

# Nutrition for the prevention of specific health problems and conditions



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**Alimentação para cuidados  
e prevenção de condições/problemas  
de saúde e doenças específicas**

**विशेष स्वास्थ्य समस्याहरूको  
रोकथामको लागि पोषण**

**预防特殊健康问题和状况的饮食**

**खास स्वास्थ्य समस्याओं और परेशानियों  
की रोकथाम के लिए सही भोजन**

**নির্দিষ্ট স্বাস্থ্য সমস্যা এবং  
অবস্থার প্রতিরোধের  
জন্য পুষ্টি**



[whathealth.akfportugal.org](http://whathealth.akfportugal.org)

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# Framing

Our nutrition- that is, the way we eat – directly impacts numerous aspects of our lives, of our relationships with our family and with the society we live in, as well as our physical and mental well-being.

Behaviours and nutrition can affect our health, by increasing the risk of obesity, of cardiovascular illnesses, of type 2 diabetes and hypertension, and of deteriorating our physical and mental health. Hence, it is very important to look after what we eat, as nutrition choices may, in actual fact, foster a better quality of life and general health conditions.





# **1. How nutrition affects oral health**

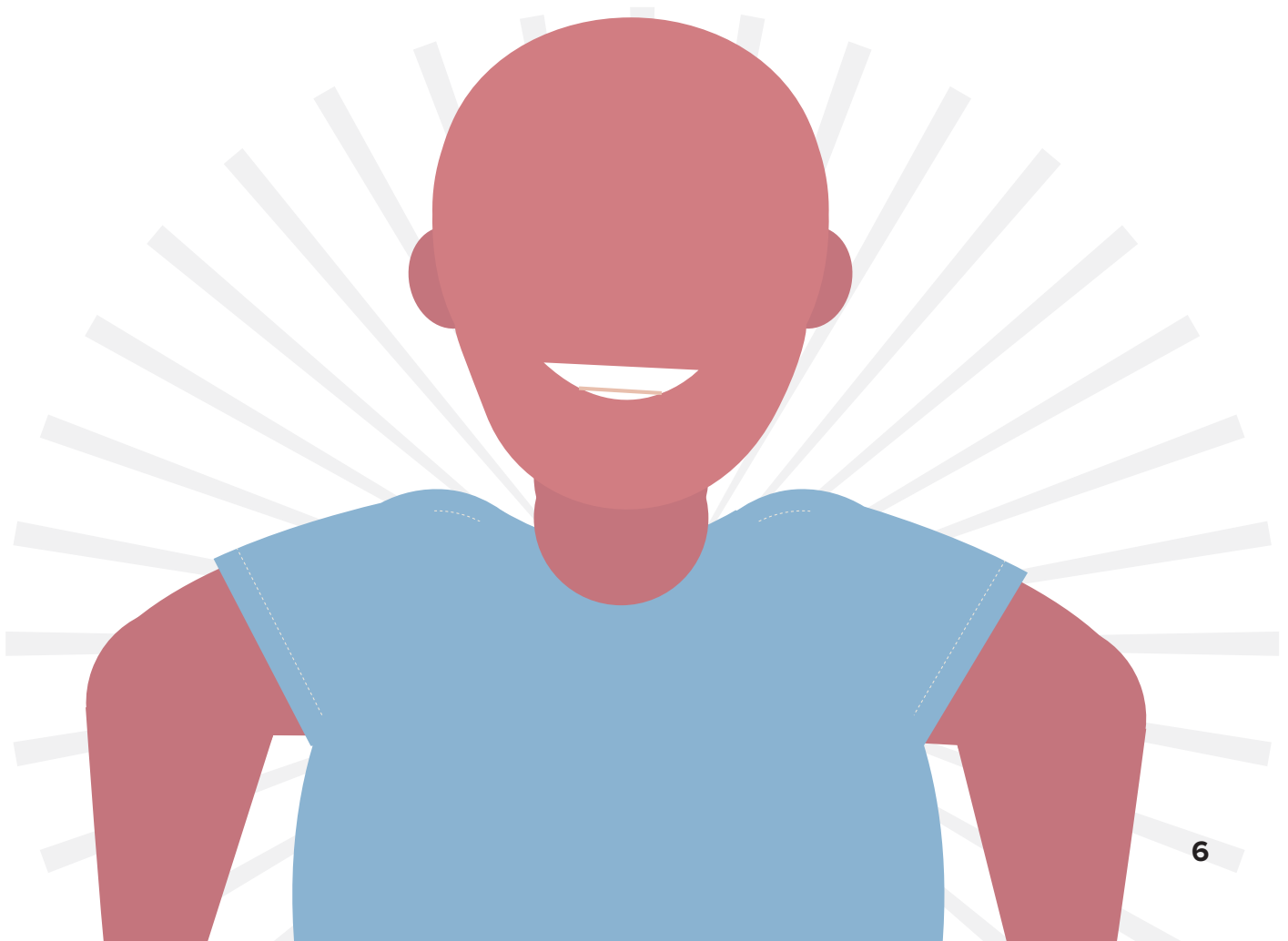
Let's start by talking about the oral cavity - that is, the mouth and teeth as gateway for food to enter our body. Taking care of the health of this part of the body is fundamental, not only because diseases in the oral cavity cause pain and changes in our physical appearance, but also because a healthy mouth and teeth allow us to maintain our functionality in eating.

We can **prevent almost all oral problems** by performing some basic care, such as:

- DAILY HYGIENE of the mouth and teeth to be performed FREQUENTLY: brush teeth at least twice a day (in the morning and at bedtime), using a fluoride toothbrush and paste, and dental floss
- REGULAR VISITS TO ORAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS (oral hygienists/dentists) to help prevent diseases and maintain regular health care.

Another aspect that we should take into consideration is what we eat.

- Sugary foods cause tooth decay, especially foods like candies, chewing gum, caramel, gummies, lollipops, or eating sugar, which are all chewed slowly and remain in our mouth, in contact with our teeth, for a long time.
- Other foods may not seem to have as much sugar, like porridge, cookies, cakes, sugary cereals, or even packet crisps. These foods are soft and stick to our teeth for a long period of time after chewing and cause damage to the teeth.
- Besides containing sugar, beverages can be acidic, which destroys the protective layer on your teeth - the enamel. Thus, juices, sodas, sports drinks, energy drinks, and alcoholic beverages are harmful to the health of your teeth.



