

3. Food ideas to help you eat well - achieving your diet.

This is a very simple guide, just to give you an idea of what you can do simply.

Breakfast.

A bowl of whole grain cereal or untoasted muesli with low fat or soy milk.

Wholegrain toast with jam or marmalade.

Whole fruits such as grapefruit.

Pitfalls

Try to avoid fruit juices since this removes much of the really important fibre. Remember that fruit juices, apart from being bad for your teeth because of their high acid and sugar levels, are also related to obesity in children if consumed in amounts greater than 500mL per day (Sanigorski 07).

Many breakfast cereals are highly processed, have high amounts of sugar and salt, and are lacking in fibre. You may as well eat cookies or cake for breakfast.

Lunch.

Make yourself some sandwiches or rolls of the wholegrain type.

Fillings are fairly easy. The following are some examples.

Sandwiches don't have to have meat on them to taste good.

- Baked beans add some ordinary tomato sauce (ketchup) to increase the taste.
- Peanut butter but add any type of lettuce or other crunchy vegetable, it really adds to the interest. Sliced celery is an example.
- Use left over vegetable dishes as a filling, for example ratatouille or homemade pasta sauce are fantastic sandwich fillings. Most of these foods will last for weeks in the fridge (if you keep your fingers and licked spoons out of them!)
- Pasta or rice can be used as fillings. Cooked rice will keep in the fridge for a long time. Before you put the rice on your sandwich just boil it briefly in water, it makes it lovely and fluffy. As a flavour enhancer, use an interesting type of chutney, such as

green tomato relish.

- Tinned tuna that come with various vegetables such as tomato, onion go well with sliced fresh tomato and lettuce.
- Hummus can be used instead of margarine, then add some sliced tomato or other cooked vegetable mix.
- There are many dips available that can be used on sandwiches but be careful. Choose the low fat ones and avoid the ones that have saturated fat and/or lots of salt. Greek tzatziki makes interesting sandwiches with tomato, cucumber, and lettuce.

Be adventurous, most things can be put on sandwiches and rolls. Experiment, surprise yourself. Again save yourself heaps.

The main meal.

There are any number of easy short cuts to making easy, really tasty main meals. You don't need complicated recipes, forage in the supermarket. It will surprise you what you can come up with. Here are some examples:

- Really easy vegetarian. Most supermarkets have a fair range of pre-prepared sauces available, particularly in Asian, Indian and other ethnic cuisines, usually in the stir fry mode. Many of them require that you add various meat types, for example lamb to curry, pork or chicken to sweet-and-sour sauce, beef to black bean sauce. Just leave out the meat and add other vegetables. Pre-cooking the vegetables before adding them to your sauce gives a better result, particularly if one type takes a longer time than others. One of the best and most nutritious to add is steamed shredded cabbage, either usual cabbage or any type of SE Asian or Chinese cabbage. It is a great filler, it is really cheap and is very acceptable to even the most ardent cabbage haters.

If you are pressed for time, you can steam your vegetables days in advance, and again they will keep very well in the fridge. You can have your delicious hot meal on the table within five minutes. You can also pre-prepare rice in the same way, just reheat by boiling it briefly and draining. If you need to thicken the sauce of a vegetable dish, add finely diced cooked potato. Never use coconut milk or cream which is the common thickener in Indian cuisine as this is loaded with saturated fat.

- Pasta sauce. You can make your own pasta sauce in a few

minutes, it freezes well and it is really good for you. Finely chop up an onion and cook in a little oil until soft, adding garlic to taste. Add a can of chopped tomatoes (or whole tomatoes and cut them up in the saucepan with kitchen scissors), add a teaspoon of sugar, a little salt and some Italian herbs. Done! To add interest all some sliced olives of any type. You can scale this up and keep it for weeks in the fridge or months in the freezer. The uses of pasta sauce are as follows.

- Mexican eggs. Add the sauce to a fry pan, bring to simmer, then make a hollow and break an egg into it. Cook until you reach your level of preference, best with a lid and serve with crusty bread, best toasted on one side.
- Spaghetti or noodles. Cook your pasta or any type of noodle for that matter, but at the end mix through some type of chutney or relish while the cook top is still hot. Then serve on a bed of pasta sauce. Use your imagination.

Vegetarian dishes need not be lacking in flavour and need not take a lot of time to prepare. They are good for you and good for the world.

References:

(Sanigorski 07) Sanigorski AM, Bell AC, Swinburn BA. Association of key foods and beverages with obesity in Australian schoolchildren. *Public Health Nutrition* 2007; 10:152-157