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National Nutrition Week (NNW) 2021

“Eat more vegetables and fruit every day”

Concept document

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ANNEXURE I: SOUTH AFRICAN GUIDELINES FOR HEALTHY EATING (FBDGs) FOR ADULTS AND CHILDREN FIVE YEARS AND OLDER AND THE FOOD GUIDE 16

1. Abbreviations

FBDGs	Food-based dietary guidelines
NCDs	Non-communicable diseases
NNW	National Nutrition Week
SADHS	South African Demographic and Health Survey
SANHANES	South African Health and Nutrition Examination Survey
WHO	World Health Organization

2. Terms and definitions

COVID-19: is a disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus. 'CO' stands for corona, 'VI' for virus, and 'D' for disease. Formerly, this disease was referred to as '2019 novel coronavirus' or '2019-nCoV.'

Dietary bioactive compounds: have actions in the body that may promote good health and prevent free radical damage. Examples are phytochemicals (lycopene, resveratrol, lignan, tannins, indoles, phenolics, flavonoids, and carotenoids) that are found in a wide variety of fruits and vegetables.

Energy-density: the amount of energy in a specific weight of a food and is expressed as kilojoules per 100 g (kJ/100 g). Diets that are lower in energy-density tend to be of higher nutritional quality and more in line with dietary guidelines, which include plenty of vegetables, fruit, whole grains, low-fat dairy, lean sources of protein and vegetable oils.

Food Based Dietary Guidelines: are brief, positive dietary recommendation messages that are used to inform healthy consumers how to choose food and beverage combinations that will lead to an adequate eating plan , that meets nutrient needs and that is, at the same time, prudent, for example, which lowers the risk of NCDs.

Food environment: comprises the physical, economic and social factors that impact the availability, accessibility and adequacy of food within a region, or as the everyday stimuli that encourage a consumer's food choices in a particular way.

Food groups: are the categorisation of foods according to the key nutrients they contain, such as protein, carbohydrate or fat and the way they are typically used.

Food guide: is a graphic representation of all or some of the messages of Food-Based Dietary Guidelines. It represents the recommended food groups in the suggested proportions for healthy eating.

Grains: a small, hard seed, especially the seed of a food plant such as wheat, maize, sorghum, rye, oats, rice, or millet

Legumes: a family of plants that bear edible seeds in pods, including beans and peas. Examples include peas, chickpeas, lentils, beans and soybeans.

Minimally processed foods: are natural foods that have been submitted to cleaning, removal of inedible or unwanted parts, fractioning, grinding, drying, fermentation, pasteurization, cooling, freezing, or other processes that may subtract part of the food, but which do not add oils, fats, sugar, salt or other substances to the original food.

Non-communicable disease (NCD): is a medical condition or disease that is non-infectious and non-transmissible among people. Currently, NCDs are the leading causes of death and disease burden worldwide.

The four main types of NCDs are cardiovascular diseases (like heart attacks and stroke), cancer, chronic respiratory diseases (such as chronic obstructed pulmonary disease and asthma) and diabetes.

Nutrient-dense foods: are foods rich in vitamins, minerals and other nutrients important for health, without too much saturated fat, added sugars and sodium. These foods include fruits and vegetables, whole grains, fish, lean meat, skinless poultry, lentils, dry peas and beans, and nuts and seeds.

Obesity: an adult whose BMI is 30.0 or higher, is obese. A child under five years, whose weight-for-length/height as indicated on the Road-to-Health Booklet is above three standard deviations, is obese. A child between five and 19 years, whose BMI-for-age is above two standard deviations, is obese.

Overweight: an adult whose BMI is 25.0 to 30.0, is overweight. A child under five years, whose weight-for-length/height as indicated on the Road-to-Health Booklet is above two standard deviations, is overweight. A child between five and 19 years, whose BMI-for-age is above one standard deviation is overweight.

Plant-based diet: a diet based mainly on foods derived from plants, including vegetables, whole-grains, legumes, nuts, seeds and fruits, with few or no animal products.

Prebiotics: are specialised plant fibres that stimulate the growth of healthy bacteria in the gut. Prebiotics are found in many fruits and vegetables, especially those containing complex carbohydrates, such as fibre and resistant starch. These carbohydrates are not digestible, so they pass through the digestive system to become food for the bacteria and other micro-organisms in the gut.

Processed foods: products manufactured by industry using salt, sugar, oil or other substances added to natural or minimally processed foods to preserve or to make them more palatable. They are derived directly from foods and are recognised as versions of the original foods. They are usually consumed as a part of or as a side dish in culinary preparations made using natural or minimally processed foods. Most processed foods have two or three ingredients.

Saturated fat: a fat that contains only saturated fatty acids, is solid at room temperature, and comes chiefly from animal food products. Some examples of saturated fat are butter, lard, meat fat, solid shortening, palm kernel oil and coconut oil. Saturated fat contributes to the production of cholesterol by the body, which can increase cholesterol in the blood.

