**How Different Foods Help**

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**Introduction**

A variety of foods from the different food groups need to be consumed on a daily basis to provide the body with energy, protect the body, and to help build the body. The purpose of the “How Different Foods Help” tip sheet is to encourage you to promote eating different foods, also called balanced meals or dietary diversity, on a daily basis to the people you meet and work with.

**Foods to Consume**

The following table describes the food groups and examples of foods within these groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Group</th>
<th>Foods within that Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staples</td>
<td>Rice, Wheat, Sweet Potatoes, Cassava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fats &amp; Oils</td>
<td>Vegetable oil, butter, nuts &amp; seeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legumes</td>
<td>Cowpeas, lentils, peanut butter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Products</td>
<td>Beef, goat, chicken, eggs, and milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables &amp; Fruits</td>
<td>Mango, banana, dark green leafy vegetables</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Meal Planning**

Consuming balanced meals throughout the day will help people consume a variety of foods.\(^1\) An example of a balance meal could be:

- 1/3 to 1/2 of the dish should be staples
- 1/4 of the dish should be legumes or animal products
- 1/4 to 1/3 of the dish should be cooked vegetables
- Small amount of oil should be used to prepare the foods
- Very small amounts of salt should be used to enhance flavor

**Size Matters**

Even though it is necessary for people to consume a variety of food on a daily basis, the amount of food matters.\(^1\) The following are examples of approximate portion size of foods.

- Fist = Amount of staple foods, legumes or cooked vegetables per meal
- Palm = Amount of animal products (meat, chicken, or fish) per meal
- Tip of finger = Fat or oil per meal
- 1 Cup (8 ounces) = Measure of water to drink

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**Eat a variety of foods for Protection, Energy and Body Building to be healthy and well.**

(Zimbabwe, FAO 2015)

**Variety** relates to selecting foods from and within the different food groups.

**Balance** relates to eating enough foods from each food group.

**Moderation** relates to eating foods in portion sizes that satisfy you. There is no good or bad food! The key is eating in moderate portions.

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