of years to further transform myself from overweight to plump, and then from plump to fit,” declared Faizal. “You’ll need to persist in your efforts. It’s important to have short-term goals before you reach your ultimate goal. Now, I weigh a trim 80kg, and it’s mostly muscle!”

### A lesson to be learnt

Faizal advised, “In my case, it was a matter of flipping a mental switch and to think of exercise in a positive light. I associated my overweight self (back then) with being a ‘pain’.

Walking around campus was a ‘pleasure’ because not only did I get to enjoy the fresh air outside, I started to feel good about my own self.”

However, he was quick to caution, “It’s very, very important not to expect instant results. I believe in achieving your fitness goals in the right way. Forget those quick weight-loss pills or fad diets. Instead, focus on two aspects; eating right and being physically active.”

Faizal also warned, “Make sure you set specific goals. Differentiate between your final goal and your daily goals. Start small; for instance, drink more plain water instead of sweetened beverages, walk a flight of stairs for at least 20 minutes instead of sitting in front of the television. Start by taking baby steps, and gradually increase the intensity of your workout until you achieve your goal.”

## Faizal shares the tips for healthy weight loss given by his dietitian:

**1 Set short-term goals:** a healthy weight reduction of 0.5 kg/week is good. Don’t expect to lose massive amounts of weight in a short while – trying too hard could result in a ‘yo-yo’ weight loss tendency.

**2 Start on a reduced calorie diet:** shave off 250-500 calories from your daily intake.

**3 Switch to a healthy eating regime:** eat smaller portions of food and focus on balance, moderation and variety.

**4 Eat LESS fried foods or foods high in fat:** eat foods prepared with healthier cooking methods.

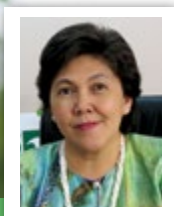
**5 Eat MORE high fibre foods:** go for more fruits, vegetable, beans and whole grains.

**6 Do MORE physical activity:** start small. You can walk and move about more whenever possible, progress to higher intensity and longer duration (minimum 45 minutes)

**7 No shortcut to better health:** self-determination, discipline and self-control are the keys to maintain your reduced weight and prevent a relapse into obesity.



# Fight NCDs by Being Active



By Prof Dr Norimah A Karim

Many Malaysians are aware that being physically active delivers great benefits. Yet, many still fail to put this knowledge into action. This was reflected in the latest findings from the National Health and Morbidity Survey 2011 which showed that two out of five adults are inactive.

Just as important as practising a healthy diet with the right portion sizes, physical activity and/or exercise can greatly reduce your risk of NCDs. Numerous studies have proven that exercise or just being active helps in lowering your risks for obesity, heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, and cancers. Thus, it is about time that you give more attention to the importance of being physically active for your health and well-being.

## TOP Reasons to Be Physically Active

### Helps maintain a healthy body weight

It's all about the balance between your body's actual requirements (which depends on factors such as your weight, how active you are, and your medical condition if any) against what food and how much you eat. Eating more than you need will result in weight gain, which can increase your risk of NCDs. Physical activity helps balance your energy input (calories from food) and output, and this in turn aids in maintaining a healthy body weight.

### Lowers the risk of getting heart disease

Physical activity increases the level of HDL (good) cholesterol. The presence of high LDL (bad) cholesterol versus low HDL cholesterol signifies an increase in your risk of developing heart disease. Exercise also makes your heart muscle work by pumping more blood to the body.



## Lowens the risk of diabetes

Physical activity helps stabilise your blood sugar levels, thus reducing your risk of diabetes. This happens due to an increase in the uptake of sugar from the blood to the cells and muscles, which stabilises the blood sugar levels.

## Reduces the risk of cancers

Individuals who are physically active appear to have 30-40% reduction in the relative risk of colon cancer, while physically active women have 20-30% of reduction in the relative risk of breast cancer compared with their inactive counterparts.

## Is just good for the body

Physical activity on the whole, does wonders for your body. For example, the hormone released during physical activity (endorphins) induces a positive impact on your mood and concurrently reduces stress levels. Other benefits of carrying out physical activity include an improvement in blood circulation and even a reduction in your risk of osteoporosis.

**No time?  
That's a poor excuse!**

**Even 10 minutes of exercise counts. The recommendation of 30 minutes of exercise can be split into shorter sessions. Do 15 minutes in the morning, and 15 minutes at night; that's equivalent to 30 minutes for a day. Or you can do 10 minutes a day for a whole week to achieve 70 minutes of exercise for the week!**

# Aim to Be Active

You should aim for at least 30 minutes daily. Your target is to make your body less static; get in gear and move! Here are some tips on what you can aim to do daily, 5 – 6 times a week, or 2 – 3 times a week.

## FIT Tip 1: Active Anytime, Anywhere, Every day

Go the extra mile by making your body move and be active. Any type of physical activity burns calories.

- Choose to walk up the stairs, instead of taking the lift or escalator at the office, shopping malls, or anywhere else.
- Going somewhere nearby? Take a walk or cycle instead.
- Clean up, move about. Do more housework daily like sweeping, mopping, gardening, etc.
- Park further away, or get off the bus/MRT/taxi at some distance from your destination - walk the rest of the way.
- Watching television? Do some stretches, exercises, or pedal a stationary bike at the same time.
- Briskly step up and down the first two steps of your house's staircase. Maintain this for about 10 minutes in the morning and in the evening.

