



To be healthy  
**Our  
Nutrition**  
*from our home garden*



Health  
Promotion  
Bureau



Scaling up Nutrition  
People's Forum

Civil Society Alliance - Sri Lanka



Nutrition Division  
Ministry of Health



## Enriched Nation.....

Food is one of the major basic necessities of life. A balanced and nutritious diet is the key to maintaining a healthy productive life.

However, due to the economic issues and busy lifestyle of the present day society, the healthy diet that has evolved over generations till now has gradually shifted to an unhealthy diet in the current scenario.

The incidence of non-communicable diseases among the community is increasing rapidly due to the consumption of processed foods high in sugar, oil and salt. In addition, there is a risk of micronutrient deficiencies due to not consuming sufficient amounts of vegetables, fruits and green leaves.

Taking these factors into consideration, the Nutrition Division has launched a Home Gardening Promotion Programme, where our primary objective is to encourage the community to grow possible food crops in their home garden for their family consumption, thereby improving the nutritional status of the family.

We hope this booklet, compiled by the Nutrition Division of the Ministry of Health, will help to instill interest in gardening among young children.

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Ministry of Health



Sanuli: Grandma, though you are now 70 years old, you are still healthy. But my father is already taking medicines for many illnesses.

Why is that so, grandma?

Grandmother: Daughter, it is because of the food we eat.

Sanuli: Why is that Grandma?

Grandmother: In the past we ate par-boiled rice or brown rice. And we also ate fresh vegetables produced in our own home gardens.

Sanuli: If so, why can't we continue to follow the same food practices?

Grandmother: There are many reasons for that my child.

Sanuli: What are those grandma?

Grandmother: Most of the people have moved from the villages to cities. Land for cultivation is limited in the city. Also people are busy and do not have time to prepare food. Therefore, they get used to the habit of eating quick and easy food. Such food contains loads of sugar, fat, salt and taste enhancers and flavoring. Sadly, most of the produce we eat have been treated with chemical pesticides and fertilizers.

### The current nutritional issues in Sri Lanka

- Approximately one out of 7 children under the age of 5 years is thin.



- Approximately one out of 3 adolescent students is thin.



- Approximately one out of 5 adolescent students is iron deficient.



- One out of every 5 pregnant mothers is iron deficient.



- One out of every 4 adult men is obese or overweight.



- One out of every 3 adult women is obese or overweight.





Teacher: Good day children. Today let's talk about our nutrition. What do you all know about nutrition?

Sanuli: Teacher, my grandmother told me that we get sick because of some of the food we eat.

Nethasha: Teacher, what happens when we eat too much food containing sugar, fat, salt and flavoring?

Teacher: Yes children, when we eat too much food containing sugar, fat, salt and flavoring, our stomachs feel full. They increase our body weight unnecessarily. Increased weight makes us more vulnerable to illnesses. Also, because of such food habits we do not get sufficient nutrition to build immunity in our bodies.

Sanuli: Teacher, so what should we do to safeguard our bodies against illnesses?

Teacher: We need to eat vegetables, fruits and greens that have more vitamins and minerals and which can protect us from illness. It means we need to have a balanced diet.

Sanuli: Teacher, what should a balanced meal contain?

Teacher: Look at these pictures, it is very important that we eat varied food items that belong to these six food categories.

Include a variety of food from the six food groups in to your daily diet.



Cereals/grains  
and food  
made with flour

Vegetables and  
green leafy  
vegetables

Pulses/  
lentils/ fish/  
eggs/ meat

Fruits

Fresh liquid milk  
and  
milk based food

Seeds and nuts  
that contain  
healthy fat.

Teacher: Also we have to exercise our bodies in order to stay healthy. When we toil and grow a home garden, we will get balanced meals, as well as good exercise.

Sanuli: Teacher my grandmother has a home garden.

Vihanga: What are the benefits of a home garden to us?

Teacher: The main important benefit is that we get a variety of fresh vegetables, fruits and greens/leafy vegetables throughout the year. When we have an excess harvest, perhaps we could exchange it with others or sell and earn extra income.

Avanathi: Teacher, then we will have food free of added chemicals that are harmful to health won't we?

- Teacher: Yes, yes, we can consume such produce without any fear.
- Sanuli: Teacher, I like to work in my grandmother's home garden. I feel so happy there.
- Teacher: Yes dear child, I totally agree with what you say. Cultivation is a joyful activity. Home gardens calm our minds. Also when all members of the family get together to help, it improves or enhance the unity and support in the family. It brings great joy.
- Additionally, working in the home garden gives us the opportunity to exercise our bodies. We can lose some body weight and can be healthy.
- Vihanga: I too would like to have a home garden.
- Teacher: That is a good idea. I will guide you on nutritious crops that can be easily grown in a home garden.

### **Vegetables: These provide vitamins, minerals and fibre.**

Long beans, Winged beans, Beans, Pumpkin, Moringa/Drumsticks, Tomato, Bitter-gourd, Ridged-gourd, Snake-gourd, Ladies fingers, Brinjals, Beetroot, Carrots, Leeks, Capsicum, Radish, Kakiri, Cucumber, Knolkhol.