To minimize the effects of these foods and drinks on your teeth:

- Choose to eat them in small amounts
- Eating or drinking them within the main meals
- Drink through a straw, to reduce contact with teeth
- If possible, consume together with dairy products (milk, cheese, yogurt, non-sugary) as they neutralize acidity
- Eating fresh fruit and vegetables can have a tooth-protective effect. Milk and cheese also protect the teeth.
- Brush your teeth whenever possible after meals.

Although it does not replace brushing the teeth after meals, eating an apple or even sugar-free tablets can protect the teeth because, through chewing, we stimulate a higher production of saliva that promotes the self-cleaning of the mouth.

Please also be aware that tobacco damages the teeth, modifies their appearance by making them yellow, and causes other diseases of the mouth and gums.

It is important to brush your teeth at least twice a day, in the morning and in the evening, with the evening being the most important time of all.

Always use a means to remove food between your teeth, whether it is flossing, brushing, or flushing.



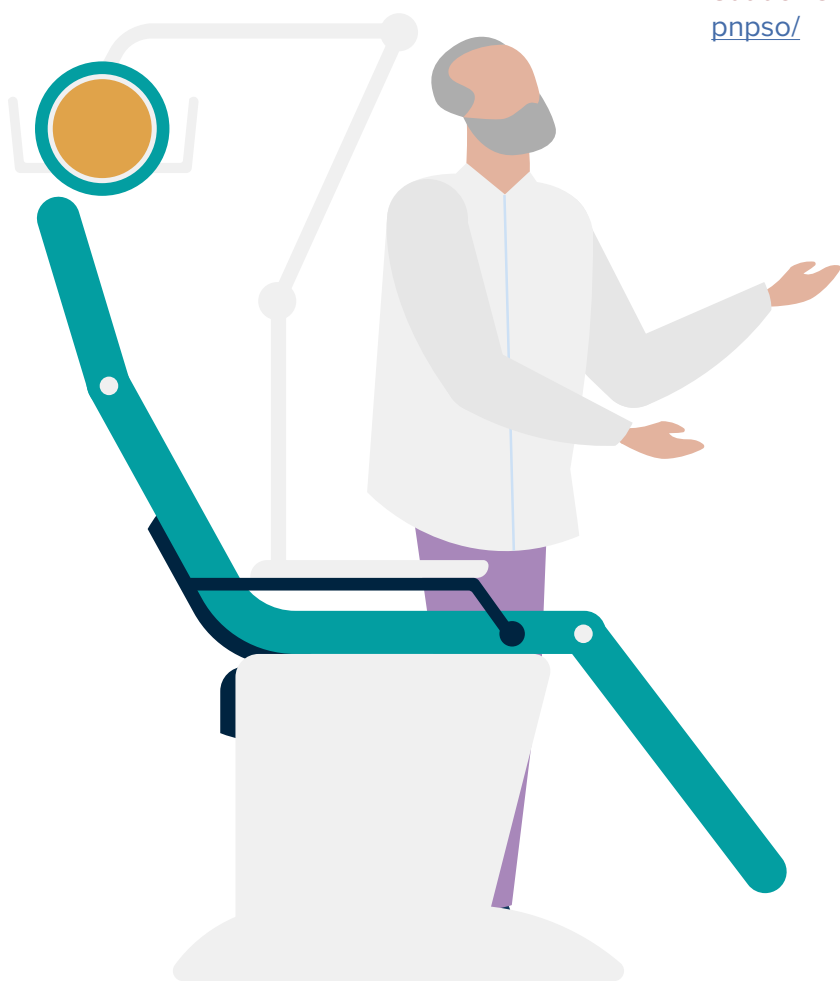
**Tip:** Use the 2 X 2 X 2 Technique: 2 times a day, 2 minutes of brushing, 2 hours without eating after brushing and main meals.

## ► 1.2 Oral Health in the Early Years

Adopting behaviours to protect and maintain good oral health from birth is within our power. Even when the baby still has no teeth, you can clean the inside of their mouth by massaging the gums every time the baby feeds or twice a day - one of them being just before bed-time, with a compress, a finger pad or even a soft brush. (For more information, see the content of Block 2)

A National Program for Oral Health Promotion is implemented by the system in Portugal, whereby the key ages to evaluate oral health are 7, 10 and 13 years old, and ages 16 and 18. Children and young people up to the age of 18, who are enrolled in a public state school, are included in this program and therefore have access to a “dental voucher” - “cheque dentista” - through the school the child attends or through your family doctor. The “cheque dentista” is a document that can access an oral hygienist/dentist consultation.

**Reference:** Programa Nacional de Promoção Saúde Oral <https://www.saudeoral.min-saude.pt/pnpso/>



# CHEQUE DENTISTA





## 2. Eating mindfully to foster mental health

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines health as a status of “complete physical, mental and social well-being”. **Mental health enables us both to adjust in dealing with positive and negative emotions**, and to have the capacity to manage our personal and professional responsibilities and skills. Also, our feelings, emotions, and mental health directly affect our general well-being and our physical health.

We can foster our own mental health by looking after basics aspects such as:

- Respecting fixed timings for sleep and rest
- Practising physical exercise
- Maintaining a healthy nutrition
- Establish and maintain emotional and social relations
- Refrain from smoking, drinking alcohol, consuming drugs



## ► 2.2 How to look after nutrition to nurture better Mental Health

Until a few years ago, it was thought that only the lack of nutrients, such as proteins, vitamins, among others, was linked to mental health problems. Today, it is known that food influences Mental Health, in some cases in a positive and others negative way.

**We can protect our mental health** and there are some foods that can help:

### ▲ **Fruits and Vegetables:**

- Eat fruit and vegetables throughout the day at various mealtimes, as they help us to be more mentally active. They are also rich in vitamins which help improve our ability to think, maintain our memory, and prevent illness. Berries, nuts, leafy green vegetables can slow down mental ageing.
- Consumption of cheese, peanuts, cashew nuts, chicken meat, egg, peas, hake, almond, avocado, cauliflower, potato, banana amongst others, can help improve sleep quality and reduce stress.
- Vegetables like cabbage, kale, broccoli, cauliflower, turnip, as well as orange and red vegetables, have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory qualities.



