

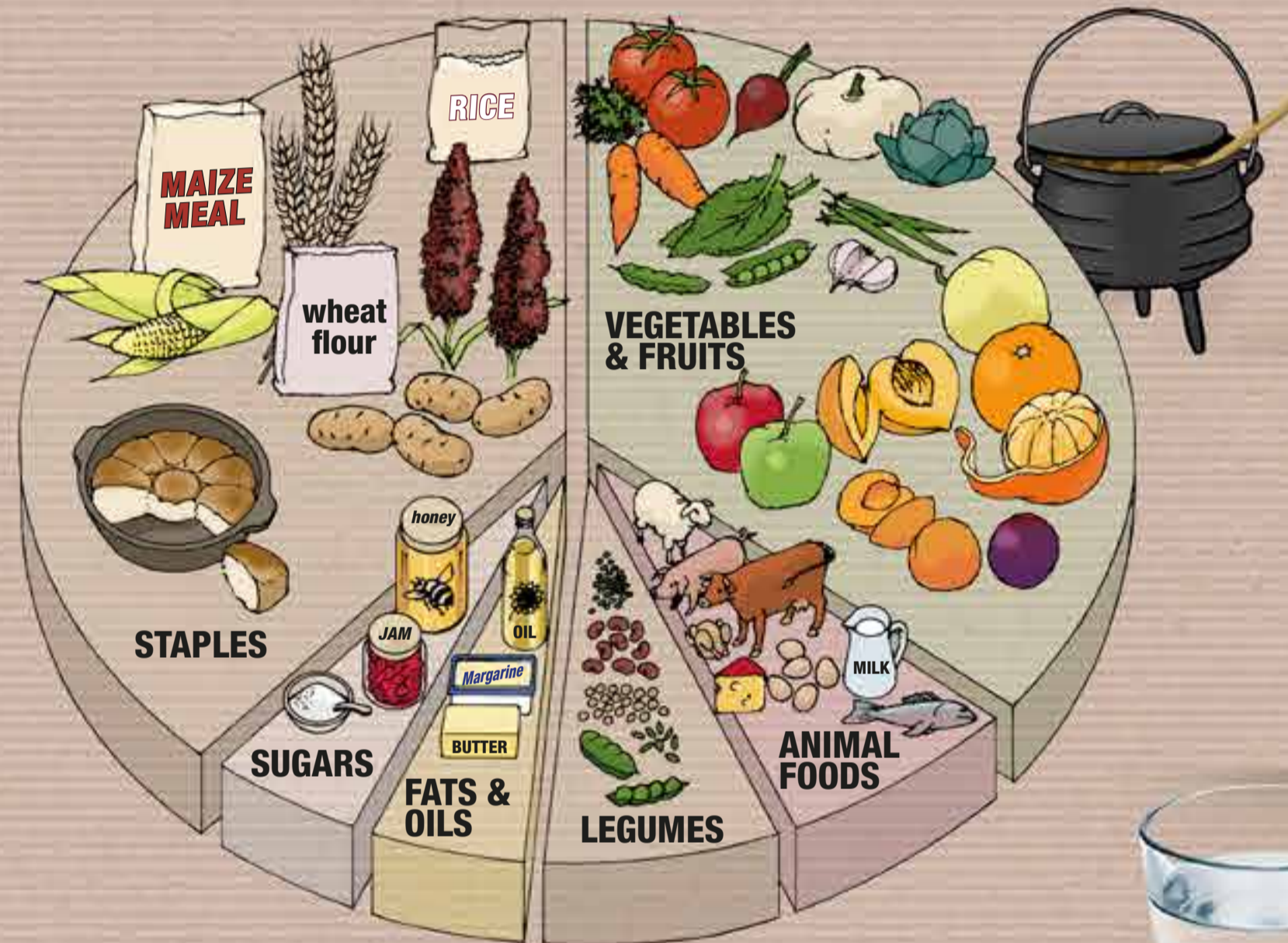
A BALANCED AND DIVERSE DIET

Why is eating a balanced and diverse diet important?

- + It keeps our bodies and minds healthy.
- + It gives the body energy to function well and be active.
- + It helps the body to fight infections and illness.
- + It helps children to develop to their full potential.
- + It contributes to safer pregnancy and child birth.

A healthy diet includes a variety of foods from different groups

Too much as well as too little food is bad for our body. A healthy balanced diet has the right proportions of good quality foods and is integrated by the following food groups:



Staples:

Should be the biggest portion on the plate and should be the main component of your diet (e.g. cereals, maize, sorghum, wheat flour and rice). They provide energy and help our body grow and repair.

