A healthy, balanced diet is important for many reasons. It is important to have variety in your diet because no single food will provide all of the essential nutrients that your body needs to be healthy and function efficiently. A healthy diet is one that helps maintain or improve your general health and is important for lowering your risk of many chronic diseases, such as obesity, heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, and cancer. A healthy diet is one that is balanced in vegetables, fruits, proteins, fats and carbohydrates. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends the following:

- achieve energy balance and a healthy weight--try to burn as much energy as you consume, and vice versa
- limit energy intake from total fats and shift fat consumption away from saturated fats to unsaturated fats and towards the elimination of trans-fatty acids
- increase consumption of fruits and vegetables, and legumes, whole grains, and nuts
- limit intake of free sugars
- limit sodium consumption from all sources and ensure that salt is iodized

The WHO estimates that 2.7 million deaths are attributable to a diet low in fruits and vegetables every year. Globally it is estimated to cause ~19% of gastrointestinal cancer, 31% of ischaemic heart disease, and 11% of strokes, thus making it one of the leading preventable causes of death worldwide.

MyPlate

In 2011, the USDA did away with the old food pyramid and came up with new guidelines for a healthy diet. MyPlate is the new set of guidelines that recommends 30% vegetables and 20% fruit--half of the plate--and 30% grains and 20% lean protein--the other half of the plate--plus a small portion
of dairy. MyPlate is supplemented by other recommendations, such as:

- Make at least half your grains whole grains
- Vary your veggies
- Focus on fruit
- Get your calcium-rich foods
- Stick to lean proteins

For more information on each food group, click on the links above!

*Information provided by the [WHO](https://www.who.int) and the [USDA](https://www.choosemyplate.gov)*