



To be healthy  
**Our**  
**Nutrition**

*from our home garden*



Health  
Promotion  
Bureau



Scaling up Nutrition  
People's Forum

Civil Society Alliance - Sri Lanka



Nutrition Division  
Ministry of Health



## From the Nutrition Unit...

Food is a fundamental need of human beings and a decisive factor in nutrition. However, due to the present socio-economic style in the society, nutrition security in families appears to be gradually declining.

Food with high content of sugar, salt and fat is gaining immense popularity in the society too. With this consumption lifestyle, the intake of essential nutrients such as Vitamins and Minerals is inadequate.

Home gardening is the best solution to address this issue. A home garden can easily provide the micro nutrients through vegetables, fruits and green leafy vegetables. Apart from this, a home gardening will also enhance family unity and joy. It will promote physical exercise amongst the family members, leading to a healthy life.

This booklet "Our nutrition from our home garden" published by the Nutrition Division of the Ministry of Health, introduces crops that could be grown easily in home gardens, with scientific explanations on their nutritional value.

Director  
Nutrition Division  
Ministry of Health

**Our**

***To be healthy nutrition***

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*from our home garden*



Sanuli: Grandma, though you are now 70 years old, you are still healthy. But my father is already taking medicines for many illnesses. Why is that so, grandma?

Grandmother: Daughter, it is because of the food we eat.

Sanuli: Why is that Grandma

Grandmother: In the past we ate par-boiled rice or brown rice. We also ate fresh vegetables **grown** in our own home gardens.

Sanuli: If so, why can't we continue to follow the same food practices?

Grandmother: There are many reasons for that my child.

Sanuli: What are those grandma?

Grandmother: Most of the people have moved from the villages to cities. Land for cultivation is limited in the city. Also people are busy and do not have time to prepare food. Therefore, they get used to the habit of eating quick and easy food. Such food contains loads of sugar, fat, salt and taste enhancers and **artificial flavours**. Sadly, most of the food we eat have been treated with chemical pesticides and fertilizers.

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## The current nutritional issues in Sri Lanka

- Approximately one out of 7 children under the age of 5 years is thin.



- Approximately one out of 3 adolescent students is thin.



- Approximately one out of 5 adolescent students is iron deficient.



- One out of every 5 pregnant **women** is iron deficient.



- One out of every 4 adult men is obese or overweight.



- One out of every 3 adult women is obese or overweight.



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Teacher: Ayubowan children. Today let's talk about our nutrition. What do you all know about nutrition?

Sanuli : Teacher, my grandmother told me that we get sick because of some of the food we eat.

Nethasha: Teacher, what happens when we eat too much food containing sugar, fat, salt and **artificial flavorurs**?

Teacher: Yes children, when we eat too much food containing sugar, fat, salt and **artificial flavorurs**, our stomachs feel full. They increase our body weight unnecessarily. Increased weight makes us more vulnerable to illnesses. **Also such food habits do not give sufficient nutrition to build immunity in our bodies.**

Sanuli: Teacher, so what should we do to safeguard our bodies against illnesses?

Teacher: We need to eat vegetables, fruits and greens that have more vitamins and minerals which can protect us from illness. It means we need to have a balanced diet **daily**.

Sanuli: Teacher, what should a balanced meal contain?

Teacher: Look at these pictures, it is very important that we eat variety of food items that belong to these six food categories **daily**.

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Include a variety of food from the six food groups in to your daily diet.



Cereals/grains  
and food  
made with flour

Vegetables and  
green leafy  
vegetables

Pulses/  
lentils/ fish/  
eggs/ meat

Fruits

Fresh liquid milk  
and  
milk based food

Seeds and nuts  
that contain  
healthy fat.

Teacher: Also we have to do more physical activities to stay healthy. When we toil and grow a home garden, we will get balanced meals, as well as exercise.

Sanuli: Teacher my grandmother has a home garden.

Vihanga: What are the benefits of a home garden?

Teacher: The main important benefit is that we get a variety of fresh vegetables, fruits and greens/leafy vegetables throughout the year. When we have an excess harvest, perhaps we could exchange it with others or sell and earn extra income.