Severely obese: a BMI of 35 or higher is regarded as severe obesity.

Snack: a small amount of food that is eaten between meals, or a very small meal.

Sodium: the major positive ion (cation) in the fluid surrounding cells in the body. The chemical notation for sodium is Na+. When sodium is combined with chloride, the resulting substance is a crystal called table salt. Too much sodium in the diet tends to increase blood pressure. The largest source of dietary sodium comes from sodium chloride or table salt.

Sugar-sweetened beverages: also called **sugary drinks** refer to any beverage with added (free sugar) sugar for example, fizzy drinks, fruit juice, flavoured milk or drinking yoghurt, sports and energy drinks, iced tea, vitamin-enriched/flavoured ‘water’.

Total sugar is the sum total of all intrinsic (naturally present and intact) and free sugars, i.e. any sugars added to foods and beverages by the manufacturer, cook or consumer, including the sugars naturally present in honey, syrups, fruit juices and fruit juice concentrates.

Unprocessed or natural foods: are obtained directly from plants or animals and do not undergo any alteration following their removal from nature. Unprocessed (natural) foods are edible parts of plants (seeds, fruits, leaves, stems, roots) or of animals (muscle, offal, eggs, milk), and fungi, algae and water, after separation from nature.

Ultra-processed foods (UPFs): these are industrial formulations typically with five or more ingredients. Such ingredients often include those also used in processed foods, such as sugar, oils, fats, salt, anti-oxidants, stabilisers, and preservatives. The main purpose of industrial ultra-processing is to create products that are ready to eat, to drink or to heat, liable to replace both unprocessed or minimally processed foods that are naturally ready to consume, such as fruits and nuts, milk and water, and freshly prepared drinks, dishes,

desserts and meals. Common attributes of ultra-processed products are hyper-palatability, sophisticated and attractive packaging, health claims, multi-media and other aggressive marketing to children and adolescents. Examples of typical ultra-processed products are: carbonated drinks; sweet or savoury packaged snacks; ice-cream, chocolate, candies (confectionery); mass-produced packaged breads and buns; margarines and spreads; cookies (biscuits), pastries, cakes, and cake mixes; breakfast 'cereals', 'cereal' and 'energy' bars; 'energy' drinks; milk drinks, 'fruit' yoghurts and 'fruit' drinks; cocoa drinks; meat and chicken extracts and 'instant' sauces; infant formulas, follow-on milk, other baby products; 'health' and 'slimming' products; ready to heat products including pre-prepared pies and pasta and pizza dishes; poultry and fish 'nuggets' and 'sticks', sausages, burgers, hot dogs, and other reconstituted meat products, and powdered and packaged 'instant' soups, noodles and desserts.

Whole food: food that has not been processed or refined or and is eaten in its natural state.

Whole-grains (or foods made from them): contain all the essential parts and naturally-occurring nutrients of the entire grain seed in their original proportions. If the grain has been processed (e.g., cracked, crushed, rolled, extruded, and/or cooked), the food product should deliver the same rich balance of nutrients that are found in the original grain seed.

3. Introduction

National Nutrition Week (NNW) is celebrated every year from 9 to 15 October to create awareness among consumers about the importance of healthy eating. As of 2021, South Africa joined the rest of the world to celebrate World Obesity Day on 4 March, instead of commemorating National Obesity Week from 15 to 19 October.

This document highlights the concept and supporting messages to be used during National Nutrition Week (NNW) 2021.

The objectives of the document are:

a. to provide guidelines for the use of NNW 2021 messages
b. to provide the **rationale** for the 2021 theme
c. to outline the overarching objectives for the campaign
d. to provide quick facts on vegetables and fruit
e. to outline the main communication **focus areas** of the campaign
f. to highlight the **key concepts** underpinning each focus area in support of the theme
g. to provide **information, statistics and tips** that can be used to ensure consistency in communication.

This document should be used in conjunction with the *Questions and Answers* document.

4. Guidelines for the use of NNW messages

The messages must remain consistent as per this document and the associated *Questions and Answers* document. They may be adapted to meet the needs of the target audiences.

a. The overall messages should be used in the format stated in the official NNW 2021 documents to avoid mixed messages and confusion.
b. The statistics given should be the statistics used in this document to avoid confusion or too many messages.
c. Messages may only be used for general health promotion and may not be used to promote any specific brands.

5. Rationale

About 88 per cent of countries worldwide face a serious burden from two or three forms of malnutrition: acute and/or chronic undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, obesity, and diet-related diseases, including type 2

diabetes, cardiovascular diseases (CVDs), and certain types of cancer[1]. With non-communicable disease (NCD) conditions accounting for nearly two-thirds of deaths worldwide, the emergence of chronic disease as the predominant challenge to global health is undisputed[2]. In South Africa, 51 per cent of all premature deaths can be attributed to NCDs[3].

