

The food pyramid

QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE BALANCE



The food pyramid is an illustration that helps us balance our diet.

First notice that it is made up of all of the food groups. In other words all of the food groups need to be included in our diet.

Keywords > Qualitative balance

The pyramid also illustrates the idea of proportion. The wider the band is, the more this group should be included in our diet. We should eat larger quantities of the food at the bottom of the pyramid than of the food at the top. For example, it is a good idea to drink a lot of water and to eat only a few sweets.

Keywords > Quantitative balance

YOUR DIET: A SOURCE OF PLEASURE

Having said that, eating is also a form of pleasure. Meals are moments to relax and to share with others. A balanced diet does not need to be about excluding anything. It is just about eating a good combination of food in the right proportions.

Keywords > Adapting your diet to your needs.

The quantities will vary from one person to another and must be adapted according to each person's energy needs. Naturally, there are a few benchmarks that you will often hear about, such as 'You should drink 1 to 2 litres of water a day,' or the famous '5-a-day' when talking about fruit and vegetables.

WHAT'S ON YOUR PLATE

It is perhaps easier to visualise a well-proportioned meal on a plate.



Ideally, fruit and vegetables should take up two fifths of the plate, starch should represent another two fifths and proteins such as meat, fish, eggs or dairy products only one fifth. The glass of water beside the plate represents drinks. Fats are not represented as they are included during cooking. Sweets have also been left out as they are not necessary for a balanced meal and they should definitely not be included in every meal.

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These proportions give you an idea of scale, but should not be followed to the letter. You can achieve a balanced diet in a single meal, but it is easier to do so taking into account all of the meals in a day, or even a week. Over several meals, you should easily be able to eat all of the food groups in a varied way and in suitable quantities to meet your needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS PER COUNTRY

Each country has its own recommendations and the food pyramid can vary from one to another. Some versions include the idea of **physical activity**.



These suggest that you must practice a physical activity alongside a balanced diet. This idea is often added at the bottom of the pyramid, so you can do as much physical exercise as you like!



The goal of NUTRIX is to move the red cube towards the green cube while balancing your diet. All of the food groups on the level have to be represented... in the right quantities. You can exceed the recommended quantities but, in this case, the food in the over-represented group will give you minus points. So to progress, you have to find a way to follow the proportions in the food pyramid.

2.4.1 The food pyramid

The food pyramid helps us...

- lose weight
- always eat the same sort of thing
- balance our diet

The food pyramid shows that we can eat as much confectionery as we like.

- True
- False

We can choose to balance our meals throughout the day rather than balancing every meal.

- False
- True

How much starchy food should we put on our plates?

- More than half of the meal (60%)
- Slightly less than half of the meal (40%)
- A fifth of the meal (20%)

What proportion of a meal should meat, fish, eggs or dairy products represent?

- Slightly less than half of the meal (40%)
- A fifth of the meal (20%)
- Most of the meal (80%)

We should drink at every meal.

- True
- False

Food pyramids are the same in every country.

- True
- False

When there is an athlete illustrated on the food pyramid, does this mean we should eat while watching sport?

- False
- True

The fact that drinks are placed at the base of the pyramid means that we should only drink a little.

- True
- False

Answers

The food pyramid helps us...

- lose weight**
Wrong! Try again!
- always eat the same sort of thing**
Wrong! The pyramid helps us vary what we eat.
- balance our diet**
Well done! The purpose of the food pyramid is to help us balance and vary what we eat.

The food pyramid shows that we can eat as much confectionery as we like.

- True**
Wrong! It's tempting, but that's not right!
- False**
Well done! Sugary products are placed right at the top of the pyramid, so we should only eat them in small quantities, and never with every meal.

We can choose to balance our meals throughout the day rather than balancing every meal.

- False**
Wrong! Such recommendations help us balance and vary our diet, but we should also enjoy eating.
- True**
Well done! We can choose to balance our meals throughout the day; above all, it is important to enjoy eating.

How much starchy food should we put on our plates?

