BENEFITS OF A HEALTHY DIET

PHYSICAL WELLBEING FACT SHEET | April 2020

Eating a healthy diet can be challenging. We need to be organised and make the time to shop and prepare food, rather than opting for the convenience of junk food. When you're in a hurry, busy at work, looking after kids, or feeling tired and stressed, it's much easier to reach for some fast food than it is to make a healthy meal.

The benefits of having and maintaining a healthy diet far outweigh the effort we have to put in. A healthy diet can improve your overall health and make you feel better in so many ways on both a physical and mental level, not to mention many long-term benefits. The benefits of a healthy diet include:

1. Controls Weight

Maintaining a healthy body weight is a key component to being healthy overall. Having a healthy diet that includes a range of wholesome food helps to maintain a healthy weight. When you eat less fatty and sugary snacks, and processed food and replace them with nutrient dense foods such as whole grains, lean meats, fruit and vegetables you will feel fuller and naturally eat less.

2. Fights Diseases

Eating healthy and nutritious foods helps keeps your immune system strong, so you will become less prone to everyday illness like cold, flus and viruses. The World Health Organisation says that a healthy diet may protect the body against certain types of diseases, such as diabetes and reduce the risks of cardiovascular diseases.

3. Boosts Energy

Keeping your body fuelled with healthy food can give you the energy you need to make the most of your day. Healthy carbs like whole grains, fruits, vegetables and legumes are slow to digest which help keep your blood sugar and insulin levels steady and your energy levels even. Protein such as lean meats, nuts and fish are vital for energy levels.

4. Enhances Mood and Improves Mental Clarity

What you eat can have an impact on your brain, especially the parts that regulate mood. Food rich in vitamins and minerals which keep your blood sugar stable such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains have been associated with helping lower the risk of depression, as have foods rich in omega-3 fats such as nuts, salmon and other fatty fish. Certain foods have the ability to slow the production of cortisol the - stress hormone - especially foods high in magnesium such as leafy greens, dark chocolate, fish, avocados and bananas.

5. Increases Longevity and Anti-Ageing

According to a study by the American Geriatrics Society a diet that includes a range of fruit and vegetables, in combination with exercise, was associated with extended life expectancy. Other studies have shown that the consumption of a Mediterranean diet, which includes lots of fruits, vegetables and omega-3 fats from fish and olive oil can play a role in extending how long you will live.

Healthy eating is a lifestyle choice not just a diet

There seem to be new research coming out every day telling us what is healthy and what is not, but most experts will agree that a healthy diet should include: whole grains, lean proteins, fruits and vegetables. You should limit processed foods, high-sugar foods, fried and fatty foods, sugary carbonated drinks and alcohol.

Some tips to incorporate a healthy diet into your day-to-day life can include:

> Bringing a pre-prepared healthy lunch to work
> Have fruit/nuts handy to avoid hitting the cookie jar during the mid-afternoon slump
> Keep a bottle of water at your desk
> Swap the chips for veggie sticks/crackers and dip
> Limit caffeine where possible- but that one coffee you can't live without is allowed

It might take some time to get used to making healthier choices, but after a few weeks you will start to feel better and the healthy options will come more naturally. It takes 21 days to form a new habit, so stick with your new healthy habit enjoy the many benefits for your health today and for the future.

Content by **Benestar** Be your best you

YOUR HEALTH MATTERS every body, every mind