Vegetables and fruits:

Should make up around one third of the plate. Have plenty of them, ideally different ones, they are also great snacks between meals. Vegetable and fruits protect our body against illness

Animal Foods and Legumes:

Should make up a smaller portion of the plate. They enable our body to grow and repair. Every day one should have at least ONE of these:

- + Meat, poultry, eggs, offal, etc.
- + Milk, cheese, yoghurt, etc.
- + Fish (tinned or fresh)
- + Legumes (lentils, beans, peas) etc.

Fats and oils:

Should form a small part of the plate. Add them to vegetables and meals in small amounts, e.g. 3-4 tablespoons per day per person. They provide energy and improve protective function of vegetables.



The importance of drinking safe water:

Water is necessary for our body functions including digestion and absorption. Dirty water can carry the diseases that cause diarrhoea – one of the major causes of infant and young child morbidity, malnutrition and mortality. Each person needs to drink 8 glasses of safe water a day.

We must eat a variety of foods every day in the right proportions so that our body gets enough energy and everything it needs to be active, to grow and to be protected against illness.



FOOD PRESERVATION

Why should we preserve food?

Preservation of food is useful to have food products available when they are out of season or in short supply. For example, fruit is not available in winter, and when one slaughters a cow or an animal the excess of meat may be used later if preserved. Food preservation helps us to ensure a diversity of nutrients.

Methods of Preserving Foods:

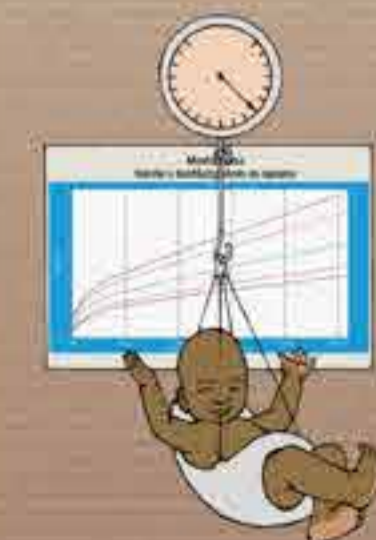
Bottling



Drying



Freezing



Preventing malnutrition

Children are at risk of malnutrition when:

- + They are not eating the right foods in quantity, quality and diversity.
- + They suffer from diseases (e.g. diarrhoea) or infections (e.g. hookworms, HIV/AIDS).

Young children are at high risk of malnutrition, especially from the age of 6 months until the age of 2 years, when breast milk is no longer enough for the growth and development of the baby. This is a critical time for growth monitoring. Babies need to be weighed and measured regularly in your health care centre.

A diverse, balanced diet and good hygiene practices are the best ways to prevent malnutrition. In addition, your doctor may prescribe supplements like iron and Vitamin A.



Obesity

Overweight as a result of eating too much of staple foods, fats or sugar can lead to serious health problems such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart diseases. Obesity also affects your quality of life, reducing your energy levels and endurance.



Nutrition for elderly

As we age we may lose appetite and find it more difficult to chew. Still, elderly people need to eat well to stay healthy. Dairy, fruits, vegetables and water are particularly good.

Attention should be paid to the preparation of meals to facilitate the food intake and digestion.

