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National Nutrition Week (NNW) 2022

"Make healthy food choices easier"

Questions and Answers

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1. What is the theme for National Nutrition Week (NNW) 2022?

The theme for the National Nutrition Week 2022 is: **"***Make healthy food choices easier*".

2. What is the campaign objective of NNW 2022?

The campaign objective of NNW 2022 is to help people make healthy and affordable food choices every day by eating regular and correctly portioned healthy meals and snacks and by being physically active.

3. What are the key communication focus areas and communication objectives?

There are four key focus areas with communication objectives

Focus area	Communication objectives
3.1 Improved healthy food choices by household members throughout the life course	3.1.1) To increase caregivers' knowledge, skill and self-efficacy to enable the caregiver to choose to practice exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months with the introduction of appropriate and safe complementary foods from six months while breastfeeding continues up to two years and or beyond 3.1.2) To increase household members' self-efficacy to make healthier choices and to plan and prepare healthy and affordable family meals, including complementary foods
3.2 Eating regular meals and healthy snacks	3.2.1) To increase knowledge on the benefits of consuming regular, healthy meals 3.2.2) To increase self-efficacy to choose or make available healthy and affordable snack and drink alternatives to ultra-processed foods and sugary drinks
3.3 Improved consumption of healthy portions	3.3.1) To increase knowledge on choosing correct portion sizes of food
3.4 Improved physical activity engagement by household members	3.4.1) To increase knowledge on the benefits and ease of regular physical activity 3.4.2) To increase knowledge on the recommended minimum physical activity targets 3.4.3) To increase self-efficacy to engage in regular physical activity

4. Who are the target audiences?

The campaign follows a life cycle approach and thus targets caregivers and parents of infants and young children, school children, adolescents and adults.

The campaign messages also aim to target educators in schools, early childhood development (ECD) centres, community nutrition development centres and healthcare facilities as audiences that influence other target groups.

5. Why was this theme chosen?

The NNW 2022 aims to create awareness on how people can make healthy food choices easier.

Efforts people make to eat healthily are affected by several barriers, for instance financial uncertainty, high cost or low availability of healthy food, availability of cheap unhealthy foods, time constraints, lack of willpower, perceived taste, lack of nutrition knowledge, low skills level, lack of cooking or kitchen equipment, lack of transportation to shop, social pressure and lack of social support. Other barriers to healthy eating are energy-dense food, large portion sizes served at family meals and frequency of eating foods away from home that are generally unhealthy.

6. How are these barriers affecting the food choices South Africans are making?

Studies have shown that South Africans do not consume a diverse diet with a variety of healthy food choices. For example, many people have a low intake of vegetables and fruit but a high intake of energy-dense foods that are nutrient-poor. This can be a result of rapid urbanisation which has also led to the intake of commercially manufactured ultra-processed foods that are high in sugar, salt and/or saturated fats and the intake of sugary drinks, which has increased over the years, and may be displacing healthier food choices.

7. Why is it important for South Africans to make healthy food choices?

The 2016 South Africa Demographic Health Survey (SADHS) found that 68 per cent of women and 31 per cent of men in the country are overweight or obese. About 20 per cent of women and three per cent of men are severely obese. Approximately 13.3 per cent of children younger than five years are overweight or obese, which is more than double the global average of 6.1 per cent. Furthermore, the rate of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) among adults has increased together with the increase in obesity. In South Africa, 51 per cent of all premature deaths can be attributed to NCDs, and a poor quality diet is one contributor to the development of these conditions.