▲ **Fish and whole grains** are also welcome. In addition to high fruit and vegetable intake, fish and whole grain consumption may also be associated with a lower risk of mental illness such as depression. In the case of fish, the high amount of omega 3 can be considered one of the elements responsible for this benefit.

- Polyunsaturated fatty acids, fatty acids from the Omega 3 series promote the proper functioning of neurons, help regulate our emotions, improve the way we think and have a benefit on our body's defences. They are present in fish such as salmon, tuna, mackerel, herring, sea bream, sardines, crab; shrimp, seaweed; in vegetable oils: canola oil, linseed; in vegetables: purslane; spinach; leek; dark green cabbage; mushrooms; in nuts such as walnuts and linseed.



▲ **Cereals.** Rye flour, oats, brown rice, cassava flour, beans, lentils, chickpeas are advisable, while excessive consumption of white sugar, soft drinks, white bread, sweets and desserts, promotes inflammation and is not beneficial for maintaining memory capacity.

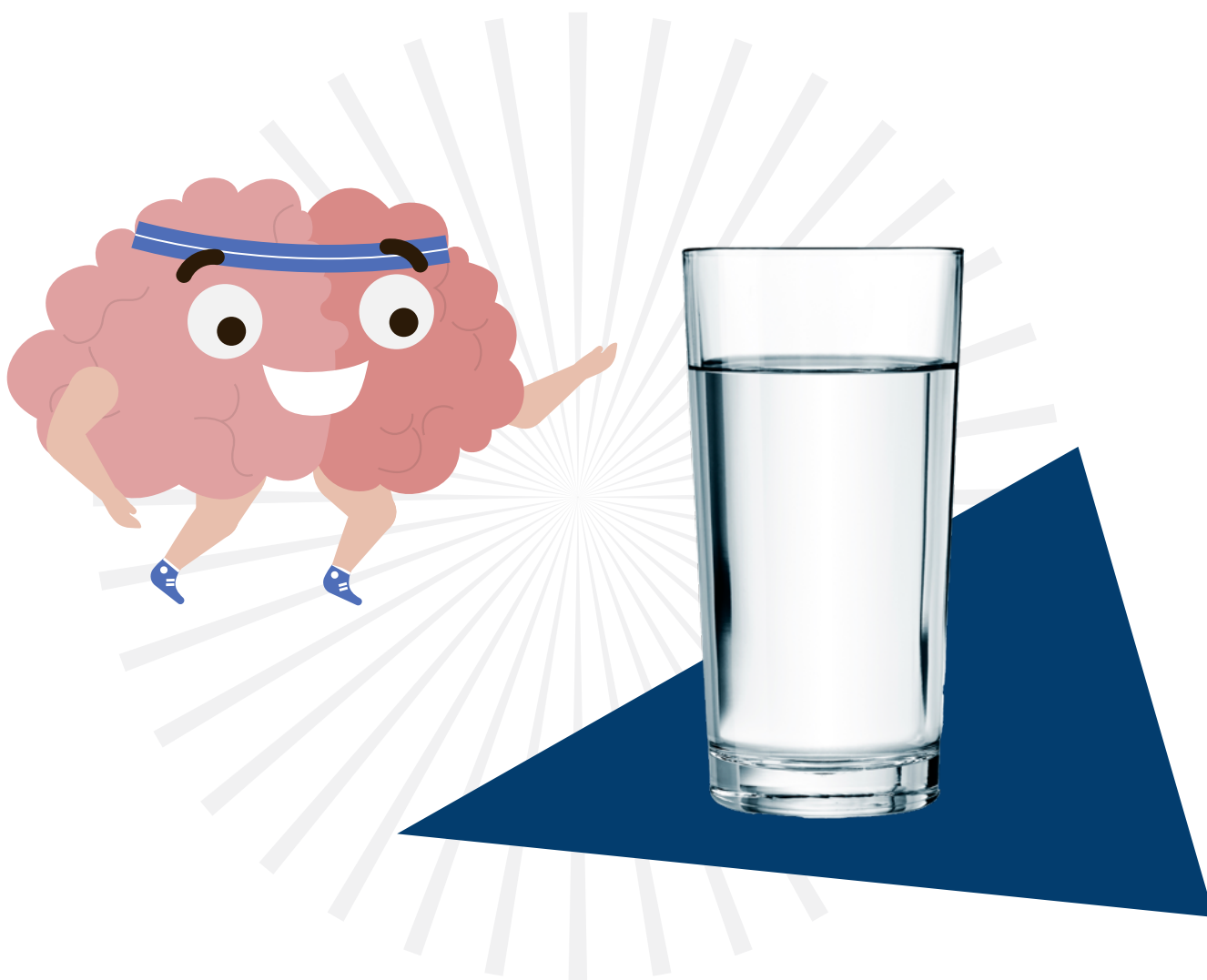


▲ **Keep hydrated.** Drinking water over the course of your waking hours can help mental conditions such as depression and anxiety. We can foster our own mental health by looking after basics aspects such as:

Eating a balanced diet and these ingredients mindfully can support mental health, however a healthy nutrition may not be in itself sufficient to maintain a stable mental health as work circumstances, genetic factors, and environment can also influence our mental health state. That is why it is also important to invest in frequent physical exercise, going to

bed at the same time each day and sleeping regular and sufficient hours when possible, maintaining positive relationships and emotional networks, eating at regular intervals of time, amongst others.


If you feel challenged by lack of concentration, deteriorating quality of sleep, increase or loss of appetite, prolonged anxiety, remember to seek advice from an acknowledged Health Professional through your Health Centre / Unidade de Saúde.



## ► 2.3 Eating better

- Cooking in a simple way. Cooking methods that protect nutrients such as steamed or boiled
- Eating local, fresh and seasonal food;
- Consume more food of vegetable origin and less of animal origin
- Choose dark bread and cereals that are not very refined, rather than white bread and refined cereals
- Eat more fish and less red meat
- Consume dairy products moderately, limiting fatty cheeses and butter intake
- Use olive oil, mustard or almond oil for example, and oleaginous fruits as sources of fat
- Use aromatic herbs to reduce the amount of salt
- Drink water as your main drink throughout the day
- Socialising during your meal promotes and strengthens emotional, affective and social relationships.



A person wearing a white lab coat is shown from the chest down, holding a stethoscope. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. At the top of the page, there is a horizontal bar with five colored segments: purple, red, orange, yellow, and green. The text is centered in a white, serif font.

