The importance of a balanced/healthy diet is often underestimated. People often don’t have time or feel like eating 'healthy'. It is therefore often not high on the list of priorities. However, a healthy diet is crucial for good health and consequently provides numerous benefits for body and mind.

**Health Triangle**

- Drink enough of (tap) water. Preferably 1.5 l of water a day. Unsweetened coffee, tea and flavoured water can be used for variety.
- Eat enough fruits and vegetables. Min 300g of vegetables and 250g (approx 2 pieces) of fruit per day.
- Choose legumes, whole grains and nuts more often. Min 125g of whole grains (e.g. wholemeal bread, oatmeal, wholemeal pasta, brown rice,...) per day. It’s best to eat whole grains or potatoes with every main meal. Eat 15–25g (a small handful) of nuts and seeds per day. Put legumes on the menu at least once a week.
- Eat less meat and prefer poultry, fish and eggs to processed meat. Do you still put meat on the menu? Then choose white meat over red meat and fresh over processed. Also, limit it to one meal a day and moderate your consumption to a palm-sized piece of meat. Put fish, seafood or shellfish on the menu once a week.
- Choose low or non-processed varieties. Adding sugar, (saturated) fat and/or salt can be disadvantageous. Processing can cause existing nutrients to be lost, e.g. dietary fibres, vitamins and minerals.

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**Mental health advantages**

- Better mood
- Increased energy levels
- Better concentration
- Improved ability to cope with stress

**Physical health advantages**

- Strengthens your immune system
- Better digestion
- Keeps skin, teeth and eyes healthy
- Supports muscles and bones
- Reduces the risk of some diseases

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**Let’s get started!**

The Food Triangle developed by The Flemish Institute Healthy Living will help you on your way!

- Eat and drink as few empty calories as possible such as soft drinks, snacks, sweets, ...
- Limit your salt consumption and do not add extra salt. <5g (1 teaspoon) per day.
- Do not overdo your consumption of oil and fat. Tip: 1 knife point per slice of bread and 1 tablespoon per person with meals.
Tips & Tricks

General

- **Vary and find alternatives.** Try new foods and play with flavours.
- **Eat at set times and with others,** that helps you keep regularity.
- **Eat consciously and in moderation.** Take small portions of what is less healthy and don’t eat more than your body needs. Listen to hunger – and saturation signals.
- **Adapt your environment** so that the healthy choice becomes the easiest choice.
- **Work step-by-step.** A weekly menu helps you plan well. Every little improvement is a step forward!
- **Enjoy what you eat!** Indulge yourself daily with tasty healthy food, but also allow yourself to sometimes choose a less healthy alternative. Just stay conscious of frequency (not too often) and portion size (not too much).

Specific for during the exams

- **Don’t eat too much, but certainly not too little either.**
- **Have three light meals a day.** A heavy meal with an overloaded stomach inhibits concentration.
- **Regularly provide tasty and light snacks, e.g. fruit, yoghurt,**... These keep your blood sugar levels up which we need for concentration.
- **Instead of eating between your books,** find another space to eat. This way, you will connect with others and be able to clear your mind for a while. Think of your meal as a moment of relaxation.
- **Don’t eat too much in the evening or too late.** This can lead to poor and restless sleep, reducing your concentration the next day.

Getting started: a short exercise.

1. **Study your eating habits** and write them down in a diary. Sometimes you eat consciously (e.g. at the table), while at other times you eat without really thinking about it. Becoming aware of this is a first step towards change.

2. **What do you want to focus on?** Write down one good habit you want to focus on, such as:
   - Replace soft drinks with water.
   - Bring fruit to class as a snack.
   - Do not eat while studying, walking, watching TV, ...
   - ...

3. **Make time daily for a moment of reflection:** what helped you stick to the new healthy habit; even if it’s only for a moment? At what moments were you doing well? At what moments did it perhaps go less well? Some things become a habit easily, while others take a bit more time. That’s okay, just keep trying. Have you integrated one healthy habit into your life? Then start the next one.

Learn more? Check our Canvas course ❯ Tel. +32 (0)2 629 23 06 ❯ guidance@vub.be ❯ follow Study Guidance on wearestudent.vub.be