**Brinjals**



**Ladies finger**



**Tomato**



**Drumsticks/moringa**



**Pumpkin**



**Kakiri**

**Fruits:** These provide vitamins, minerals and fibre. These contain healthy antioxidants.

Naran, Orange, Passion-fruit, Nelli, Cashew-apple, Guava, Banana, Papaya, Mango, Rambutan, Custard-apple, Pineapple, Sour-sop, Avocado, Ceylon olives, Pomegranate, Jambola



Naran



Orange



Nelli



Cashew Apple



Guava



Banana



Papaya



Mango



Rambutan



Sour sop



Avacado



Pineapple

Include a minimum of 2 vegetables, 1 green/leafy vegetables and 2 fruits in your daily diet

**Greens/leafy vegetables:** Leafy vegetables contain a higher content of fibre, minerals such as iron, and vitamins.

Kathurumurunga, Gotukola, Moringa/drumstick leaves, Thampala, Saarana, Mukunuvenna, Beetroot leaves, Kankun, Spinach, Thebu, Coriander.



Kathurumurunga



Drumstick/  
Moringa leaves



Gotukola



Beetroot leaves



Thampala



Mukunuvenna



Spinach



Cabbage leaves

**Cereals/Pulses:** Cereals contain carbohydrates, proteins and fibre.

Corn, millet, finger millet



Corn



Finger millet



Millet

## Legumes: Legumes contain a high content of proteins, iron and zinc.

Soya, cow-pea, green-gram, horse-pea, long beans, green beans, winged beans.



Soya



Cow-pea



Green-gram



Winged beans



Long beans



Green beans

## Yams/root vegetables: Yams contain a high content of carbohydrates and fibre.

Sweet potato, Kiri ala, Buthsarana, Hulangkeeriya, Innala, Hingurala, Dandila.



Tapioca/cassava/manioc



Sweet potato



Innala (Chinese potato)

## Other crops: Mushrooms, Peanut, Kottan, Coconut.



Mushroom



Peanut



Coconut



Kottan

### Spices: These crops are rich in medicinal properties

Curry leaves, Green chilli, Turmeric, Ginger, Mustard, Coriander, Pepper.



Curry leaves



Ginger



Green chilli



Peper corn

Instead of using artificial flavors, homegrown spices can be used in cooking to enhance taste, aroma and health benefits.

Teacher: Not only crops, but if a home garden has excess space, it could be used for animal husbandry such as rearing goats, cattle, and chicken. They produce fresh liquid milk, eggs and also manure. Fresh liquid milk and eggs are rich in proteins, vitamins and minerals.