## FIT Tip 2: Work Your Heart Out, 5 to 6 times a week

Aerobic exercises not only helps to burn more calories than your normal daily activity but also improves your stamina and exercises your muscles. Aim for a minimum of 30 minutes by doing the following:

- Join your colleagues for badminton, ping-pong, football, basketball, or any other sports.
- Take up brisk walking, jogging, or cycling.
- Go for a swim.
- Try racquetball, tennis, or squash. Get your family involved in this activity.

## FIT Tip 3: Stretch Your Muscles and Build up Your Strength and Endurance, 2 to 3 times a week

Some activities help to build your endurance, muscle strength, and improves flexibility too. They are equally important for your overall health:

- Workout with weights, a fitness ball, or exercise bands.
- Try workouts which use your own body weight such as push ups, sit ups, lunges, or squats.
- Take up martial arts, dance, tai chi, or yoga.
- Include running, marathon, and distance bicycling to increase your endurance level.
- Spread out endurance activities to avoid excessive fatigue and to reduce risk of injury.

*Most importantly – have fun while being active!*

# Exercise...

## No More Excuses, Please

It's not about having enough time; it's about making the time for it.

Want to exercise but just can't seem to find the time to head to a gym? Well, it seems that everyone works more hours these days. The old "no-time-to-exercise excuse" gets dragged out more than ever. So what can you do? Get started by incorporating exercise into your daily routine as every little bit helps! And, you don't need to have exotic exercise equipment because all you really need is your body!

### Enjoy it in the Comfort of Your Home

Do it at home by getting started with a couple of simple exercises that you can fit into your busy life. These 3 workouts can even be done in front of your TV while watching your favourite TV show or during advertisement breaks!

#### Dining Chair Dips



Strengthens upper arms and prevent flabbiness

1. Sit on the edge of a sturdy chair with your hands next to hips.
2. Slide your bottom off the edge and bend elbows to 90 degrees.
3. Keep your back close to the chair and push back up with your arms.
4. Repeat 10 to 12 times.

#### Thigh Shaper Lunges



1. Stand upright with hands on hips and feet together. Keep your head and shoulders held high.
2. Take a big step forward with your right leg, lowering your left knee towards your right ankle.
3. Step back to the starting position. Repeat the lunge with your left leg.
4. Repeat 12 times, alternating both legs.

Shapes a firmer and sexier lower body

#### Love Your Floor's Push-ups

1. Assume a prone position on the floor.
2. Place your hands on the floor with your palms facing down, approximately shoulder width apart.
3. Keep your body straight as you raise yourself with your arms.
4. Lower your torso to the ground until your elbows form a 90 degree angle.
5. Repeat steps 3 and 4.
6. Perform this movement as many times as you can. Increase the number of movements as your strength increases.

*Note: This version (knees on the floor) is good for beginners. Once you are more advanced, you can lift your knees.*



Sculpts sexy arms and a firmer chest

## Working Out @ Work

Here are a few simple moves you can do at work to accumulate the benefits of any form of exercise.

### Raise the Roof

Feeling sleepy? Try this energising movement to wake you up.

While marching in place, push toward the ceiling with your palms up and thumbs almost touching your shoulders.

*\* You can opt to hold books or water bottles for a more vigorous exercise*



### Knee Lift

Get your heart rate up! Move your hips and quadriceps even at work. Don't let them fall asleep.

Lift your knee up in front as your arms go down. Alternate your knees as you do this exercise.



### Curl your hamstrings

Want something a little less showy? This workout can be done even while you photocopy documents or just to kill time while waiting (e.g. for your documents to print, the microwave to finish heating up your lunch at the pantry, etc.).

Bend your arms at the elbow. Bring one foot up toward your rear end while straightening your arms so that your hands are down when your foot is up. Repeat so for both left and right sides.



### Punch Away

Feeling restless and energetic but don't know what to do? Be like Muhammad Ali and release it with this punching exercise.

While rocking foot to foot, punch with alternating arms.





# Promoting Healthy Eating Nationwide

## Achievements of NMM (2002-2012)

Since its launch in 2002, Nutrition Month Malaysia (NMM) has been observed every April to promote greater awareness of the practice of healthy eating habits among Malaysians. In this 11th year, NMM focuses on the prevention of non-communicable diseases with the theme, **"Eat Right, Be Active: Stay Free from Diet-Related Diseases."**

Our nationwide campaign aims to promote greater awareness on healthy eating and active living as the foundation for general good health and wellbeing. We also aim to inculcate healthy eating habits and encourage physical activity from young, so as to improve the nutritional status of Malaysian families.

### Family Carnival

- ✦ Organised 6 major fun-filled carnivals



### School & Kindergarten Roadshows

- ✦ Visited 160 primary schools and provided healthy eating and active living messages
- ✦ Visited 175 kindergartens and conducted interactive nutrition activities



### Educational Materials for School Children & Preschoolers

- ✦ Published comic book and activity book for primary school children
- ✦ Published DVD and worksheets for preschoolers



### Publications for Public

- ✦ Published 5 practical nutrition guidebooks, 3 recipe books and 1 mini-booklet



### Educational Press Articles

- ✦ Published over 73 articles in English, Bahasa Malaysia & Chinese newspapers



### Mass Media Promotions

- ✦ Disseminated messages through radio, television & website

Visit our website to obtain more information on educational materials from the Nutrition Month Malaysia programme. We also welcome feedback/queries. To reach us, please contact:

**The Nutrition Month Malaysia Secretariat**

**Tel: (03) 5632 3301/5637 3526**

**Email: [enquiry@nutritionmonthmalaysia.org.my](mailto:enquiry@nutritionmonthmalaysia.org.my)**

**Website: [www.nutritionmonthmalaysia.org.my](http://www.nutritionmonthmalaysia.org.my)**



**Nutrition Month Malaysia**