# 3. Prevention and treatment of specific health issues through food

## ► 3.1 Overweight and obesity

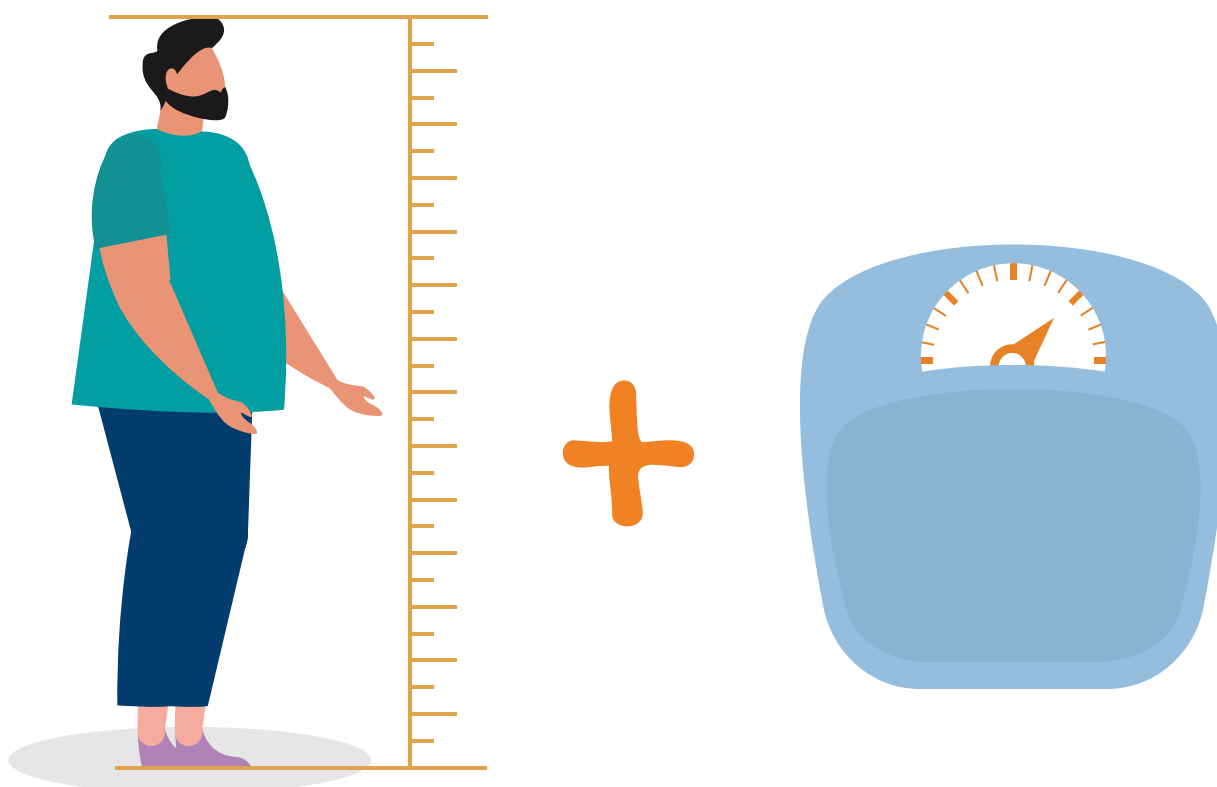
Body Mass Index – BMI can be used to calculate if one has an ideal body weight. A useful link to calculate and understand BMI may be [www.trustaboutweight.global](http://www.trustaboutweight.global) and [arodadaalimentacao.pt/calculadora](http://arodadaalimentacao.pt/calculadora) [ Calculadora IMC | À Roda da Alimentação ([arodadaalimentacao.pt](http://arodadaalimentacao.pt)) ] Generally, you can obtain your BMI by dividing your weight by your squared height – that is:

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{Weight}}{\text{Height} \times \text{Height}}$$

Should the result be more than 25kg m<sup>2</sup>, then you are overweight;

Should it measure over 30kg per m<sup>2</sup>, that would be an indication of obesity.

- Thus, excess weight and obesity are measured by the relation between height and weight of a person, to obtain the Body Mass Index. Therefore, technically values of BMI > 25kg by square metre and BMI > 30kg per square metre\*, respectively indicate excess weight and obesity. The latter affects aggravation of diabetes, hypertension, cholesterol, arthritis, and heart diseases. Decrease in weight can help decrease cholesterol, blood pressure, and sugar in our blood, supporting in treatment of conditions such as hypertension and diabetes.
- In these situations, whatever weight loss is positive and can help in improving your health conditions and to generally feel better. However, avoid any “miracle” diets! It is most effective, on the contrary, to change your lifestyle little by little to improve your long-term health condition.





## What to do?

Firstly, define viable goals (for example, losing 2kg per month), by gradually changing your habits. Think of a balanced diet.

- When you go food shopping, write a list and avoid higher calory foods (biscuits, sweets, cakes, soft drinks, fast food, ready-made meals).
- Try practicing exercise every day. Avoid spending long hours sitting down working at your computer and watching tv.