8. What are the healthy food choices that a household should make?

- Enjoy a variety of whole foods, i.e., unprocessed or minimally processed foods.
- Buy healthy, affordable foods.
- Drink lots of clean, safe water instead of sugary drinks.
- Prepare healthy home meals rather than buying ready-to-eat snacks or meals.
- Use cooking methods such as boiling, steaming, grilling and baking instead of frying.
- Be mindful about the amount of fat/oil, sugar and/or salt that is added in food preparation and use these items sparingly as far as possible.
- Eat regular meals and choose healthy snacks.
- Practice healthy eating habits, e.g., eat lots of vegetables and correct portions of other foods.
- Grow your own vegetables and fruit. Homegrown vegetables can be much cheaper than store-bought vegetables.
- Families should eat together without distractions (e.g., cell phones or TV).

9. What is the best food for a baby?

- For the first six months of a baby's life, he or she needs breastmilk only. Do not give porridge, water or any other liquids. Do not give any other home or traditional medicines or remedies. Only give your baby medicines they receive from the clinic or hospital.
- From the age of six months, introduce appropriate complementary foods and continue breastfeeding until the child is at least two years old.

10. Why is breastmilk so important?

Breastmilk contains all the nutrients a baby needs for the first six months of life. A baby's tummy (intestine/gut) is not yet ready for any other foods, water or other liquids before six months. Breastmilk protects the baby against respiratory and gut infections and sudden infant death syndrome. Obesity in later childhood and adolescence is lower among breastfed children.

11. What is meant by appropriate complementary feeding?

- From the age of six months, in addition to breastfeeding, introducing solid foods at the right time, in the correct amounts and of age-appropriate texture is important.
- Give a variety (different kinds) of foods (iron-rich foods, starches, beans, vegetables and fruit). Iron-rich foods include fortified infant porridge, mashed beans/chickpeas/lentils, softly cooked/shredded chicken livers, grounded mopane worms, minced meat and egg.
- Start with small amounts: One to two teaspoons, twice a day.
- Build up to five small meals each day.
- For each meal:
  - ¼ cup at nine months
  - ½ cup by 12 months

12. How can complementary foods be made more affordable?

- It is not necessary to buy baby food or baby cereals. In fact, homemade foods for infants and young children can be healthier and more affordable than store-bought options.
- They can also be easy to prepare, like mashing up a banana.
- Foods for family meals are suitable to use for infants and young children, if they are an age-appropriate texture, such as mashing up beans.

13. Is it possible to eat healthily on a tight budget?

It is possible to eat healthily on a tight budget by careful planning:

- Draw up a budget for food. Have an amount in mind and do your best to stick to it.
- Create a menu plan for the week ahead for breakfast, lunch and dinner.
- Plan to use leftovers for a few breakfasts, lunches or dinners throughout the week to reduce time spent cooking.
- Always use a shopping list as a reminder to choose healthy foods and to stick to the food budget.
- Buy locally produced foods and look out for specials: Look for discounts, coupons, and sales, especially on store brands, which usually cost less.
- Compare unit prices (rand per gram/kilogram) listed on price tags to find the cheaper brand.
- Buy in bulk, if possible, as single-size items are often more expensive than buying in bulk. Dry products and frozen foods keep well for a longer period and can be bought in bulk.
- Dry beans, peas, lentils and soya are more affordable and are not subjected to VAT. They are high in protein and can also be added as a meat extender to "stretch" the quantity of the dish.
- Check the use-by date/best before/expiry dates and quality of food you buy, especially when it is on sale.
- Buy vegetables and fruit that stay fresh for longer such as butternut, carrots, cabbage, beetroot, onions, apples and oranges.
- If a freezer is available buy fruit and vegetables on special in bulk. Cut them up and freeze them for later use.
- Make vegetable soup or stew with vegetables before they spoil to prevent food waste.
- Certain vegetables such as spinach, carrots, tomatoes and green beans are relatively easy to grow. Homegrown vegetables can be much cheaper than store-bought vegetables.
- Save electricity or gas:
  - Use a pot or pan that is the same size as the stove plate or gas hob.

