

Eating habits: dos and don'ts

Eating: just surviving or...

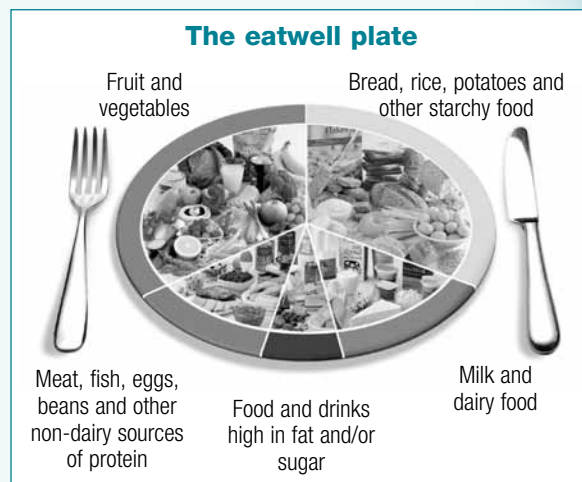
It is often said that we are what we eat, but we can add that how we eat and the people we eat with also reveal much about our style of life, our culture and our attitude towards the world and ourselves. It has always been an important way of expressing social, cultural and religious belonging. Today in the western world eating is no longer simply a matter of surviving but, now more than ever, we eat to please ourselves.

Many different aspects contribute, or even determine, people's eating habits all over the world. But personal preferences also play a crucial role in the choice of food.

We like or dislike certain dishes because of our personal experience, exposure to food, family habits and rituals or even prejudices.

What and how people eat varies across cultures, climates and economic circumstances. Different socio-cultural groups have a set of eating rules which are acceptable; they are learned behaviours referring to meal and snack patterns, acceptable foods, food combinations and portion sizes. The same rules can be totally unacceptable by other groups.

In western cultures a meal is generally the consumption of two or more foods in a particular setting and at established times. Snacks, on the other hand, consist of a little portion of food or drink between meals. In Europe a common eating pattern is based on three meals a day: breakfast, lunch and dinner, with the possibility of a light snack in between.



Healthy habits: some dos and don'ts

The debate about a healthy diet and, consequently, a better life has been one of the most frequent topics of TV programmes, newspapers and magazine articles for some decades. Childhood and adulthood obesity have become a problem not only in the USA but also in Europe, since some of the American eating habits have spread in recent years. This is one of the reasons why the quality and the quantity of food has become a major concern. Here are some ideas of a possible pattern for a healthy lifestyle.

DOS

- have a good breakfast: milk or tea or coffee, cereals, toasts with jam or honey, white yogurts.
- have a fruit as a snack, an apple, an orange, a banana...
- have pasta or rice with tomato sauce and some vegetables for lunch.
- have some meat or fish or cheese or eggs for dinner. Always have some vegetables as a side dish and fruit as a dessert.
- consume two or three portions of legumes a week.

DON'TS

- drink too much wine or alcohol.
- use too much butter or add unnecessary sugar or salt.
- have too many sugary drinks or sugary snacks.
- consume too much caffeine.
- eat too late in the day.
- grab, gulp and go.