Several studies in different provinces of South Africa show that a double burden of malnutrition (DBM) exists on a household level with undernutrition among children and overweight/obesity among caregivers[4,5,] in the same household or early stunting with adolescent obesity in the same socio-geographic population[6]. Furthermore, it has also been shown that there is a high prevalence of overweight and stunting in studies in the same group of mainly low socioeconomic groups of children[7]. In addition to the double burden of undernutrition and overnutrition, there is also the burden of micronutrient deficiencies in the country[8,9].

The leading dietary risk factors for NCD mortality in 195 countries worldwide are diets high in sodium but inadequate in: whole grains, fruit, nuts and seeds, vegetables, and omega-3 fatty acids; each accounting for more than two per cent of global deaths[10]. In 2017, some 3.9 million deaths worldwide were attributable to not eating enough vegetables and fruit[11]. Insufficient intake of vegetables and fruit is estimated to cause around 14 per cent of deaths from gastro-intestinal cancer worldwide, about 11 per cent of those due to ischemic heart disease, and about nine per cent of those caused by stroke[12].

In South Africa, the nutrition transition, which saw an increase in the intake of ultra-processed foods in the diet and a decrease in the intake of vegetables, and other more fibrous nutrient-rich foods, has been linked to the rise of overweight and obesity[13], and the decrease in the intake of vegetables[14]. The 2016 South African Demographic and Health Survey (SADHS) found that only 23 per cent of children aged six to 23 months were fed a minimum acceptable diet; 27 per cent did not consume vitamin A-rich fruit[15] .

According to a review on adolescent nutrition in South Africa[16], girls and urban-dwellers are particularly vulnerable to obesity and dietary intakes show a transition towards energy-dense, processed foods high in sugar

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and fat, but low in essential micronutrients. Food choices are driven by the adoption of obesogenic behaviours in the teenage years, including irregular breakfast consumption and fewer family meals, increased snacking and low levels of physical activity. The 2016 SADHS showed that one-third of adolescents ate salty snacks daily, while fruit and vegetable intakes were generally low and decreased from the highest to lowest household wealth categories[15]. South Africans aged 15 years and older eat well below the recommended 400g of vegetables and fruit per day at 226g per day for females, and 235g per day for males[17].

The current global pandemic of Coronavirus (COVID-19), and measures taken to reduce its spread, have disrupted food environments worldwide[18]. Food systems are not delivering the healthy diets needed for nourishment and strong immune systems. Reduction in consumption of nutrient-rich foods has been greatest for fruits and vegetables, dairy and meat in high, and low and middle-income countries[19]. This results in the increasing prevalence of all forms of malnutrition (stunting, wasting, overweight, and obesity), all of which are exacerbated by the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Diets high in vegetables and fruit are widely recommended for their health-promoting properties; they have historically held a place in dietary guidance because of their content of vitamins, minerals, dietary fibre and prebiotics[20], and, more recently, dietary bioactive compounds.

Most nutritional and global recommendations include consumption of at least two servings of fruits and three servings of vegetables per day for adults[21,22,23,24,25]. More than 100 countries worldwide have developed food-based dietary guidelines adapted to their nutrition situation, food availability, culinary cultures, and eating habits that encourage increased vegetable and fruit consumption.

The South African Food Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDGs) also recommends eating "plenty of vegetables and fruit every day", in line with the international recommendation, which is supported by the evidence that this contributes to an overall healthier dietary pattern that reduces the risk for disease. Practical considerations that complement the messages to eat plenty of vegetables and fruit are those related to variety, quantities and serving sizes in the life cycle[26].

Although adequate intake of vegetables and fruit is considered essential for maintaining optimal health and disease prevention, the consumption thereof is associated with higher costs, especially in low-income settings[27]. Some of the other barriers for including adequate amounts of vegetables and fruit in the diet are frequency of the intake of sugary drinks[28], availability, acceptability, preparation[29], peer pressure[30,], food availability and affordability of food in school tuck shops[30], perceived time and effort[31] and confusing recommendations[29,30,31]. Studies have shown dietary energy density to be positively associated with the consumption and availability of

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discretionary foods high in sugar and fat and inversely associated with the consumption and availability of fruit, vegetables, protein and fibre[32].

The United Nations has declared 2021 as the "International Year of Fruits and Vegetables" under the theme: "*Fruit and vegetables – your dietary essentials".* The year aims to raise awareness of the nutritional and health benefits of consuming more fruits and vegetables as part of a diversified, balanced and healthy diet and lifestyle and direct policy attention to reducing loss and waste as they are highly perishable[33]. Limited vegetable and fruit consumption are however not simply determined by inadequate nutrition knowledge or poor decision-making by households, but rather by a much broader set of social, economic and spatial processes. Strategies should not only target individuals, but also wider structural barriers to support adequate consumption of fruit and vegetables[29].