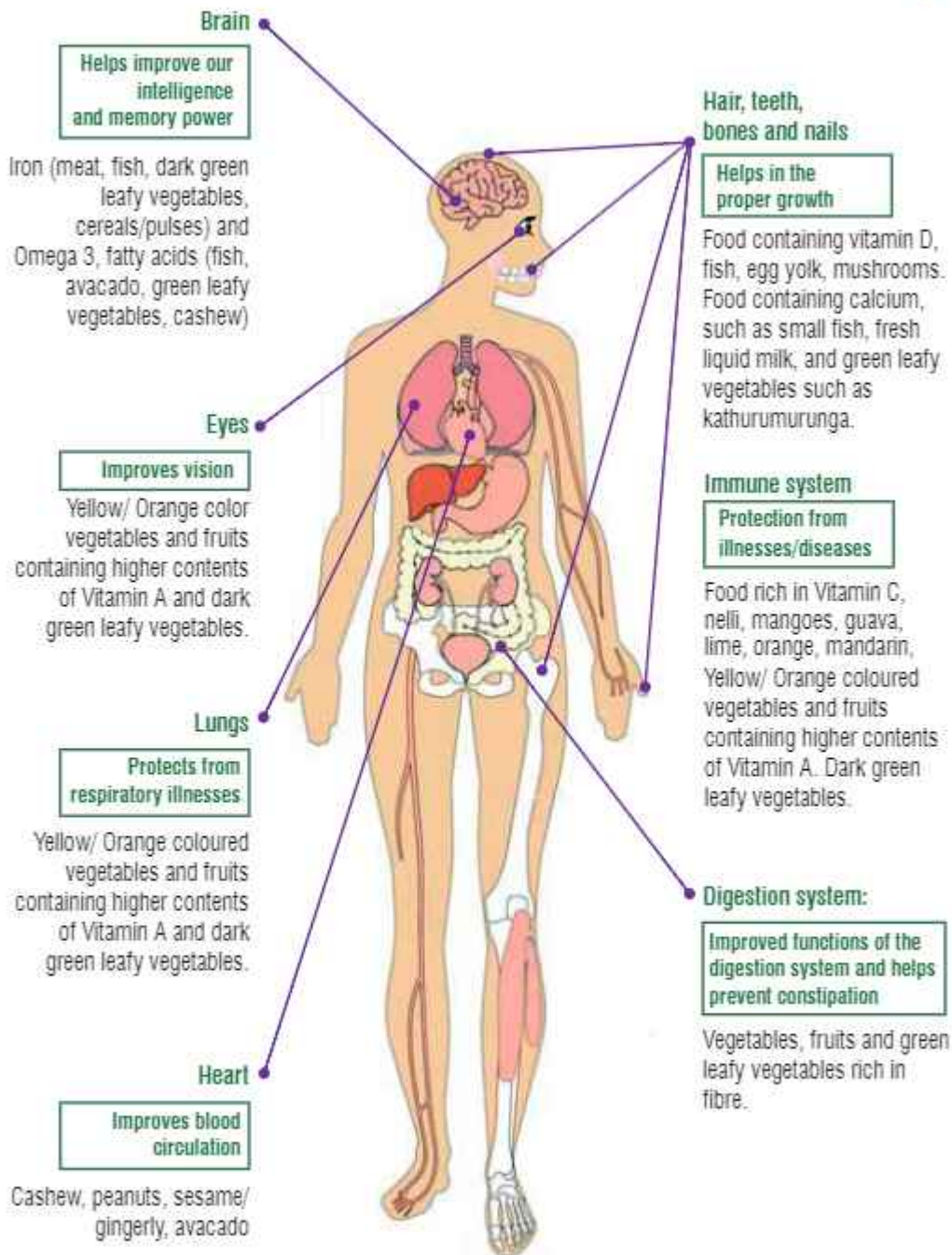
Eggs



liquid milk

Sanuli: Teacher, how does home grown fruits and vegetables help us to be healthy?

Teacher: Let me show how it is. This picture shows how vegetables and fruits help our organs to function in a proper manner.





Binara: Mother, today in school we were taught how to use home grown food to prepare nutritious dishes. Here are the notes I took down.

Mother: Oh it is a very important thing my son. Although we select food rich in nutrients, essential nutrients may be lost due to the way we prepare food.

Binara: They also taught us how to store cooked food in the correct manner.

Mother: Let me see what you have written down.

**Selecting food items varied in taste, aroma and nature adds variety to the diet. It improves our intake of nutrients and appetite.**

## Points to remember while cooking and storing food

Method	Reason
Pick vegetables from your garden just in time for cooking (Just before cooking).	Enables to obtain clean, fresh, and varieties of vegetables and green leaves.
Wash the vegetables, fruits and green leaf before cutting/chopping.	Cutting prior to washing will cause removal of nutrients from the cut surface.
When preparing vegetables and green leaves in coconut milk, ensure to retain the original vegetable colour.  When cooking in coconut milk/leafy porridge, add the green leaves / leaf juice to the preparation just before taking off the fire.	When leafy vegetables are overcooked the nutrients get destroyed due to high heat.
Prepare green leaves as raw sambols/salads as much as possible with added lime juice.	Nutrition is retained when green leaves are consumed in raw form. Adding lime, enhances the absorption of nutrients in these preparations.
Try as much to consume fruits with its skins.	Fruit skins are high in fibre and health friendly properties.
Cooked food should be stored in a clean place. Ensure a place that is safe from insects.	To prevent contamination of food by animals.
Do not store uncooked fish/meat with cooked food in the refrigerator.	Uncooked meat and fish contain high amounts of harmful bacteria which could contaminate the cooked food.
Do not repeatedly re-heat refrigerated food for consumption.	Microbes increase in food taken out from the refrigerator repeatedly.

## Food Based Dietary Guidelines for Sri Lankans (FBDGs)

Consume unpolished rice and cereals instead of polished cereals and products.



Consume a meal with variety that contains all nutrients.



Include a minimum of 2 vegetables, 1 green leafy vegetable and 2 fruits in your daily diet.



Include a lentil, fish, eggs and lean meat (fat removed) to your daily diet.



Consume fresh milk or fresh milk based products.



Consume daily a handful of nuts such as cashew, peanuts or sesame which contain fat/oil.



Consume clean food products that have no poisonous substance (pesticides/weedicides etc.)



Water is the healthiest drink  
Consume – 8-10 glasses of water each day.  
(1.5 - 2.0 litres).



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## Food Based Dietary Guidelines for Sri Lankans (FBDGs)

Limit sugary/sweet drinks, biscuits, cakes, sweets and sugar substituted products.



Limit adding salt in food preparation and consuming salted food.



Limit processed and ultra processed food. Consume home cooked fresh food.



Always read labels in packed food items.



Have an undisturbed sleep of 7-8 hrs a day.



Be active: Indulge in a 30 minutes moderate exercise each day for at least five days a week.



**Proper nutrition – a healthy life**

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Son: Father, our teacher told us that we can get seeds and plants for our home garden from the nearest Agricultural sales outlet.

Father: If so, I will quickly go and get some plants that are rich in nutrition and some seeds too.

Son: Lets all get together and prepare a home garden filled with nutrition.

**Let us as a family determine to lead a healthy, disease-free life by using produce from our successful home garden.**

**You can obtain further information and advice from the Agricultural Research Assistant or the Agricultural Instructor in your area for home gardening.**

**Please get in touch with the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) or the Public Health Midwife (PHM) for information on how best you could utilize the nutrients in your home grown products.**

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