- More than half of the meal (60%)**
Wrong! Less than that.
- Slightly less than half of the meal (40%)**
Well done! Just like fruit and vegetables, two fifths of a meal should consist of starchy food.
- A fifth of the meal (20%)**
Wrong! It's more than that.

What proportion of a meal should meat, fish, eggs or dairy products represent?

- Slightly less than half of the meal (40%)**
Wrong! Less than that.
- A fifth of the meal (20%)**
Well done! There should be less protein-rich food than starchy food and vegetables.
- Most of the meal (80%)**
Wrong! It's much less.

We should drink at every meal.

- True**
Well done! It is important to drink enough to replace the water your body uses each day.
- False**
Wrong! Try again!

Food pyramids are the same in every country.

- True**
Wrong! Try again!
- False**
Well done! Every country depicts its own particular recommendations differently, according to the availability of food and to its prevalent religious and cultural practices.

When there is an athlete illustrated on the food pyramid, does this mean we should eat while watching sport?

- False**
Well done! It means that, in addition to having a balanced diet, we should practise a physical activity.
- True**
Wrong! Try again!

The fact that drinks are placed at the base of the pyramid means that we should only drink a little.

- True**
Wrong! Try again!
- False**
Well done! The fact that drinks feature at the base of the pyramid means that it is important to drink plentifully, especially water.

Balanced meals

[11-13 years old and 14-16 years old]

Instructions:

Decide whether each meal is balanced.

If it is not balanced, please specify which food group is not represented.

NB:

Even though drinks are vital for our health, they have been omitted from this activity.

You can achieve a balanced diet in a single meal but this is not necessary so long as you achieve a balanced diet across several meals.

Meal 1: Grated carrots, chicken with mushrooms, green beans, panna cotta

Balanced meal: yes no

If you answered 'no', please specify which food group is missing.

Meal 2: Half a grapefruit, grilled salmon, spinach, rice, crème caramel

Balanced meal: yes no

If you answered 'no', please specify which food group is missing.

Meal 3: Tomato and mozzarella salad, parmesan risotto, bread, mango

Balanced meal: yes no

If you answered 'no', please specify which food group is missing.

Meal 4: Beetroot, beef meatballs with herbs, rice, cheese, strawberries

Balanced meal: yes no

If you answered 'no', please specify which food group is missing.

Meal 5: Cauliflower salad, mackerel in a mustard sauce, mixed vegetables with potatoes, raspberry yoghurt

Balanced meal: yes no

If you answered 'no', please specify which food group is missing.

Meal 6: Beef samosas, gnocchi with leeks, cheese, an apricot

Balanced meal: yes no

If you answered 'no', please specify which food group is missing.

Meal 7: Pasta carbonara, fried escalope of chicken, natural yoghurt

Balanced meal: yes no

If you answered 'no', please specify which food group is missing.

Answers

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Balanced meal: yes no

If you answered 'no', please specify which food group is missing.

Cereals _____

Meal 2: Half a grapefruit, grilled salmon, spinach, rice, crème caramel

Balanced meal: yes no

If you answered 'no', please specify which food group is missing.

Meal 3: Tomato and mozzarella salad, parmesan risotto, bread, mango

Balanced meal: yes no

If you answered 'no', please specify which food group is missing.

Meat _____

Meal 4: Beetroot, beef meatballs with herbs, rice, cheese, strawberries

Balanced meal: yes no

If you answered 'no', please specify which food group is missing.

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Balanced meal: yes no

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Fruit and vegetables _____

The food pyramid for athletes

[14-16 years old]

Nutritional recommendations cannot address the specific needs of each individual. Hence, the food pyramid has to be adapted for athletes, vegetarians, pregnant women, etc.

Athletes must increase their consumption of three of the food groups. Which do you think these three groups are? Why?

Food group 1: _____

Food group 2: _____

Food group 3: _____

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Food group 1: _ **fats** _____

Food group 2: _ **cereals** _____

Food group 3: _ **drinks** _____

Answer: Athletes need to increase their consumption of fats, cereals and drinks. For more information, see:

http://www.ssns.ch/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Lebensmittelpyramide_Sport_E1.2.pdf