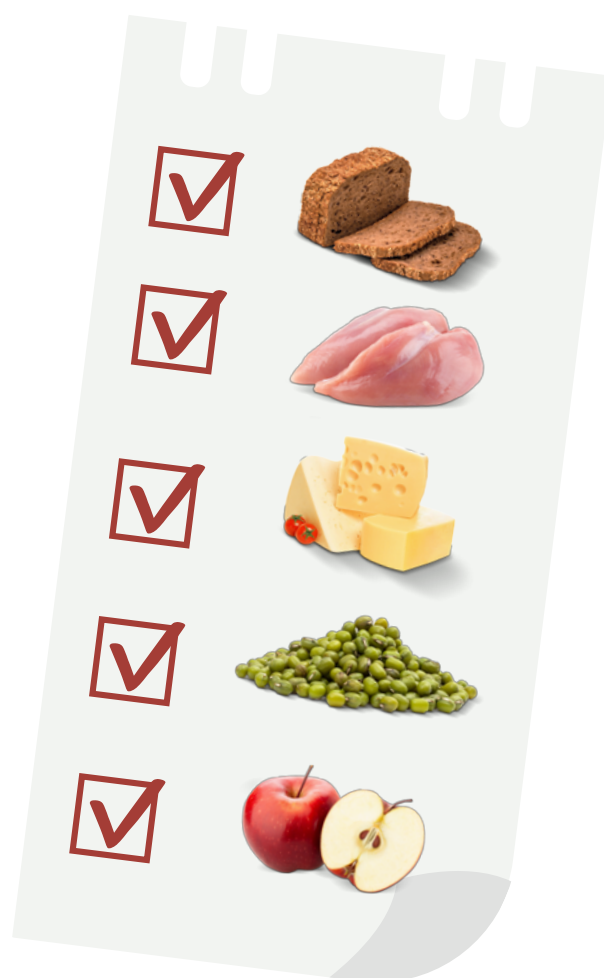


## How to practice a balanced diet

- Plan what to eat
- Eat 5 times per day – breakfast, morning light snack, lunch, afternoon light tea, dinner), with no extra snacking in between as this can increase the tendency to eat unnecessary calories
- Drink 2 litres of water per day
- Boiled and grilled foods, rather than fried, stir-fried food and sauces. The best fat is olive oil (which still contains calories, hence consume with moderation) or other vegetable oils (sunflower, mustard, coconut, almond, peanut oil) rather than animal fat, but it still should be used in moderation and not cooked at high temperatures.
- Eat fruit and vegetables every day. You can start your meal with Soup or daal, Mashed vegetables or Salads.
- Eat rice and noodles with moderation. Avoid eating bread with your main meal, opting for brown alternatives and basmati rice. Choose boiled rice instead of fried rice and bread produce.



- Moderate your intake of red meats (beef, pork, veal, sheep) and choose skinless chicken or turkey instead, or fish
- Eat 2-3 portions of fruit per day, whereby 1 portion of fruit corresponds to about the size of a closed fist
- Choose low fat and sugar-free yoghurt, milk and cheese
- Avoid sausages and preserved meats, toucinho, cured cheese, ghee, oil, butter and margarine
- Avoiding eating sweets such as jalebi, chum chum, barfi and halva, as they are high in sugars
- Avoid fruit juices, soft drinks and alcohol. Drink water with your meal and outside your meals.
- Avoid eating out at restaurants as they tend to use more fats and sugar. If you eat at a restaurant, avoid ordering dishes with cream, sauces or cooked in coconut oil (such as kormas, curries, etc.). Opt for dry tandoori and takda daal instead whereby they don't have added oil.



### ▲ How to compose your dish

- Use up half of your dish for vegetables
- Leave ¼ of your dish (that is 25% of the space on your dish) for carbs (potatoes, rice, noodles/udon, pasta, roti/naan, quinoa/cus-cus, or whole wheat flour)
- The remaining space on your dish will be divided into vegetable proteins (that is pulses such as chickpeas, lentils, beans) and animal proteins (meat or fish, whereby your diet allows so).

## ► 3.2 Nutrition for specific cardiovascular pathologies:

People who are originally from South-East Asia tend to be more at risk of cardiovascular conditions. Genetics plays a major role; however you can reduce risks by changing your lifestyle.

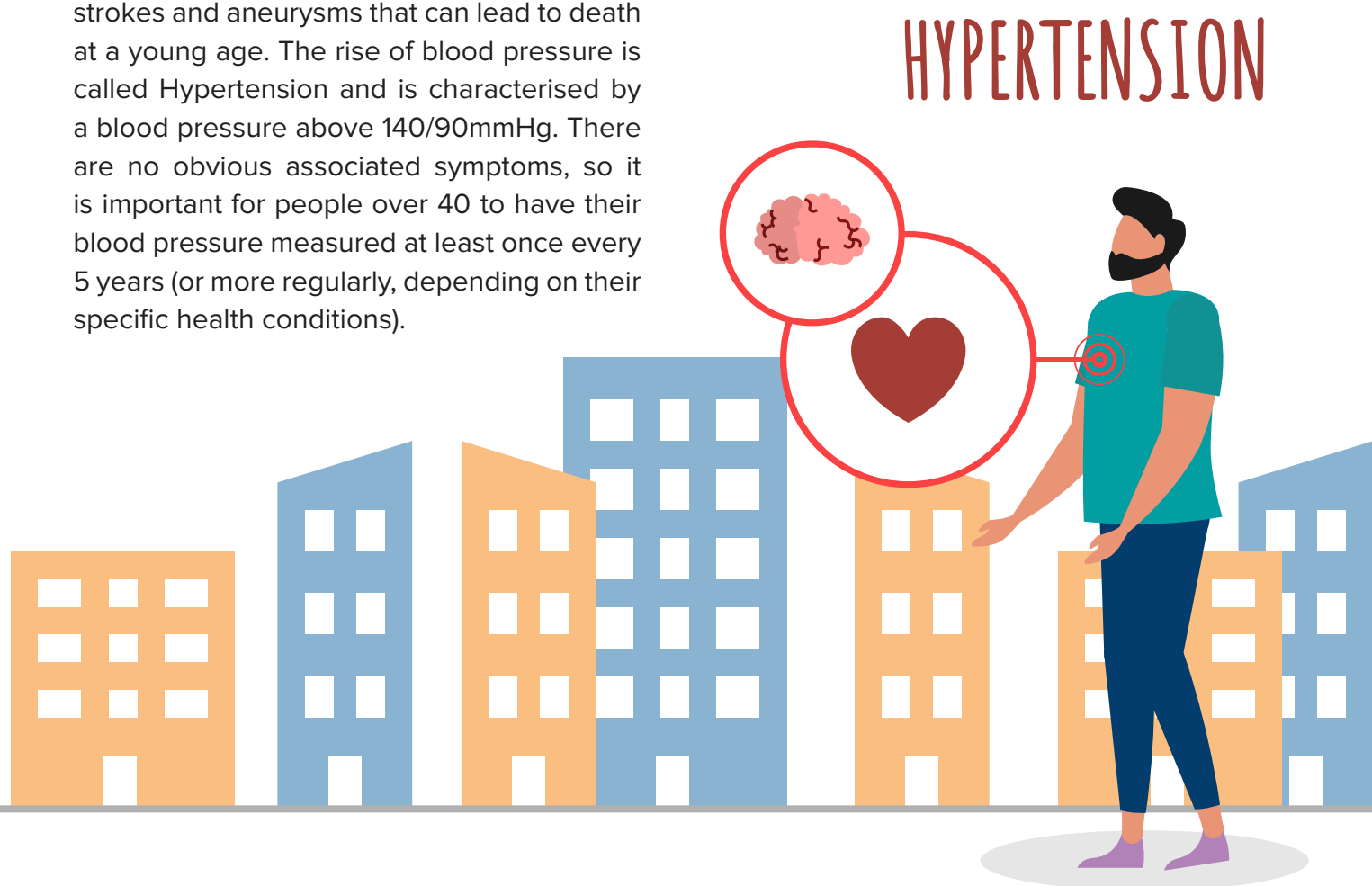
### ▲ Hypertension:

Blood pressure allows blood to reach the body's organs - a fundamental phenomenon. It is measured by the force of blood against the wall of the arteries.