    - Keep the lid on when cooking, especially when making a stew or soup. This way the food also cooks faster.
    - Use the stove top or microwave instead of the oven. Hay or wonder boxes are very effective for slow-cooking beans, lentils, rice or stews as they do not use electricity.
- During cooking, assess if an ingredient in a recipe can be fully or partially substituted with another more economical ingredient.
- Stick to the correct portion sizes – eating more than needed is wasteful and unhealthy.

14. Why is it important to have regular meals every day?

- Setting and keeping to a plan of regular, healthy meals helps most people to stay healthy, maintain a healthy weight and prevent hunger. It helps to prevent overeating at meals or snacking on unhealthy foods during the day which can lead to the development of obesity, diabetes and heart disease.
- The goal is to eat at least every –four to five hours during the day in order to re-energise one's body and keep blood sugar levels consistent and for optimal digestion of food.

15. Why is it so important to eat breakfast?

Eating breakfast has many health benefits:

- Forms part of a healthy lifestyle – people who eat breakfast regularly tend to be more active and follow a healthier lifestyle.
- Can provide important nutrients such as fibre, vitamins and minerals.
- Contributes to healthy eating choices throughout the day and prevents you from feeling hungry and snacking on energy-dense and often expensive foods during the day.
- Helps to achieve and maintain a healthy body weight.
- Helps to prevent type 2 diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure.
- Improves alertness, mood, academic performance and learning behaviour.

16. Can you give some examples of a healthy breakfast?

Most of the meal should consist of unprocessed or minimally processed plant-based foods, for instance: vegetables and/or fruit, legumes and where possible minimally processed starchy foods. The foods should be low in sugar, salt and fat. Some breakfast ideas include:

- freshly cooked or leftover maize meal porridge, with left-over vegetables or with low-fat milk or maas
- oats/mabele/maize meal porridge with milk
- brown bread sandwich with peanut butter/pilchards/baked beans/boiled egg
- unsweetened, low-fat yoghurt with sliced fruit
- a piece of fruit to go and a packed brown bread sandwich with peanut butter (do not add butter/margarine *and* peanut butter, and where possible, make use of peanut butter with no added salt/sugar)
- lightly blended smoothie made the night before from low-fat milk, unsweetened low-fat yoghurt/maas and fruit or vegetables
- leftover rice mixed with unsweetened low-fat yoghurt, dried fruit and nuts. Sprinkle with cinnamon
- Overnight oats (add a mix of your favourite fruit and nuts to oats and yoghurt and milk and leave to soak overnight)

17. Can you give some examples of a healthy lunch?

Most of the meal should consist of unprocessed or minimally processed plant-based foods, for instance: vegetables and/or fruit, legumes and where possible minimally processed starchy foods. The foods should be low in sugar, salt and fat. Some lunch ideas include:

- left-over food from the meal the previous night
- brown bread with peanut butter, and an apple
- whole-wheat bread, egg and tomato
- cheese and tomato sandwich, and a carrot
- samp, beans, vegetable relish and an orange
- mealie meal, milk, and a banana

18. What should people bear in mind when packing a breakfast or lunch box?

- Follow hygienic food preparation methods. This is especially important when food will be stored for many hours before being eaten. Remember the five keys to safer food (*See infographic – Five keys to safer food)*:
  - keep clean
  - separate raw and cooked food
  - cook thoroughly
  - keep food at safe temperatures
  - use safe water and raw materials
- Prepare the breakfast/lunches the night before and store them in the fridge so they can be safely consumed the next day.
- In summer, freeze water bottles overnight to have ice-cold water throughout the day. This also can help to keep a breakfast/lunch box cool.
- Bring a cooler or store food or snacks in the refrigerator at work.

19. Can one have snacks during the day?

- Most healthy eating plans allow for one or two small healthy snacks a day. If it is not possible to have lunch or dinner at the scheduled time, then it helps to have a healthy snack to avoid overeating at the next meal. Eating a vegetable or fruit as a snack also helps to be able to get to the recommended three portions of vegetables and two portions of fruit per day.