In line with increasing evidence emphasising the importance of eating plenty of vegetables and fruit every day, the theme for the National Nutrition Week 2021 is: **"Eat more vegetables and fruit every day"**

6. Campaign objective

The campaign objective is to increase consumption of vegetables and fruit among South Africans.

To complement the campaign objective in line with the Social and Behaviour Communication Change (SBCC) strategy, the campaign also has specific communication focus areas (see section 8).

7. Quick facts on the benefits of vegetables and fruit

a. They can promote good health for children by strengthening a child's immune system and help protect against disease[34];
b. Intakes of fruit and vegetables in line with what is recommended may reduce the severity of some infectious diseases. Though they will not protect a person against a virus such as COVID-19, recovery from infectious disease is better when consuming fruit and vegetables than with diets low in this food group[35,36]

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c. People who eat more fruit and vegetables tend to live longer[37]; They can help with gut health[38,39], help protect against heart disease[40,41,42,43] and help to reduce the risk for obesity[44,45], diabetes[46]and certain cancers[47]

8. Communication focus areas

8.1 Eating more vegetables and fruit every day can help reduce the risk for obesity and can help prevent diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and certain types of cancer

8.2 Eat more vegetables and fruit, i.e. at least three portions of vegetables and two portions of fruit

8.3 Choose vegetable and fruit snacks as part of a healthy eating plan

8.4 Vegetables and fruit are important for the growth, development and health of infants and young children

8.5 Growing vegetables and fruit is possible. It can be an affordable and sustainable way to increase dietary diversity and improve health outcomes

8.1 Eating more vegetables and fruit every day can help reduce the risk for obesity and can help prevent diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and certain types of cancer

8.1.1 Rationale:

Inadequate intake of vegetables and fruit has been associated with an increased risk of developing NCDs in adults, and an increased risk for stunting (a risk factor for obesity and NCDs) among children.

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8.1.2 Key concepts:

a. Eating the recommended three portions of vegetables and two portions of fruit regularly is important to achieve a healthy weight and can help prevent chronic diseases, including heart disease, high blood pressure, strokes, some types of cancer, ageing-related eye diseases and type-2 diabetes. These foods are also high in fibre (roughage), which ensures proper bowel functioning and helps to prevent constipation and related symptoms like bloating.
b. Vegetables and fruit contain nutrients that are important for your body to function at its best. Eating too few vegetables and fruit can lead to deficiencies and poor health.
c. Adequate intake of vegetables and fruit can support your immune system.
d. Most eating plans should consist of a variety of whole, mostly unprocessed or minimally processed foods from plants, for instance, vegetables, fruits, starchy foods and legumes as illustrated in the Food Guide **(See Annexure I for the Food Guide and the Guidelines for Healthy Eating).** The Food Guide for the Guidelines for Healthy Eating shows that nearly 80 per cent of what we eat should be a variety of unprocessed or minimally processed foods from these food groups.
e. Vegetables and fruit are tasty and can provide colour and texture to meals.

8.1.3 Implementation tips from registered nutrition professionals (Registered Dietitians/Nutritionists for use by supporting staff / media / public):

a. Try to include a variety of vegetables and fruit in daily meal plans – not only on weekends. Indigenous vegetables and fruit should be included where possible. Include both cooked and raw vegetables and salads in meals.
b. Eat a yellow or orange vegetable (carrots, pumpkin, butternut) or a dark green vegetable (broccoli, spinach,) at least once a day. Ideally, try to get at least one serving from each of the following categories: dark green leafy vegetables; yellow or orange fruits and vegetables; red fruits and vegetables; and citrus fruits on most days.
c. Portion sizes of vegetables can be more generous if a variety of vegetables is not available.
d. Canned vegetables, with no added salt or sugar, are good alternatives to ensure a sufficient intake of vegetables. Salt, sugar, and preservatives are sometimes added during the canning process. Draining and rinsing foods can lower their salt and sugar contents. To avoid extra sugar, choose fruits that are canned in water or juice instead of syrup. It is therefore important to read the label.
e. If a freezer is available: frozen fruits and vegetables can be a cost-effective option, or buy fresh vegetables or fruit in bulk if it is available at a reasonable price and freeze,
f. Always wash vegetables and fruit well in clean water before preparing, cooking and eating.
g. Enjoying a healthy eating plan also means preparing food in healthy ways, for instance using cooking methods such as boiling, steaming, grilling and baking instead of frying. If the method of frying is used, then only use 1 teaspoon of oil per person.
h. Once vegetables are cut, they need to be boiled or steamed in a *little* water for a short period to retain most of the nutrients. Most vegetables can be cooked in a few minutes if they are steamed, microwaved or stir-fried (in a little vegetable oil). Use the remaining water from boiling or steaming to add flavour and nutrients in the preparation of other dishes.