Several factors may contribute towards high blood pressure, which in turn increases probabilities of acute myocardial infarction, strokes and aneurysms that can lead to death at a young age. The rise of blood pressure is called Hypertension and is characterised by a blood pressure above 140/90mmHg. There are no obvious associated symptoms, so it is important for people over 40 to have their blood pressure measured at least once every 5 years (or more regularly, depending on their specific health conditions).

There are non-pharmacological and pharmacological measures that can help control blood pressure.

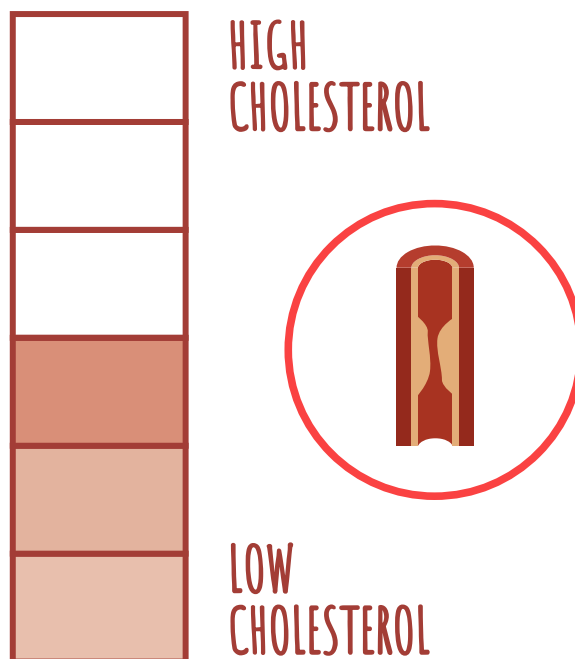
**Non-pharmacological measures** are based on a healthy diet, focusing on reducing salt in your food (for example by replacing it with spices to season your dishes), eating fruit and vegetables, and reducing alcohol consumption. It is also important to avoid eating processed food (sausages, canned food, pre-packaged and pre-made food, etc.) and fast food. Other important aids are physical exercise, stopping smoking and losing weight if you are overweight or obese.



## ▲ Cholesterol:

Cholesterol is an essential type of fat, however if in excess it can deposit itself in the arteries and rapidly impede blood flow, which in turn causes Acute Myocardial Heart attacks and Strokes due to blood not reaching the heart and brain, respectively.

Increased cholesterol levels is caused by lifestyle, hence can be avoided in several ways, namely not smoking, practicing physical exercise, and losing weight in case of obesity. Likewise, you can reduce the risk of high cholesterol by reducing consumption of foods that contain high levels of fat, such as red meat, and high-fat dairy products (milk, cheese and yoghurt).



## ▲ Diabetes:

Diabetes is a chronic disease characterised by an increase in blood sugar levels due to the lack of, or decrease in, production or action of the "insulin" hormone, which allows the body to use this sugar. The most common types of diabetes are type 1, whereby the body does not produce insulin; and type 2, characterised by a decrease in production or action of insulin.

Over time, high blood sugar level damages the blood vessels. This can lead to sexual impotence, the development of chronic kidney disease, eyesight changes due to damage of the eye retina (the layer of the eye in charge of eyesight), and acute myocardial infarction, among others. To avoid these complications, you should regularly control your diabetes, by going for blood tests to check glycated haemoglobin twice a year, or by self-monitoring by measuring blood sugar daily through a finger prick (only in specific cases). Regular medical follow-up is crucial.



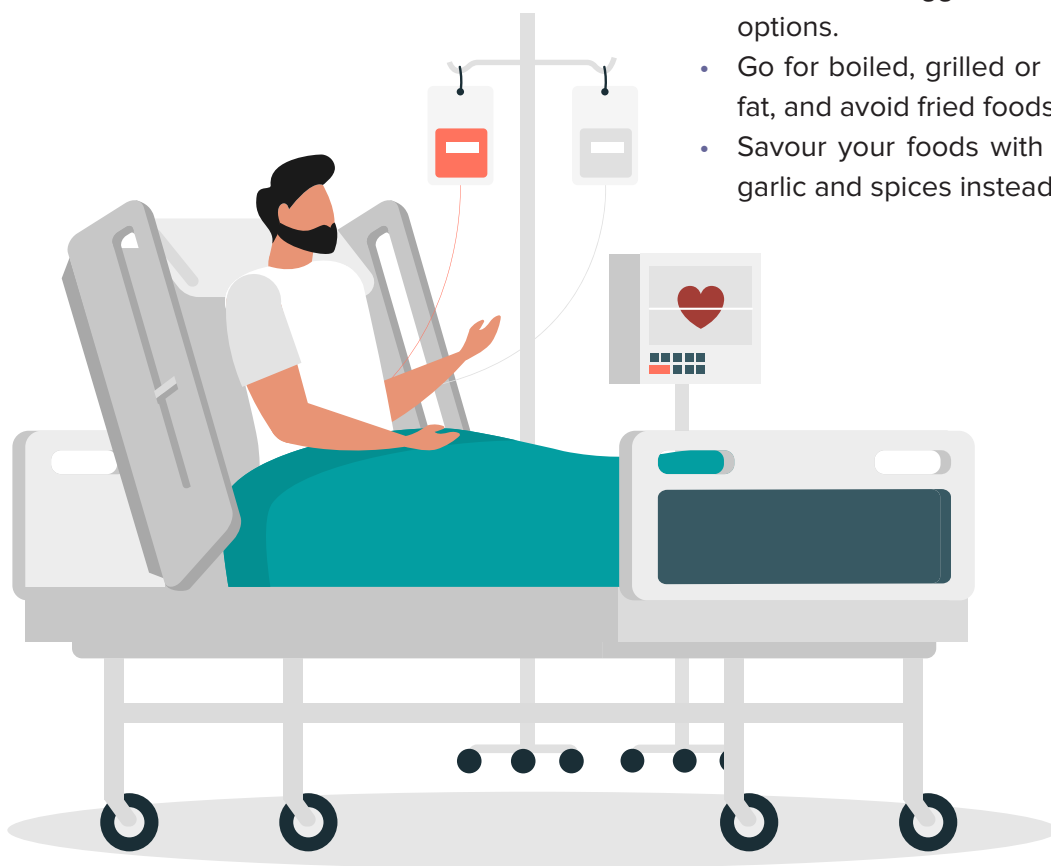
Good blood sugar control is necessary to avoid the complications of diabetes. This requires maintaining an adequate weight, not smoking, keeping an eye on your blood pressure, and practicing regular exercise. One of the most important proactive care is also to follow a low-carb diet.