Avanathi: Teacher, then we will have food **without harmful substances**. won't we?

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Teacher: Yes, yes, we can consume such **food** without any fear.

Sanuli: Teacher, I like to work in my grandmother's home garden. I feel so happy there.

Teacher: Yes dear child, I totally agree with what you say. Cultivation is a joyful activity. Home gardens calm our minds. Also when all members of the family get together to help, it improves the unity and closeness in the family. It brings great joy.

Additionally, working in the home garden gives us the opportunity **to be active** and we can lose some body weight and be healthy.

Vihanga: I too would like to have a home garden.

Teacher: That is a good idea. I will guide you on nutritious crops that can be easily grown in a home garden.

### **Vegetables: These provide vitamins, minerals and fibre.**

Long beans, Winged beans, Beans, Pumpkin, Moringa/Drumsticks, Tomato, Bitter-gourd, Ridged-gourd, Snake-gourd, Ladies fingers, Brinjals, Beetroot, Carrots, Leeks, Capsicum, Radish, Cucumber, Knolkhol.



**Brinjals**



**Ladies finger**



**Tomato**

**Drumsticks/moringa Pumpkin**

**Cucumber**

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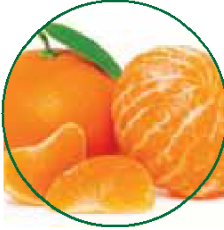


**Fruits: These provide vitamins, minerals and fibre. These contain healthy antioxidants.**

Mandarin, Orange, Passion-fruit, Nelli, Cashew-apple, Guava, Banana, Papaya, Mango, Rambutan, Custard apple, Pineapple, Sour sop, Avocado, Ceylon olives, Pomegranate, Jambola



**Naran**

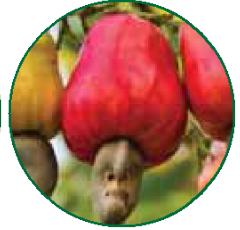


**Orange**

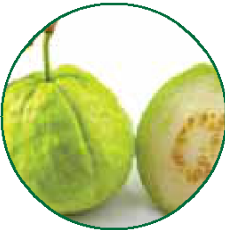
**(add a picture of local Orange)**



**Nelli**



**Cashew Apple**



**Guava**



**Banana**



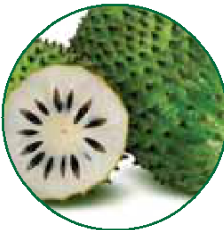
**Papaya**



**Mango**



**Rambutan**



**Sour sop**



**Avacado**



**Pineapple**

**Include a minimum of 2 vegetables, 1 green/leafy vegetables and 2 fruits in your daily diet**

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## Greens/leafy vegetables: Leafy vegetables provide fibre, minerals such as iron, and vitamins.

Kathurumurunga, Gotukola, Moringa/drumstick leaves, Thampala, Saarana, Mukunuvenna, Beetroot leaves, Kankun, Spinach, Thebu, Coriander leaves.



**Kathurumurunga**



**Drumstick/  
Moringa leaves**



**Gotukola/  
Indian penny worth**



**Beetroot leaves**



**Thampala**



**Mukunuvenna**



**Spinach**



**Cabbage leaves**

## Cereals/Pulses: Cereals contain carbohydrates, proteins and fibre.

Corn, millet, finger millet



**Corn**



**Finger Millet**



**Millet**

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## Legumes: Legumes contain proteins, iron and zinc.

Soya, cow-pea, green-gram, horse-gram (Kollu), long beans, green beans, winged beans.



**Soya**



**Cow-pea**



**Green-gram**



**Winged beans**



**Long beans**



**Green beans**

## Yams/root vegetables: Yams contain a high amount of carbohydrates and fibre.

Sweet potato, Kiri ala, Buthsarana, Hulangkeeriya, Innala , Hingurala, Dandila.



**manioc**



**Sweet potato**



**Innala (Chinese potato)**

## Other crops: Mushrooms, Peanut, Kottan, Coconut.



**Mushroom**



**Peanut**



**Coconut**



**Kottan**

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## Spices: These crops are rich in medicinal properties

Curry leaves, Green chili, Turmeric, Ginger, Mustard, Coriander, Pepper.