8.1.4 Resources/examples/toolkits:

a. Infographic:" *Protect yourself with vegetables and fruit"*: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1EyhVo34YGLyPpZWduTRnuGTi4rytNcgH?usp=sharing

b. Infographic: "*Do you think your budget won't allow you to eat more vegetables and fruit?"* https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1TrhJBBCkGquYK2W-J948ecS6xo2WTFWb?usp=sharing

8.2 Eat more vegetables and fruit, i.e., at least 3 portions of vegetables and 2 portions of fruit

8.2.1 Rationale:

South Africans do not consume enough vegetables and fruit. Reduced intake of vegetables and fruit is associated with an increased risk of NCDs. Increasing the portion sizes of vegetables and fruit at meals and replacing unhealthy snacks with vegetables and fruit can assist in achieving the recommended target.

8.2.2 Key concepts:

a. The WHO recommends that one should eat *more than five portions* (400 grams) of vegetables and fruit combined per day. No single vegetable or fruit provides all the nutrients one needs so it is therefore important, when possible, to eat a variety of types and colours of vegetables and fruits every day.
b. One serving of vegetables or fruit = approximately 1 cup raw or ½ cup cooked, or 80 g fresh and 30 g dried

Fresh, frozen, tinned vegetables or fruit	½ cup cooked; 1 cup diced and raw
Leafy vegetables	1 cup raw
Whole fruit	One medium or two small
Dried fruit	30g or 2-3 pieces
100% fruit juice	125 ml (limit to 1 per day, if using)

a. By making small changes in your food preparation, incorporating vegetables and fruits into daily meals and snacks is possible:
   - Include vegetables or fruit with most meals
   - Choose vegetables and fruit as snacks
   - When having lunch or dinner, aim for half a plate of vegetables or salad, a quarter plate of chicken, fish, meat, cooked dry beans or peas and a quarter plate of starchy foods, such as potatoes
b. Potatoes and sweet potatoes, are considered starchy foods. Choose at least three other vegetables to include in your meals and snacks each day.

8.2.3 Implementation tips from registered nutrition professionals (dietitians/nutritionists) for use by supporting staff/media/public:

a. Add extra vegetables to recipes such as stews, curries, stir-fries, soups and sandwiches or brown rice or whole-wheat pasta dishes or egg dishes (scrambled eggs or omelettes). Baby spinach, tomatoes, carrots, beetroot and sundried tomatoes are some of the vegetables that are easy to add to dishes.
b. Eat multiple portions of vegetables and/or fruit in a salad or blend it into a smoothie. By adding a small handful of spinach, kale, cauliflower or broccoli florets or frozen peas to your smoothie, you reap all the benefits, but will not even notice the taste.
c. Grating or mashing vegetables into dishes can help to “hide” them in foods and increase acceptability.
d. Add raw vegetables such as carrots or shredded cabbage to lunchboxes. Include fresh fruit or fresh vegetable as a snack between meals.
e. Using fresh vegetables to cook large batches of soups, stews or other dishes will make them last longer and provide meal options for a few days. These can also be frozen where possible and then quickly reheated.
f. Swap some of the animal-based foods with whole plant-based alternatives. Meat can be replaced with vegetables like mushrooms, aubergine/brinjal or eggplant and baby marrow/courgette or legumes like lentils, beans and chickpeas. In practising portion control, be mindful about the amount of fat/oil, sugar and/or salt that are added in food preparation and use these items sparingly as far as possible. Sugar and oil/fat add additional kilojoules. Use herbs and spices to flavour dishes.
g. Rather choose whole fruit instead of fruit or vegetable juice. Juices (vegetables or fruit) have had their pulp removed. The pulp contains the produce’s fibre, meaning that if you remove it, you remove all the fibre. The fibre helps promote regular bowel functioning and helps your body absorb the sugar from the produce more slowly, giving you more energy for longer. More than one portion of fruit has been used to create the amount of juice you drink. This means that when you drink a whole glass of fruit juice, you are

consuming more than when you eat whole fruit. Since fruit contains sugar, you are also consuming a high dose of sugar without the fibre to keep you feeling full, making it very easy to overconsume.

h. Substitutions:

The following tips can help one eat more vegetables and fruit during the day:

(a) Substitute spinach, onions, or mushrooms for one egg or half the cheese in a morning omelette. The vegetables will add volume and flavour to the dish with fewer kilojoules than the egg or cheese.
(b) Substitute starchy foods such as potatoes and rice with vegetables, e.g., cauliflower "rice" instead of rice.
(c) Cut back on the amount of cereal in the bowl to make room for some cut-up bananas, apples, peaches, or strawberries.
(d) Substitute vegetables such as lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, or onions for the cheese and/or the meat in a sandwich, bread roll or wrap to increase vegetable intake.
(e) Replace the meat/chicken or fish or the noodles in broth-based soup with 1 cup of chopped vegetables, such as broccoli, carrots, beans, or bell peppers.
(f) Add in 1 cup of chopped vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, tomatoes, squash, onions, or peppers, while removing 1 cup of the rice or pasta from a favourite dish. The dish with the vegetables will increase the amount of fibre and nutrients in the meal.
(g) When preparing lunch or dinner, aim for half a plate of non-starchy vegetables or salad, a quarter plate of protein (such as meat, lentils or beans) and a quarter plate of starchy food (such as whole grains, pap, rice or potato).