When ingested, carbs convert themselves into sugars and have a high impact on sugar levels in our bloodstream. These can be:

- **Starchy**, which include bread, pasta, ciabatta, potatoes, yam, noodles, rice, cereals and puffed rice.
- **Sugars** – such as honey and refined sugar - which are often added to food or natural sugars, that are found in fruit and milk.

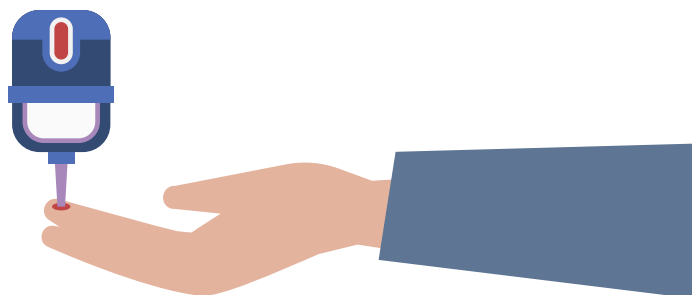
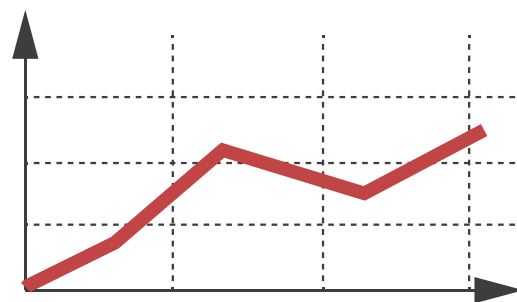
At the same time, it is not healthy to totally stop including sugar in your diet, by doing the following:

- Eat 5-6 times per day: breakfast, light morning snack, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner / supper.
- Eat carbs in moderation. Choose Brown alternatives, for example for bread. Basmati rice is absorbed by the body more slowly and therefore is better than other white rice.
- Eat salad and vegetables daily. And 2 pieces of fruit per day, varying the type of fruit each day.
- Avoid eating foods with sugar: honey, chocolates, fried foods, juices, butter, toucinho, preserved meats, sauces and pâtés, red meat. Most traditional snacks, such as chevra, kachoris, ghatia, papads, are fried and contain a lot of calories, so you should choose healthier alternatives instead, such as chana or baked papad and steamed dhokras.
- Select low-fat dairies rather than full fat dairy produce.
- Opt for White meat (such as chicken or turkey), lean fish or eggs, over red meat and fattier options.
- Go for boiled, grilled or steamed foods low in fat, and avoid fried foods.
- Savour your foods with lemon, black Pepper, garlic and spices instead of Salt and Sauces.



People who suffer from diabetes and undergo insulin treatment and other medication. Diabetes, are at risk of hypoglycaemia, which is very low blood sugar values. Symptoms may include trembling, sweating, weakness, hunger and sleepiness. Some situations can cause hypoglycaemia especially when increasing the time between meals, suddenly increasing the amount of physical exercise practiced, making mistakes in taking medicines, and drinking too much alcohol.

So it is also really important to eat the recommended amounts of food, at the right times, and not to skip meals, to carry a packet of sugar or sweets with you, and to practice sport according to medical advice. Do not fast without talking to your doctor first, to make sure it is a healthy practice for your condition.



## GOUT



### ▲ Gout:

Gout is the deposit of uric acid (present in your blood as a result of your own metabolism) in your joints, causing local swelling and acute pain crises. Following a crisis, both medication advised and adjusting your diet can help reduce the frequency of future attacks. You must consult your doctor and abide by the medication plan they suggested, as well as

- Stop drinking any alcohol, and especially avoid beer
- Drink lots of water
- Reduce consumption of visceral foods (liver, kidneys, brains), seafood, blue fish (anchovies, sardines), preserved meats, red meats and game such as boar and venison meat. These foods contain high levels of uric acid and can trigger an attack
- Lose weight without going through a restrictive diet. Reduce your fat intake and avoid prolonged fasting and long hours without eating.



# 4. Alcohol consumption

## ▲ What is Alcoholism?

Alcoholism is a disease characterised by alcohol dependency. Alcohol dependency occurs when a person consumes alcohol in a constant, uncontrolled manner and progressively increasing the quantity consumed. Alcohol can be consumed if moderately and in small quantities.

However, some people should not drink alcohol at all such as:

- women during pregnancy or trying to conceive
- before or while driving or operating any potentially dangerous equipment
- if you are under the legal age for drinking (which in Portugal is 18 years old)

- if you have certain medical conditions or are taking certain medication that can interact with alcohol
- if you are recovering from an alcohol use disorder.

If in doubt about alcohol consumption, please consult a healthcare provider to determine if you can drink alcoholic beverages and what drinking in moderation means for you, in your specific health condition.

You can contact:

- Your Family doctor / GP
- The Equipa Técnica Especializada de Tratamento de Xabregas, a Specialised Unit in Rua de Xabregas, 62 – 1900-440 Lisboa. Telephone number: 00351 211 119 430
- Unidade de Alcoologia de Lisboa M. Parque de Saúde de Lisboa, Avenida do Brasil, 53A - Pavilhão 41, 1749 - 006 Lisboa – Telephone no. +351 211 119 430
- SICAD - Serviço de Intervenção nos Comportamentos Aditivos e nas Dependências.