**Curry leaves**



**Ginger**



**Green chilli**



**Peper**

**Instead of using artificial flavors, homegrown spices can be used in cooking to enhance taste, aroma and health benefits.**

Teacher: Not only crops, but if a home garden has excess space, it could be used for animal husbandry such as rearing goats, cattle, and chicken. They produce fresh liquid milk, eggs and also manure. Fresh liquid milk and eggs are rich in proteins, vitamins and minerals.



**Eggs**



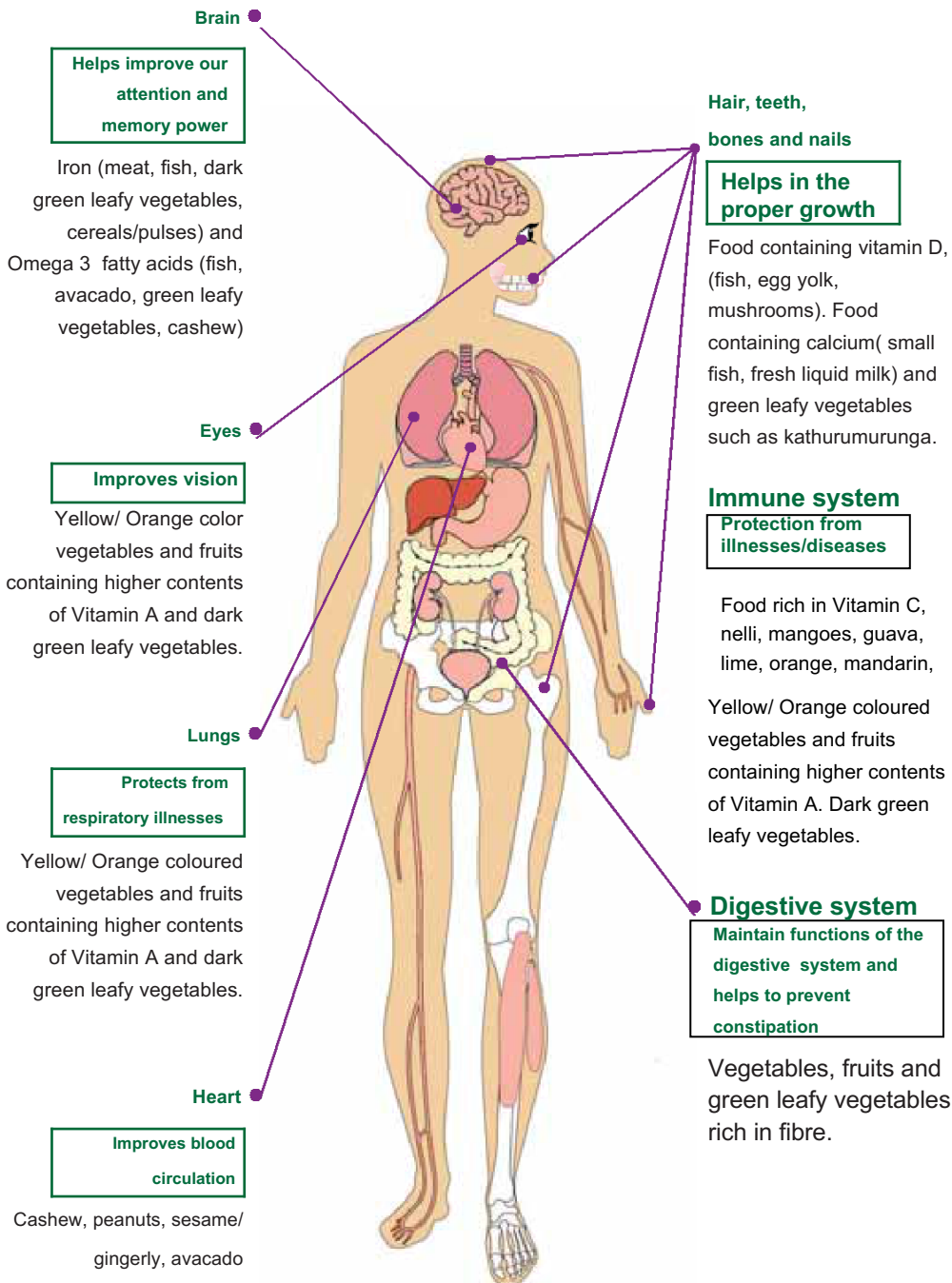
**Fresh liquid milk**

Sanuli: Teacher, how does home grown fruits and vegetables help us to be healthy?

