



**gems**

Government Employees  
Medical Scheme

# Diet Guideline

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## DIET GUIDELINE

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### HEALTHY EATING

Having a balanced diet is essential to your wellbeing. Healthy eating does not imply avoiding high calorie/fatty foods altogether.

Rather, a healthy eating plan focuses on more fruit, vegetables, grains and legumes, and less fats, oils and sugars.

#### **Benefits of healthy eating**

Following a healthy eating plan has many immediate and long-term benefits, such as:

- You will live longer and have less complications in your old age.
- You will maintain a healthy body weight.
- You will have more energy, enabling you to enjoy physical activities.
- You will feel good and your mood will improve.
- Healthy eating reduces and can even eliminate many health risks such as adult-onset diabetes, heart problems, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, osteoporosis, certain cancers and strokes.

### HOW TO BALANCE YOUR DIET: FOOD GROUPS AND SERVING SIZES

Food is classified into six groups. Each group provides certain essential nutrients, and a certain quantity of food from each group should be consumed in order to ensure that your body stays healthy and functions properly.

The food grid serves as a guideline on the amount of daily servings you need from each group:

### Recommended serving sizes

A single serving equals to:

Fats, oils and sweets	=	As little as possible
Meat & fish	=	Size of a deck of playing cards
Eggs	=	Two medium eggs
Lentils and beans	=	Four tablespoons
Nuts	=	Small handful
Milk	=	One medium sized glass
Yoghurt	=	One small pot
Cheese	=	Size of a matchbox
Peas, carrots, broccoli	=	Two heaped tablespoons
Apple, orange, pear	=	One
Grapes	=	Handful
Strawberries, raspberries	=	Two tablespoons
Fruit juice	=	One small glass
Dried fruit	=	Handful
Bread	=	One slice
Cereal	=	Three tablespoons
Chapatti	=	One
Pasta	=	Three heaped tablespoons
Potatoes	=	Two egg-sized
Rice	=	Two heaped tablespoons

Milk, yogurt & cheese	2 - 3 servings
Meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs & nuts	2 - 3 servings
Vegetables	3 - 5 servings
Fruit	2 - 4 servings
Bread, cereal, rice & pasta	6 - 11 servings

## HEALTHY WEIGHT

***Being obese, overweight or underweight creates serious health complications and can lead to illness.***

Obesity is the greatest cause of adult-onset diabetes. People who are obese or overweight are likely to suffer from many health problems. Obesity has been positively associated with heart disease, stroke, breast and colon cancer, and high blood pressure.

Underweight persons are at increased risk of problems such as osteoporosis and menstrual irregularities. Having an unhealthy weight also affects your mood, self-esteem and energy levels.

### **Determining whether you have a normal weight**

Normal weight is determined by a number of factors such as age, sex, height and genetics, and varies from person to person.

The most common method for determining normal weight is the Body Mass Index (BMI). Other means of determining healthy weight is through waist circumference and body fat ratio.

### **BMI**

BMI is calculated from a person's weight and height:  $BMI = \text{kg}/\text{height}^2$  (in metres). BMI less than 18.5 = Underweight, BMI between 18.5 – 25 = Ideal weight, BMI between 25 – 30 = Overweight, BMI between 30 – 40 = Obese, and BMI more than 40 = Very obese

### **Waist circumference**

Excess fat stored around the waist increases a person's risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

#### **Low risk:**

Women = waist circumference > 80cm, and men = waist circumference > 93cm.

#### **High risk:**

Women = waist circumference > 88cm, and men = waist circumference > 102cm.

### **Body fat ratio**

Body fat ratio is performed by a healthcare provider who uses a special scale designed for this purpose.



The scale passes a small electrical signal through your body, which can be conducted through muscles and tissue, but is resisted by fat.

Therefore, the greater the resistance, the higher the amount of body fat present. The healthcare provider will then be able to make recommendations based upon his/her findings.

### **Controlling your weight**

Miracle pills or crash diets are not recommended as a means of controlling weight. You will cause your body far more damage than good by resorting to these methods.

Achieving and maintaining a healthy body weight is possible through healthy eating and regular physical activity.

Ideally, you should perform 30-45 minutes of moderate physical activity per day (activity that leaves you slightly out of breath).

If you are physically inactive, start with five minutes a day, such as using the stairs or going for a brisk walk, and increase your level and duration of physical activity only when you are comfortable to do so.

Regarding your diet, make small, gradual changes, focusing on one food group at a time. In doing so you will find it much easier to become healthy and stay healthy.

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