8.2.4 Resources/examples/toolkits:

a. Infographic: *"Create a healthy plate":*
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1dfMylyyiza-PvRSD5438sxKsYQvtvYkJ?usp=sharing

b. Infographic: "*Helping hand for health"*
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1-dqA48I2mgRcuvgtey3l3-YeJ_YAAATn?usp=sharing

8.3 Choose vegetable and fruit snacks as part of a healthy eating plan

8.3.1 Rationale:

Energy-dense snacks contribute to overall energy intake and obesity. Energy-dense foods often replace more nutritious foods in the diet. These can be replaced by vegetable and fruit snacks.

8.3.2 Key concepts:

a. Most healthy eating plans allow for one or two small snacks a day. Vegetables and fruit can make healthy, convenient snacks.
b. Ultra-processed snacks are often high in sugar, salt and fat. Replace them with healthier options such as vegetables or fruit.
c. Children12 to 36 months should have three small meals and two healthy snacks during the day. Avoid giving tea, coffee and sugary drinks and high-sugar, high-fat salty snacks to your child.

8.3.3. Implementation tips from registered nutrition professionals (dietitians/nutritionists) for use by supporting staff/media/public:

Here are six healthy snack ideas:

a. a medium-size apple cut into pieces and dipped in a peanut butter and yoghurt dip (2 teaspoons of peanut butter and ¾ cup of low-fat, unsweetened yoghurt
b. a medium-size banana
c. 1 cup steamed or raw green beans
d. 1 cup blueberries

e. 1 cup grapes
f. 1 cup carrots, broccoli, celery sticks, or bell peppers (or combinations of any of these) with 2 tablespoons hummus, low-fat yoghurt or low-fat cottage cheese.

Instead of a high fat, sugary or salty snack from a vending machine, bring some cut-up vegetables or fruit from home.
Vegetables and fruit make great snacks for children too. Stock up on vegetables for snacks and limit unhealthy snacks in the home. In this way, children will be more likely to choose vegetables when they are hungry.
Keep a container of chopped vegetables, like cucumber, carrots, celery sticks or a bowl of cherry tomatoes in the fridge or several ready-to-eat washed whole fruits in a bowl on the counter. These are often also more affordable than soft drinks, chips and sweets.
Offer older children frozen baby peas but note that these can be a choking hazard for younger children.

8.4 Vegetables and fruit are important for the growth, development and health of infants and young children

8.4.1 Rationale:

Introducing the right foods at the right time is important to maintain children's health and growth. In many cases, complementary feeding practices are suboptimal as it relates to dietary diversity and the inclusion of fruit and vegetables in the diet. Intake of dark green and orange vegetables, are of particular concern for preventing vitamin A deficiency.

8.4.2 Key concepts

a. Infants should be given only breastmilk for the first six months of life. Breastmilk contains all the energy, vitamins and other nutrients and water in the correct amounts that the baby needs. They should not be given any other food or fluids, not even water, except for medicine prescribed by a doctor or nurse.
b. From the age of six months, appropriate and culturally acceptable complementary foods should be introduced, and breastfeeding continued until the child is at least two years old.
c. From six to 12 months, give your baby dark-green leafy vegetables and orange-coloured vegetables and fruit every day.
d. A child's Road-to-Health Book /Side-by-Side caregiver Message Book: How to Raise a Healthy and Happy Child, gives some ideas on types of foods, quantities and textures for children from six months to five years.
e. Homemade foods for infants and young children can be healthier and more affordable than store-bought options. It can also be easy to prepare. Foods for family meals are suitable to use for infants and young children

8.4.3 Implementation tips from registered nutrition professionals (dietitians/nutritionists) for use by supporting staff/media/public:

a. Family mealtime is a good time for adults to show their children how they enjoy vegetables to encourage them to eat vegetables too.
b. Experiment with different food combinations, tastes, textures, and methods of encouraging smaller children to eat if they refuse many foods.
c. When feeding a young child, foods that can cause choking should be avoided, for instance, nuts and seeds, whole grapes, and large pieces of raw vegetables.
d. Start by introducing small amounts of soft, mashed fruit or cooked vegetables. Examples are banana, pawpaw, sweet potato, or pumpkin.
e. For children 9 to 11 months, give them a piece of fruit or vegetable they can hold themselves, like banana or cooked carrot. Even if they do not eat everything, it can be fun to explore the new taste at their own pace.
f. For children older than one year, cutting fruit and vegetables into small pieces so that the child can feed themselves is a good strategy. Fruit pieces like naartjie segments, apple wedges, cubes of guava, mango, and pawpaw, have great vitamins needed for a strong immune system.