20. Could you give examples of healthy snacks?

- Mash banana for babies between six and eight months. For babies aged nine to 13 months, offer pieces of soft fruit like paw-paw or mango. For toddlers and older children, you can give naartjie segments or pieces of cooked carrot as easy and affordable snacks.

- Offer older children frozen baby peas but note that these can be a choking hazard for younger children.

- Choose vegetables and fruit as snacks, for example:
  - a medium-sized apple cut into pieces and dipped in peanut butter and yoghurt dip (two teaspoons of peanut butter and ¾ cup of low-fat, unsweetened yoghurt)
  - a medium-sized banana
  - one cup steamed or raw green beans
  - one cup blueberries
  - one cup grapes
  - one cup carrots, broccoli, celery sticks, or bell peppers (or combinations of any of these) with two tablespoons hummus, low-fat yoghurt or low-fat cottage cheese
  - boiled or roasted mielie (corn on the cob)

- 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.

- Other healthy snack options for older children, adults and adolescents include:

- unflavoured and low-salt popcorn
- unsalted or low-salt pretzels
- low-salt wholewheat crackers
- unsalted nut trail mix
- low-salt or unsalted nuts
- unflavoured, low-fat / fat-free yoghurt or low-fat maas
- unsalted mopani worms
- biltong (ostrich or game)

21. What is meant with unhealthy snacks and drinks?

- Unhealthy snacks are those snacks and drinks that should be limited. Ultra-processed snacks, such as sweets, chocolates, crisps and biscuits are often high in sugar, salt and fat. Sugary drinks are high in sugar. Examples include sugary fizzy drinks, fruit juices, sports drinks, sweetened milk or yoghurt-based drinks, sweetened iced teas, sweetened flavoured drinks (e.g., flavoured water) and energy drinks. They provide empty kilojoules and can contribute to weight gain. Furthermore, energy drinks contain large amounts of caffeine and other stimulants which may lead to dehydration, heart complications such as irregular heartbeat and heart failure, anxiety and being unable to sleep. These drinks are also often pricey.
- Do not give babies and young children Rooibos tea or any other tea, coffee, creamers, condensed milk, flour water, sugar water, and cold drinks. These foods and drinks do not contain any nutrients and will not help your child to grow.

22. What tips do you have to drink more water?

- After your baby is six months old, give him/her water from a clean cup.
- Make water the drink of choice. Choose a glass of water rather than having a sugary drink.
- Start your day with a glass of water.
- Increase your daily water intake when the weather is hot.
- Keep a reusable water bottle with you and make sure to refill it regularly. This will also help one to sip on water instead of sugary drinks and will also provide a visual reminder to drink more water.
- Take a bottle of clean, safe water to school or work.
- Try setting reminders using your cell phone or notes at your desk to drink water regularly.
- There are no health benefits to drinking more water than what is needed; when excess water is consumed it will be excreted as urine.
- Make it a habit to drink water with meals instead of sugary drinks.
- Add fresh slices of lemon, cucumber or lime, mint leaves or pieces of fresh fruit or berries to your water or unsweetened Rooibos or herbal teas. Prepare flavoured water in advance and refrigerate and/or add ice.
- Drink one to two glasses of water 30 minutes before exercising and sip water for a few hours afterwards.
- Before going to bed each night, put the number of water bottles you would like to drink the next day in the refrigerator.
- Drink a glass of water before and/or after brushing your teeth.
- If you do not have access to clean, safe water, purify water by boiling it for three minutes or by adding one teaspoon of bleach to 25 litres of water and leaving it to stand for two hours before using.

23. What is meant by portion control?

- A portion is the amount of food that a person eats of one food at one time. The recommended number of portions for each food will vary according to a person's age, gender, size, health and activity level. Many people do not eat the correct amount of food from each of the food groups and may take in too much energy from food, which may lead to weight gain. For instance, some people do not eat enough vegetables and then eat too much starchy food or meat. They may gain weight

and will be at risk of developing non-communicable diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and some forms of cancer.

