



**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
*Republic of South Africa*

**FOOD-BASED DIETARY GUIDELINES FOR HEALTHY SOUTH  
AFRICANS OLDER THAN 6 YEARS**

The Department of Health has adopted a core set of Food-Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDGs). These FBDGs guidelines are intended to be used as an effective nutrition education tool for promoting the importance of nutrition to combat the growing burden of chronic diseases as well as existing nutritional disorders associated with poverty and undernutrition. The guidelines will form the core of Governments nutrition education messages with a view of promoting healthy lifestyles among all South Africans.

South Africa is faced with a double burden of disease namely infectious diseases such as TB and HIV and the increasing prevalence of chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular diseases, certain cancers, diabetes and dental caries. Many of these chronic diseases are caused by factors such as overweight, lack of physical activity and poor diet (high fat and sugar intake and low in fruit and vegetables consumption).

The Food-Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDGs) for South Africa are as follows:

1. Enjoy a variety of foods
2. Be active
3. Make starchy foods the basis of most meals
4. Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits everyday
5. Eat dry beans, peas, lentils and soy regularly
6. Chicken, fish, milk, meat or eggs could be eaten daily.
7. Eat fats sparingly
8. Use salt sparingly
9. Drink lots of clean, safe water
10. If you drink alcohol, drink sensibly
11. Use food and drinks containing sugar sparingly and not between meals.

The guidelines are based on the best currently available scientific evidence on the relationship between nutrition and disease. Implementation of these guidelines will have a major impact on disease and death rates due to both under- and overnutrition (malnutrition). South Africans are advised to choose a diet that is low in fat, sugar and salt, high in vegetables and fruits; in conjunction with regular physical activity.

The guidelines are in line with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) independent expert report on “Diet, Nutrition and the Prevention of Chronic Diseases” that was released in June 2003. \*

The South African Food Based Dietary Guideline Work Group developed the guidelines in consultation with health educators, dietitians, nutritionists and nutrition professionals over the past five years. Different stakeholders were represented on the Group including the Department of Health: Directorate Nutrition, UNICEF, academia, Dry bean Producers Organisation, the South African Sugar Association, Unilever, the Association for Dietetics in South Africa, the Nutrition Society of South Africa, and the Medical Research Council.

The FBDGs were subject to wide-scale consumer research testing across all socio-economic spectra within South Africa, namely rural, informal urban and formal urban dwellers, as well as all cultural groups representative of the South African population.

People who want more information can contact the Directorate: Nutrition

Tel: 012 312 0062 and Fax: 012 312 3112

\*WHO/FAO Diet, Nutrition and the Prevention of Non Communicable Diseases,

WHO, Technical Report Series 916 available on

[http://www.who.int/hpr/NPH/docs/who\\_fao\\_expert\\_report.pdf](http://www.who.int/hpr/NPH/docs/who_fao_expert_report.pdf)