g. Get older preschool children into the habit of eating raw vegetable sticks or fruit when they are hungry between meals.
h. Continue to introduce (and re-introduce) vegetables. It is normal for children to say they do not like some vegetables when they first taste them (it can take up to 15 times before he/she develops a taste for a new food). If the child does not like a particular vegetable, try offering small amounts of the vegetable with another healthy food that he/she likes. Keep encouraging him/her to try and taste vegetables.
i. Use praise when a child tries vegetables so that they will be more likely to eat vegetables again. Try not to let praise become the focus of the meal. On the other hand, punishing a child for not eating vegetables can turn vegetables into a negative thing for him/her. If he/she refuses to eat their vegetables, try not to make a big deal about it – just try another time again. If the child is not eating anymore of a meal, it is best to take his/her meal away after about 20 minutes or when everyone else has finished eating. It is also not a good idea to use food as a bribe. For example, avoid saying things like, 'If you eat your broccoli, you can have some ice-cream for dessert'. This can make your child more interested in treats than healthy foods. It also suggests that eating healthy food is a chore. It can also encourage overeating.
j. Changing presentation and preparation can go a long way. Oven-roasting vegetables can make them tasty and crunchy and can entice picky eaters without all the added fat from deep-frying.
k. Appearance is important – try to make fruit and vegetables 'fun' to encourage children to try more and eventually eat more vegetables, especially with younger children. Try to choose vegetables of different shapes, colours, textures, and tastes. Make a vegetable face for a snack plate – grated carrot for hair, cherry tomatoes for eyes, a bean/grape for a nose and red bell pepper strips or a piece of apple for a mouth.
l. If you serve new vegetables with other food your child enjoys, the entire focus of the meal is not on new vegetables.
m. Remember that taste matters. For example, try roasting vegetables with fresh herbs and lemon juice or use finely sliced vegetables in a stir-fry. This will probably appeal more to a child than large, steamed pieces of vegetables.
n. Try to serve vegetables in different ways, for instance, warm, cold, frozen, roasted, steamed, sautéed, with a healthy dip (hummus, guacamole, with peanut butter) and in in different shapes.
o. Add pureed or grated vegetables in pasta sauce or soups. This will not change the child's behaviour and thinking about vegetables. Hence, it is also important to regularly give him/her vegetables in their original form, too. This will help your child to become familiar with different types of vegetables and their different tastes and textures.
p. Involve children in planning and cooking family meals with vegetables so that they are more likely to want to eat the vegetables they helped to prepare. For instance, they can help choose vegetables for dinner when buying groceries, put chopped vegetables in the steamer or saucepan before it is cooked or wash and dry salad leaves. Older children can help with grating or chopping vegetables when it is safe for them to handle sharper kitchen tools safely.

8.4.4 Resources/examples/toolkits:

a. Road-to-Health Book /Side-by-Side*: "The Caregiver Message Book: How to Raise a Healthy and Happy Child"*
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1tkEI1qhon0Uk13fEdTkmDECnPC8QAGzn?usp=sharing

b. Infographic: "*Feed smart from the start*"
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/139TfxDzcEa1x69vprPa9AFZe9C9P3Ay4?usp=sharing

8.5 Growing vegetables and fruit is possible. It can be an affordable and sustainable way to increase dietary diversity and improve health outcomes.

8.5.1 Rationale:

Food gardens can contribute to food and nutrition security, help improve dietary diversity and address micronutrient deficiencies, and improve communities' physical access to food[48]

[48] Faber M, Witten C and Drimie S. Community-based agricultural interventions in the context of food and nutrition security in South Africa. S Afr J Clin Nutr 2011;24(1):21-30

a. There are many social and environmental benefits for families, schools, and communities in growing their food. Communal farming not only unites neighbourhoods and helps combat food insecurity - it also encourages healthier eating.
b. A range of vegetables can be grown at home or in school or communal gardens from the old favourites like spinach, tomatoes, carrots, beetroot, potatoes, mealies, green beans, peas, cabbage, cauliflower, garlic, onions to different lettuce varieties, peppers, chillies, artichokes, asparagus, brinjals, zucchini, patty pans, different colour tomatoes, different colour carrots and micro- greens to supply the growing demand for different organic vegetables by upmarket shops and restaurants.
c. One does not need a big garden or lots of water to grow your own food. One can start small! For instance, start with a keyhole garden, bag garden, a compost trench bed or even with a hydroponic food garden.

