

TOP 10 NUTRITIONAL TIPS

by Helen Bond, *Consultant Nutritionist*

The way we eat affects our well-being and is also reflected in the health of our mouths. Just like every other part of your body, a healthy mouth depends on a good diet to ensure that it is supplied with all of the necessary nutrients and in the right amounts.

Indeed, the appearance of your mouth, tongue and teeth can reveal a lot about your overall health. For example, cracking at the corners of the mouth or recurrent mouth ulcers can be caused by a deficiency of iron, vitamin B12, B6, or folic acid. Certain foods, health conditions and habits are among the main culprits of bad breath and in Chinese medicine, different areas of the tongue are believed to reflect the health of our different organ systems.

If there is an unusual colour, coating, and/or shape in a certain area, special attention is paid to the corresponding organ system.

Take comfort that a healthy, balanced diet should provide you with enough energy and nutrients to stay healthy and to look and feel great. Helen Bond,

Consultant Nutritionist to Philips Sonicare offers the following practical tips on eating well for healthy living.

As highlighted by the Food Standards Agency, the key to a healthy diet is eating the right amount of food for how active you are and eating a range of foods to make sure you're getting all of the essential nutrients in your diet.



- 1 Simple steps.** There are lots of simple things you can do to start to live a healthier lifestyle. You don't need to make big changes - a few small steps can make a real difference, whether it's looking at food labels to cut down on levels of sugar and salt, or adding an extra half an hour of simple exercise into your routine each week.
- 2 Start with starches.** Base each of your meals on starchy foods such as bread, cereals, rice, pasta and potatoes. Try to choose unrefined 'wholegrain' varieties such as wholemeal bread and wholegrain breakfast cereals. They are very important as part of a healthy diet, supplying energy-releasing B vitamins, bowel regulating fibre, vitamins and vital minerals. They should make up about a third of our daily intake.
- 3 Have five a day.** Try to eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables every day - this includes fresh, frozen, canned and fruit juices. Remember potatoes count as a starchy food, not as one of your portions. Eat a variety of fruit and vegetables from each of the colour groups: red, orange, yellow, green, purple and white, to ensure that you're getting the best mix of nutrients.
- 4 Cut back on sugar.** Sugar adds flavour and sweetness to foods as well as pure calories. Sugar is also the main culprit for tooth decay. If you must have sugary foods and drinks, it's best to try to eat them during meals. The less you expose your teeth to sugar the less plaque acids attack your tooth enamel.
- 5 Eat the right fats.** To stay healthy we need to have a small amount of fat in the diet. However, what is important is the kind of fat we are eating. Different types of fats can affect our bodies in different ways, so it's important to get the right balance of what we eat, as well as how much we eat - all fats are high in calories! Choose foods that are rich in monounsaturates (e.g. olive and rapeseed oils, avocados, almonds) and polyunsaturates (e.g. sunflower, corn oils, margarine, nuts and seeds).
- 6 Begin with a balanced breakfast.** A healthy breakfast replenishes low blood sugar levels after a long period without food and provides fuel to help the body function more effectively throughout the day. Research shows that eating breakfast can reduce stress, help lift your mood and improve your concentration and mental performance, as well as supply essential vitamins and minerals we need for good health. It can also actually help people control their weight by staving off mid morning hunger pangs! So why not try a bowl of wholegrain cereal with semi-skimmed milk, some sliced banana and a glass of fruit juice for a healthy start to the day? The milk will also ensure you have 21% of your recommended daily calcium intake ensuring strong teeth and bones.
- 7 Don't forget fish.** Both white fish (such as haddock, plaice, halibut and sole) and oily fish (such as sardines, salmon, trout, pilchards and mackerel) are valuable sources of protein, vitamins and minerals. You should aim to eat at least two servings of fish a week, including one serving of oily fish. You can choose from fresh, frozen or canned. Oily fish contains omega-3 fats, best known for their beneficial effects on the heart, and if eaten with their bones, are also a good source of calcium for the building and maintenance of strong teeth and bones.
- 8 Skip the salt.** Too much salt can raise your blood pressure, putting you at increased risk of developing heart disease or having a stroke. It is a good idea to limit using salt at the table or during cooking, but also get in the habit of checking food labels, as many processed foods are high in salt. Adults should try to eat no more than 2.5g sodium (6g salt) each day.
- 9 Water is essential for life.** As much as 70% of our body is made up of water. Everyday we lose water through breathing, sweating and going to the toilet and these losses must be replaced. Aim to drink about 6 to 8 glasses (1.2 litres) of water, or other fluids, every day to avoid getting dehydrated.
- 10 Never say never!** Your goals may weaken when they are too strict or include phrases such a 'never have', cut out or avoid completely. The key to healthy eating is everything in moderation and portion control.