## ▲ How can alcohol affect the body?

When drinking alcoholic beverages (wine, beer, sake, rice liquor, Bai jiu, Mi jiu), moderation is recommended.

Drinking alcohol contributes to accidents and injuries and can lead to liver disease, high blood pressure, various cancers (such as cancers of the head and neck, digestive tract, and breast cancer), dementia and birth defects, among other health problems.

Only a few minutes after consuming alcohol it starts entering in the bloodstream, where it can remain for hours and cause some symptoms such as:

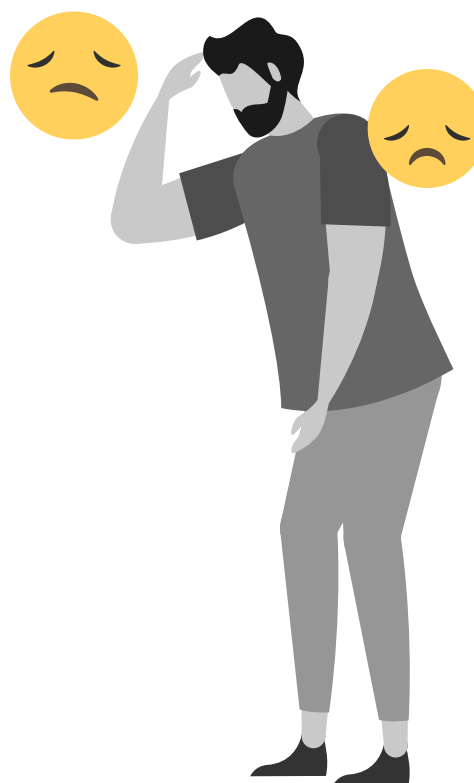
- Sleepiness
- Difficulty with eyesight (blurred vision)
- Acidic feeling in the stomach, vomiting and diarrhoea
- Decrease in body temperature
- Headache
- Thirst and dehydration
- Restlessness
- Mindless body movements
- Difficulty in speaking
- Decreased ability to react to certain situations
- Reduced attention span and understanding
- Inadequate social behaviour
- Sexual disinhibition
- Changes in mood and emotional state
- Memory gaps and failure to remember things

If the doses of alcohol ingested are very high, consequences may lead to difficulty in breathing, a state of deep sleep (coma) and eventually death.

Consuming alcohol very regularly over time produces several alterations in different organs: it destroys brain cells, decreases the body's natural defences, alters the functioning of the heart, provokes liver deterioration, stomach lesions and pancreatic inflammation. It can also trigger greater aggressiveness, sleeping difficulties, conflicts due to jealousy, perception that someone is persecuting us, or forgetfulness and loss of recent memories.

Alcohol-induced changes can lead to risky situations such as dangerous driving. Its consumption in a risky way can have social consequences and lead to absence from work or reduced ability to do a good job, increased risk of accidents, criminal behaviour and even suicide. Within the family circle, it can lead to disorganisation and destruction of the family itself and ill-treatment, among others.

People who consume alcohol for long periods of time may experience the aforementioned effects even due to small quantities of alcohol.



## For Further Information on this document's topics:

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/high-cholesterol/how-to-lower-your-cholesterol/>.
- <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/diabetes-the-basics/information-in-different-languages>.
- Guia prático de Saúde em MGF
- Reducing your risk of stroke: information for South Asian people - Website: [stroke.org.uk](http://stroke.org.uk).
- Reducing the risk of heart and circulatory diseases for people of South Asian origin in the UK (2019). UK : British Heart foundation.
- [Reducing-your-risk-for-people-of-South-Asian-origin-in-the-UK.pdf](#) (leicestershirewms.co.uk)
- [Healthy eating for the south Asian community - Diabetes UK Foundation](#).
- <https://www.sns24.gov.pt>
- <https://www.sicad.pt>
- <https://www.dgs.pt>
- Jun S Lai, Sarah Hiles, Alessandra Bisquera, Alexis J Hure, Mark McEvoy, and John Attia. A systematic review and meta-analysis of dietary patterns and depression in community-dwelling. adults1–3. The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, Volume 99, Issue 1, January 2014, Pages 181–197, <https://doi.org/10.3945/ajcn.113.069880>.
- Neel Oceana,\* , Peter Howleya , Jonathan Ensor, Lettuce be happy: A longitudinal UK study on the relationship between fruit and vegetable consumption and well-being Social Science & Medicine. Volume 222, February 2019, Pages 335-345, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0277953618306907?via%3Dihub>.
- Fahimeh Haghghatdoost, Awat Feizi, Ahmad Esmailzadeh, Nafiseh Rashidi-Pourfard, Ammar Hassanzadeh Keshteli, Hamid Roohafza, Payman Adibi. Drinking plain water is associated with decreased risk of depression and anxiety in adults: Results from a large cross-sectional study. World J Psychiatr 2018 September 20; 8(3): 88-96.
- Alimentação e saúde oral, [https://comum.rcaap.pt/bitstream/10400.26/30998/1/Duli%  
c3%a8re\\_AnneB%c3%a9atrix\\_Marie\\_Sibylle\\_.pdf](https://comum.rcaap.pt/bitstream/10400.26/30998/1/Duli%c3%a8re_AnneB%c3%a9atrix_Marie_Sibylle_.pdf)
- Prevenção e Higiene Oral <https://www.ond.pt/publico/prevencao-higiene-oral/>
- Direcção-Geral da Saúde Circular Normativa Assunto: PROGRAMA NACIONAL DE PROMOÇÃO DA SAÚDE ORAL. [https://www.saudeoral.minsaude.pt/isoPnpsoRepo/Despacho\\_Ministerial\\_153\\_2005\\_de\\_5\\_Janeiro.pdf](https://www.saudeoral.minsaude.pt/isoPnpsoRepo/Despacho_Ministerial_153_2005_de_5_Janeiro.pdf)
- Despacho n.º 5201/2021 [https://dre.pt/web/guest/home//dre/163851447/details/2/maximized?serie=II&parte\\_filter=31&dreId=163851409](https://dre.pt/web/guest/home//dre/163851447/details/2/maximized?serie=II&parte_filter=31&dreId=163851409)



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## Funding Support:

