

Nutrition



Our diet is essential for our health and welfare, both physically and mentally. What we eat will dictate our energy levels, growth, recovery from injury, muscle strength, mental ability and concentration, ability to fight disease, presence of allergies, organ function and weight. Diet describes how we eat, it is not about losing weight. To ensure that we have a body that can function at peak performance and tolerate the stresses of dance we have to address our nutrition.

The principal aims of nutrition are to:

- Keep healthy.
- Maintain ideal weight for height.
- Support an enjoyment of food and eating.
- Enhance adaption and recovery between training sessions.



Below are some very useful guidelines for a healthy diet. It is a holistic approach and not specifically for weight loss or medical conditions.

- It is important to eat regularly, ideally every 2-4 hours to ensure the body has a constant supply of fuel. If we skip meals the body will 'store' as it thinks food is scarce and will need to keep a supply of energy (body fat) for daily function. Three meals and a couple of snacks throughout the day is a healthy goal.
- Breakfast is the most important meal of the day, don't skip it!! This kick starts the metabolism and also provides energy for the morning, keeping you alert and energised.
- Breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince and dinner like a pauper! Therefore our smallest meal of the day should be dinner and the largest is breakfast. Make sure you get up early enough to make this happen and try not to eat less than 3hrs before bed time.
- Don't eat your meals on the go. Take time to eat in peace and taste your food. Try not to eat in front of distractions such as the TV or homework.
- Chew your food until it is liquid in your mouth. This is where digestion of carbohydrates commences. It is key to helping the optimal total digestion of food.
- Variation in food is the key. Don't eat the same foods for every meal such as tuna sandwiches for lunch every day. The body needs a variety of nutrients from different foods. There isn't a super food that supplies them all. Provide a 'rainbow of colours' with your food choices, therefore covering a broad spectrum of macro and micro nutrients.

- Check your portion size, don't over indulge. This is the biggest mistake people make. With current advertising and portions getting larger and larger we are ingesting more calories than we need. Keep portions small, chew your food slowly and learn to recognise when you are full and stop eating. We don't always need to clean the plate.
- Don't feel the need to finish everything on your plate, it's ok to leave food. Listen to your body, as to when it's full, and stop eating. It can take up to 20mins to have a sense of being full, so eat slowly and enjoy your meal.
- Try to drink water with juice of 1/2 a lemon or lime 20mins before eating, to stimulate your digestion. Avoid drinking large quantities of water with your meal as this can dilute your digestive enzymes.
- You can also try including Apple Cider Vinegar or 1/2 a Grapefruit 5-10 mins before eating, or if there is no time to plan ahead, then include bitter foods like rocket, olives & bitter melon, or herbs and spices such as Turmeric, Dill and Coriander in your meals.

We have 3 main food groups that need to all be included in every meal as each one has it's role and function.

1. Carbohydrates

- Carbohydrates are our primary energy source, vital for muscle contraction and brain function. It is **ESSENTIAL** that we have enough complex carbohydrates in our diet. No fad low carb diets for the dancer/athlete... they just don't work!
- The building blocks of carbohydrates are sugars (glucose, sucrose, lactose, fructose).
- We store glucose in our muscles and liver as glycogen to be broken down and used as needed. Glucose is also available in the blood. We need therefore to constantly replenish these stores with a constant supply of carbs. We can start to replenish stores within the hour so a steady stream of food throughout the day is our aim to keep blood sugar steady.
- A good portion size of carbs is about the size of your fist.



2. Fat

- It is also essential to have good fats in our diets. We need fats for cell membranes, insulation and vitamin transport. Keep in mind that is very energy dense.
- There are different kinds of fat, good fats (mono and polyunsaturated) and not so good (saturated fat) and not good at all (trans fats). Examples of good fats include: Avocado, Flaxseeds & Coconut.
- It is also essential to have a high level of Omega 3 within the diet, i.e. oily fish such as salmon.



3. Protein

- Protein is the third essential food group. This can be animal and plant protein.
- Proteins are broken down to form the building blocks of amino acids. They are essential for growth and repair, and healthy muscles, nails and hair.
- A good sized portion would be the size of your palm.
- Good sources of protein include: Eggs, Fish, Poultry, Slow cooked broth etc.

Micronutrients (vitamins and minerals) should also be included and will be available in the above food groups. We require a broad spectrum of micronutrients so a varied diet is the key.

Hydration is vital to body function. We should be drinking good quality water daily and reducing our intake of coffee and soft drinks. The formula $0.033 \times \text{body weight in kg} = \text{the amount of water required in a day}$. This needs to be increased in the presence of exercise sometimes up to 3 times.

- Our urine should be pale yellow or even clear, even first thing in the morning.
- Coffee, alcohol and packaged juices need to be kept to a minimum. Freshly squeezed juices are preferable.
- If you are hungry, drink water. Dehydration is often perceived as hunger.
- It is appropriate to turn to sports drinks like Gatorade if your exercise session is between 1-2 hrs of maximal intensity. Any less than this and water will suffice.

With regards to weight loss it is a 50:50 balance between nutrition and exercise. You need to change the balance of energy to have energy in less than energy out. Any weight loss needs to be slow, steady and in moderation. Be very wary of diets promising rapid weight loss, they are no good for health or for keeping weight off long term.

Summary

- Eat every 2-4hrs, and include carbs in your snacks.
- Never skip breakfast.
- Stay hydrated! Water is the key!
- Avoid processed foods.
- Eat organic meat/diary and vegetables where ever possible to obtain the best nutrients.
- Eat a variety of foods- a rainbow of colours!
- Have all 3 food groups on your plate in 1 meal.
- Eat foods in their natural state (not in packages).
- Be prepared, plan your meals and snacks, don't get caught out eating fast food.

ALWAYS REMEMBER THE 3 **P**s

PLANNING **P**ORTION SIZE **P**RODUCT VARIETY

Snack Ideas

BREAKFAST

- Grain toast x 1 slice with eggs and spinach/mushrooms.
- Oats (not instant/quick cook) with natural yoghurt and cinnamon (or cook with milk for protein).
- Non toasted muesli (1/2 cup) with light milk/natural yogurt.
- Grain toast and ham or grated cheese.
- Leftovers from last night.
- Smoothie with oats/ milk/yogurt/LSA and fruit.
- Omelette with asparagus/spinach and pesto.
- Salmon and steamed asparagus/spinach.

SNACK

- Cheese + Rye Crackers.
- Vita wheat and hard boiled egg.
- Small tin tuna and sliced tomatoes.
- Small natural yoghurt + cinnamon or vanilla/chia seeds.
- Veg sticks and hummus or cream/cottage cheese.
- Piece of fruit and small amounts nuts.
- Nut bar and glass of milk.
- Boiled egg and veg sticks/fruit.
- A chicken rice paper roll.
- 1 slice grain bread and nut butter.
- Avocado and veg sticks.

LUNCH

- Mixed salad with tuna/salmon/chick peas + olive oil dressing.
- 1/2 cup brown rice with lean meat and veg.
- 1/2 cup wholemeal pasta with veg/beans and salad.
- Jacket potato with cottage cheese and salad.
- Salad wrap with lentils or chickpeas.

- Veg soup and small ham wrap.
- Sushi on brown rice.
- Quinoa and salad and lean meat with nuts.

SNACK

As previous if really required.



DINNER

- Grilled lean meat + roasted vegetables.
- Lean meat and salad.
- Meat casserole with salad.
- Spanish omelette and salad.
- Frittata and salad.
- Lean meat and quinoa.
- Spring veg soup with omelette/wrap/grilled chops or sausages.

Always remember variation is the key!

Finally... You are what you eat, therefore if you eat rubbish food your body will respond with rubbish. Poor skin, recurrent injuries, delayed healing, low energy, poor concentration, and an overworked liver. So when you pick up your next snack think - its this going to heal me or harm me?