Healthy Eating
African Caribbean Style
Getting a Healthy Balance

Traditional African Caribbean food is both tasty and healthy, especially if you get the balance right. This means eating lots of vegetables and fruit and starchy food and eating less sugary, fatty and salty food. Research shows that there is a greater risk of high blood pressure, stroke and diabetes amongst the African Caribbean community. Healthier eating can help prevent these health problems.

The healthy balance of foods in your diet should look something like this:

**Fruit and Vegetables**
Eat lots of these, they are protective against heart disease and cancer.

**Meat, Fish and alternatives**
Eat about twice a day for a healthy strong body.

**Starchy Foods**
Base your meals around these foods and choose higher fibre types where possible. They are more filling and are good for the bowels.

**Milk & Dairy Products**
Take some of these each day they contain calcium which is important for strong bones. Use calcium enriched soya products if dairy foods are not eaten.

**Fatty foods & Sugary foods**
Use these foods in small amounts to add interest and variety. They should not replace balanced meals.
**Fruit & Vegetables**

- Fruit and vegetables are a good source of fibre, vitamins and minerals and are protective against heart disease and cancer.
- Try to have at least five portions a day such as fruit or juice at breakfast, vegetables or salad with meals, and fruit for desserts or between meal snacks.

**Starchy Foods**

- Starchy foods such as yam, green banana, plaintain and rice provide energy and vitamins.
- Base your meals around these foods and choose high fibre types where possible, such as brown rice and wholemeal bread. These are the most filling and are best for your bowels.
- Avoid adding too much fat when cooking these foods. Try boiling or baking rather than frying.

**Meat, Fish and Alternatives**

- These foods provide protein, vitamins and minerals and should be eaten in moderate amounts at meal times.
- To reduce your fat intake choose lean meat and take the skin off chicken before cooking.
- Oily fish like mackerel and herring contain a type of oil (omega 3) which is beneficial for the heart and circulation. Try to include it every week.
- Peas, beans and lentils are low in fat and high in fibre, try to use them as much as possible.

**Milk & Dairy Foods**

- Milk and dairy foods are a good source of calcium important for strong bones and teeth.
- Choose lower fat varieties where possible e.g. semi-skimmed milk, low fat yoghurt and cottage cheese.
- Use 'light' versions of condensed and evaporated milk they are much lower in fat than the ordinary ones.
Fatty Foods and Sugary Foods

These foods help to add taste and variety, but in large amounts contribute to obesity and heart disease.

- Eat less fried food and fatty snacks such as fried dumplings, fritter and plain, burgers and pastries.
- Measure the amount of fat or oil in cooking and gradually cut down.
- Snack on fruit and vegetables when hungry between meals.
- Cut down on sugar in drinks and on cereal or swap to sweetener

Healthy Cooking tips

- Reduce fat by choosing cooking methods which involve little or no fat such as boiling, baking, steaming, stewing and microwaving
- Palm oil, coconut oil, butter, ghee and lard are high in saturated fat which can increase your cholesterol level and lead to heart disease.
  Use small amounts of unsaturated oils instead, such as olive oil, rapeseed oil, corn oil or sunflower oil. These are better for the heart.
- Creamed coconut is high in saturated fat - use it sparingly

Cornmeal Porridge

Swap sugar and condensed milk for sweetener and light condensed milk. This will halve the fat and sugar content, without spoiling the taste.

Fruit Punch

Use fresh fruits and their juices, lots of ginger and sugar free squash to reduce the sugar content.

One Pot Meals

Try making an all vegetable one pot meal including beans or lentils for a quick and filling meal.

Oatmeal Porridge

Try using semi-skimmed milk and sweetener instead of full cream milk and sugar.

Salt

A high salt intake can cause high blood pressure. To reduce your intake:

- Soak salt fish and other salty food in lots of water before cooking.
- Use less all purpose seasoning which contains a lot of salt and add extra spices such as chilli, ginger and garlic
- Use less salt at the table
- Cut down on salted crisps, nuts, snacks and processed foods.
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