8.5.2 Resources/examples/toolkits:

a. Manual: "*Horticulture manual for schools"*
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1QANdC1oYggcWrK5F1U7nStfye9R-zqMG?usp=sharing

b. Infographic/poster: "*Know how to grow your own"*
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ZZs3rpjNNx4l4rMQ-rpwhFXYN8BlXmI2?usp=sharing

9. NNW 2021 collaborators

a. National and provincial Departments of Health
b. Department of Basic Education
c. Department of Social Development
d. South African Military Health Services (SAMHS)
e. Grow Great Campaign
f. Better Health Project South Africa (BHPSA) and in particular, Dr Sara Nieuwoudt and Ms Liezel Engelbrecht
g. The Association for Dietetics in South Africa (ADSA)
h. The Nutrition Society of South Africa (NSSA)
i. The Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA)
j. The Heart and Stroke Foundation SA (HSFSA)
k. Division of Human Nutrition, Department of Global Health, University of Stellenbosch University
l. Consumer Goods Council of South Africa (CGCSA)

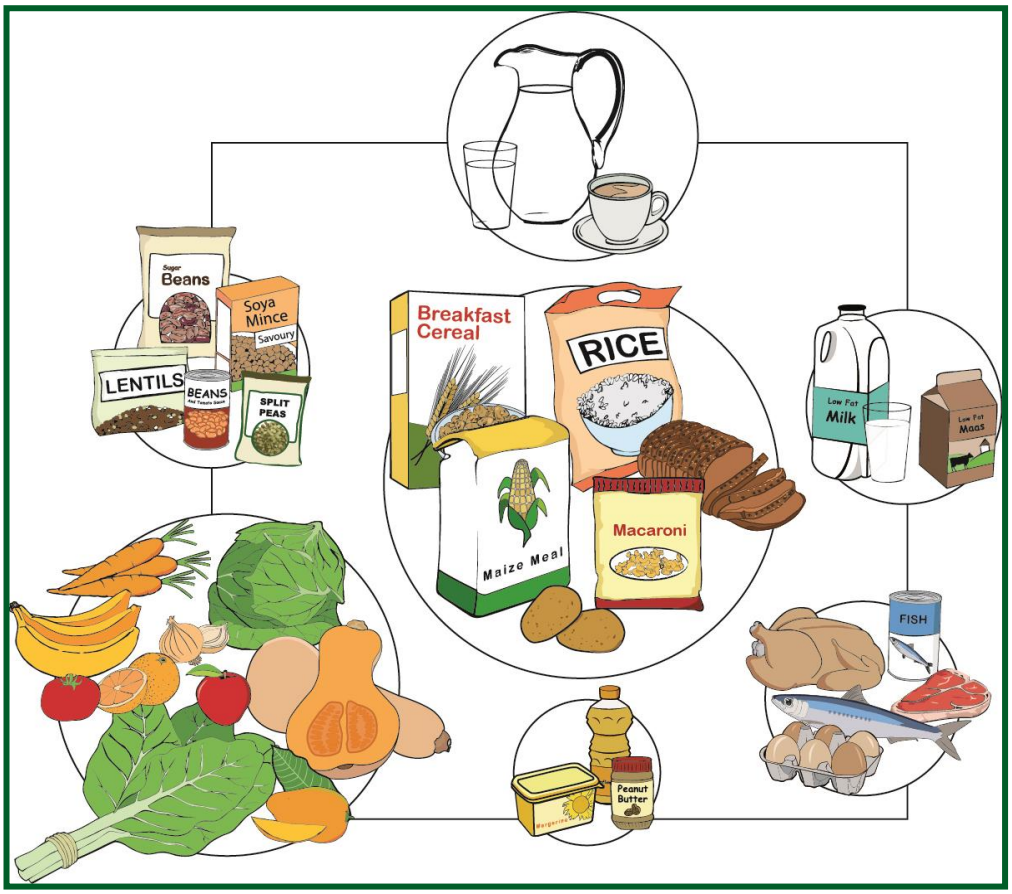
10. Websites for more information about NNW 2021

www.nutritionweek.co.za
The national Department of Health: www.health.gov.za
The Association for Dietetics in South Africa (ADSA): www.adsa.org.za
The Nutrition Society of South Africa: www.nutritionsociety.co.za
Grow Great Campaign: www.growgreat.co.za
The Heart and Stroke Foundation SA: www.heartfoundation.co.za
The Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA): www.cansa.org.za

ANNEXURE

ANNEXURE I: SOUTH AFRICAN GUIDELINES FOR HEALTHY EATING (FBDGs) FOR ADULTS AND CHILDREN FIVE YEARS AND OLDER AND THE FOOD GUIDE

a) Enjoy a variety of foods.
b) Be active.
c) Make starchy foods part of most meals.
d) Eat plenty of vegetables and fruit every day.
e) Eat dry beans, split peas, lentils and soya regularly.
f) Have milk, maas or yoghurt every day.
g) Fish, chicken, lean meat or eggs can be eaten daily.
h) Drink lots of clean, safe water.
i) Use fats sparingly. Choose vegetable oils rather than hard fats.
j) Use sugar and foods and drinks high in sugar sparingly.
k) Use salt and food high in salt sparingly.



This picture depicts the Food Guide. The size of the circles reflects the proportional volume that those foods should contribute to the total daily intake.