

The importance of...

HEALTHY EATING

The importance of balanced/healthy nutrition is often underestimated. Consequently, it is often not high on the priority list. A **balanced/healthy diet** is crucial for good health and provides numerous benefits for the body and mind. Your brain will thank you: **more focus, a better memory and stronger academic performances.**



Mental health advantages

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



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

Let's get started!

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

- **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.



- **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.

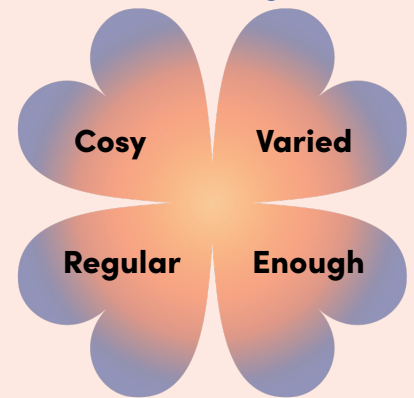
Tips & Tricks



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).

Balanced eating behavior



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.