Teacher: Let me show how it is. This picture shows how vegetables and fruits help our organs to function in a proper manner.

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## Our

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Binara: Mother, today in school we were taught how to prepare home grown food without losing nutrients. Here are the notes I took down.

Mother: Oh it is a very important thing my son. Although we select food rich in nutrients, essential nutrients may be lost due to **method of food preparation**. the way we prepare food.

Binara: **And also** taught us how to store cooked food in the correct manner.

Mother: Let me see what you have written.

Selecting food items **with different** in taste, aroma and texture, add a variety to the diet. It improves our nutrition and appetite.

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## Points to remember while cooking and storing food

Method	Reason
Pick vegetables from your garden just before cooking).	Enables to obtain clean, fresh, and varieties of vegetables and green leaves.
Wash vegetables, fruits and green leaf before cutting.	Cutting prior to washing will cause removal of nutrients from the cut surface.
When preparing vegetables and green leaves, ensure to retain the original colour of the vegetable.  When cooking <b>meals</b> /leafy porridge, add green leaves / leaf juice just before taking off the fire.	When leafy vegetables are overcooked the nutrients get destroyed due to high heat.
Prepare green leaves as raw sambols/ salads as much as possible with added lime juice.	Nutrients are retained when green leaves are consumed in raw form. Adding lime, enhances the absorption of nutrients in these preparations.
Try as much to consume fruits with its skins.	Fruit skins are high in fibre and <b>healthy elements</b> .
Cooked food should be stored in a clean place. Safely covered.	Avoid food being contaminated by animals/insects.
Do not store uncooked fish/meat with Cooked food in the refrigerator.	Uncooked meat and fish contain high amounts of harmful bacteria which could contaminate the cooked food.
Do not repeatedly re-heat refrigerated food for consumption.	Microbes increase in food taken out from the refrigerator repeatedly.

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## Food Based Dietary Guidelines for Sri Lankans (FBDGs)

Consume unpolished rice and cereals instead of polished cereals and products.



Consume a meal with variety that contains all nutrients.



Include a minimum of 2 vegetables, 1 green leafy vegetable and 2 fruits in your daily diet.



Include a lentil, fish, eggs and lean meat (fat removed) to your daily diet.



Consume fresh milk or fresh milk based products.



Consume daily a handful of nuts such as cashew, peanuts or sesame which contain fat/oil.



Consume clean food products that have no poisonous substance (pesticides/weedicides etc.)



Water is the healthiest drink  
Consume – 8-10 glasses of water each day.  
(1.5 -2.0 litres).



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## Food Based Dietary Guidelines for Sri Lankans (FBDGs)

**Limit** sugary/sweet drinks, biscuits, cakes, sweets and sugar substituted products.



**Limit** adding salt in food preparation and consuming salted food.



**Limit** processed and ultra processed food. Consume home cooked fresh food.



Always read labels in packed food items.



Have an undisturbed sleep of 7-8 hrs a day.



Be active: Indulge in a 30 minutes moderate exercise each day for at least five days a week.



**Proper nutrition – a healthy life**

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- Son: Father, our teacher told us that we can get seeds and plants for our home garden from the nearest sales outlet **of agricultural department**.
- Father: If so, I will go and get some plants that are rich in nutrients and some seeds too.
- Son: Let us all in our family get together and prepare a home garden where we get nutritious food.

**As a family let us determine to lead a healthy, disease-free life by food from our successful home garden.**

**You can obtain further information and advice from the Agricultural Research Assistant or the Agricultural Instructor in your area for home gardening.**

**Please get in touch with the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) or the Public Health Midwife (PHM) for information on how best you could utilize the nutrients in your home grown products.**

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