- Use your hand to estimate how much food to eat for meals and snacks, for example:

    - a clenched fist (one cup) whole fruit, one medium ortwo2 smaller pieces, for instance plums, apricots or figs
    - the palm of your hand (90g cooked) skinless chicken, baked or grilled fish or lean meat
    - two cupped hands (one cup) cooked or raw vegetables, grapes or berries, cooked dry beans, split peas or lentils
    - a small handful (¼ cup) raisins, other dried fruit (two to three pieces), nuts
    - a cupped hand (½ cup) starchy foods such as cooked pap, samp, rice, potato, sweet potato and pasta
    - a clenched fist (30g) for ready-to-eat high bran cereals
    - a thumb (one tablespoon = three teaspoons) hard cheese or peanut butter
    - one cup low-fat milk, maas or low-fat, unsweetened yoghurt
    - a tip of thumb (one teaspoon) oils, margarine or mayonnaise

24. Could you give an example of practising portion control when having a meal?

When having meals, aim for:

- Half a plate of vegetables and/or salad.
- A quarter plate of skinless chicken, baked or grilled fish, lean meat, eggs, cooked dry beans, split peas or lentils. Low-fat milk, maas or unsweetened low-fat yoghurt or low-fat cheese, can be included as an option for breakfast or lunch.
- A quarter plate of starchy food such as rice, samp, pap, potatoes, sweet potatoes or brown bread.

25. What other tips for portion control do you have?

- Use smaller plates, bowls, serving utensils and a smaller glass or mug for drinks other than water.
- Avoid being tempted by second and third helpings. Serve the correct amounts on individual plates instead of putting serving dishes on the table.
- Be aware that your body may only experience feeling “full” sometime after eating your meal. Practise mindful eating, by eating slowly, and paying attention to your body’s internal cues to avoid overeating.
- Stick to regular meal and snack times.
- Many restaurants serve more food than is appropriate for one person. Share a meal with a friend or ask the waiter to put half the meal in a “doggie bag” or “take away container”, before it is brought to the table. Alternatively order a salad and a starter as the main meal.
- Snack foods that are bought in bulk, should be portioned into individual-size bags**.** Store large containers out of sight in a storage closet.
- Where possible, avoid distractions when eating such as the TV, but when eating or snacking in front of the TV, put a small amount in a bowl or container and leave the rest stored away.
- Keeping healthier foods within easy reach means you will eat more of those foods**.** Place fruit in a bowl on the counter and serve cut vegetables as the family arrives home from school or work.

26. How important is it to be physically active even if one is making healthy food choices?

Regular physical activity, such as walking, cycling, wheeling, doing sports or active recreation, provides significant benefits for health, such as reducing the risk of disease, strengthening bones and muscles and improving mental health. It helps with losing weight as well as in maintaining a healthy weight. By becoming more active throughout the day in relatively simple ways, people can easily achieve the recommended activity levels. People should aim to engage in any form of physical activity for 30 minutes daily.

27. Could you provide some tips to be physically more active?

- Engage in any form of physical activity for 30 minutes daily.
- Start slowly and set realistic goals to work towards.
- Engage in community physical activities to encourage participation by others.
- Choose a form of physical activity that should be enjoyable, for instance:
    - brisk walking
    - walking up the stairs instead of taking a lift
    - Ii you use a car, park the car far away from the shopping/mall entrance
    - take opportunities to stand more, e.g., when speaking on the phone
    - taking a walk during lunch breaks
    - playing active games with family and/or friends
    - dancing, cycling, swimming and skipping

28. Where can one get more information about NNW 2022?

- National Nutrition Week: 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
- Grow Great Campaign: www.growgreat.co.za
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF): www.unicef.org/southafrica/
- The Nutrition Society of South Africa: www.nutritionsociety.co.za
- The Heart and Stroke Foundation SA: www.heartfoundation.co.za