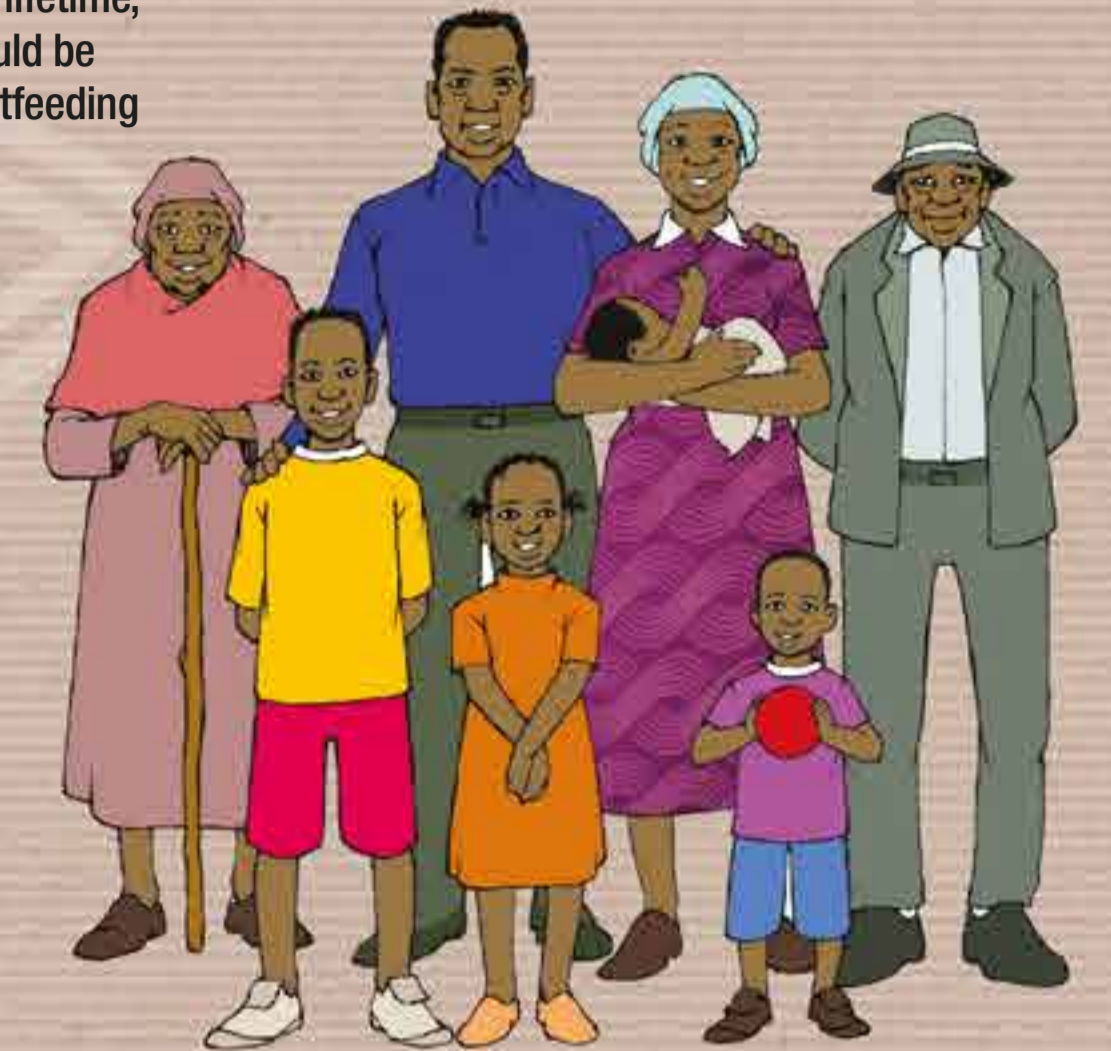
SPECIAL NEEDS:

Our nutrition requirements change during our lifetime, from infancy to old age. Special attention should be paid to the diet of pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers, children, elderly and sick people.

Mother and child feeding

It is extremely important for a woman to pay attention to her eating when she is pregnant, breastfeeding or feeding a young child. Proper feeding enables:

- + The mother to feel well and active.
- + Making birth easier.
- + Proper growth and development of the child.
- + Helping the mother to breastfeed the baby successfully.



1 Pregnant women

- + Eat nutritious snacks between meals during the day.
- + Take iron and folic acid tablets prescribed at the health centre.
- + Attend ante-natal clinics as instructed by the health personnel.



2 Breastfeeding mothers

- + Eat a little more at each meal or have smaller frequent meals.
- + Continue eating more nutritious snacks between meals.
- + Take vitamin A capsules prescribed at the health centre.
- + Attend post natal clinics as instructed by the health personnel.
- + HIV-infected mothers on ART (antiretroviral) should adhere to medication and breastfeed their children seeking regular advice from health centre personnel.

Good nutrition is important for both mother and child

4 Feeding Children over 6 months

- + It is highly recommended that breastfeeding is continued until the child is 2 years old.
- + From 6 months of age, complementary foods should be given in addition to breastfeeding.



3 Feeding babies aged 0-6 months

- + Babies under 6 months of age should be exclusively breastfed.
- + Babies should attend the health centre monthly for growth monitoring.



Feeding the babies of HIV-infected mothers

- + HIV-infected mothers on ART (antiretrovirals) should adhere to medication and breastfeed their children seeking regular advice from health centre personnel.
- + Children under 6 months of age should be exclusively breastfed.
- + While still on ART, HIV-infected mothers should introduce complementary foods when the child is 6 months and continue to breastfeed until the child is 12 months.
- + After 12 months of age, breastfeeding should only stop once a nutritionally adequate and safe diet without the breast milk can be provided to the infant. Advice should be requested from health centre and nutrition personnel.

