



Balanced Diet Guide for Healthy Lifestyle

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ABSTRACT

A balanced diet is the main foundation in maintaining and improving the quality of individual health. In the modern era marked by easy access to fast food and a sedentary lifestyle, people are increasingly susceptible to various non-communicable diseases such as obesity, type 2 diabetes mellitus, hypertension, and coronary heart disease. A proper diet that meets the body's needs not only plays a role in maintaining the physiological function of body organs, but also in supporting mental health, metabolism, and overall body resistance. This article aims to provide comprehensive guidance on a balanced diet as an integral part of a healthy lifestyle, by examining the components, basic principles, and benefits of implementing a balanced diet. This research was conducted using a literature study method on various scientific sources, such as nutrition journals, reference books, policies from the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, and publications from the World Health Organization (WHO). The results of the study show that implementing a balanced diet supported by regular physical activity and clean living behavior can provide long-term benefits in the form of improving the quality of life, preventing degenerative diseases, and maintaining ideal body weight. Challenges such as lack of nutritional literacy, instant eating habits, and fast lifestyles need to be addressed through public education, public policy, and cross-sector collaboration. Thus, understanding and implementing a balanced diet is the main key to building a healthy and productive society.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Diet is a reflection of a person's habits and lifestyle choices that greatly affect health conditions. In the modern era, easy access to fast food, processed foods high in fat and sugar has led to a significant increase in various non-communicable diseases. Based on data from the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia and WHO, diseases such as obesity, hypertension, and type 2 diabetes have increased globally due to poor community diets. Therefore, it is important for every individual to understand and implement a balanced diet as a promotive and preventive effort against various health problems.

Health is a fundamental aspect of human life. One important component in maintaining health is diet. Food is not only a source of energy, but also a key factor in maintaining the body's physiological functions, preventing disease, and improving quality of life. In recent decades, the increase in cases of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as obesity, type 2 diabetes mellitus, hypertension, and coronary heart disease has become a global concern. The main cause is often associated with an unhealthy lifestyle, one of which is a poor and unbalanced diet (WHO, 2020).

According to the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia (2014), a balanced diet is the daily consumption of food containing nutrients in types and amounts that are appropriate to the body's needs. This concept includes not only adequate energy and nutrients, but also aspects of food hygiene, physical activity, and regular weight monitoring. Eating healthy and balanced does not mean a strict diet or avoiding certain food groups, but rather regulating daily intake so that the body gets all the essential nutrients proportionally.

In the current era of globalization and digitalization, lifestyle changes are happening very quickly. People tend to have low physical activity and a high-fat, sugar, and salt food consumption pattern. Consumption of fast and processed foods is the main choice for reasons of practicality and speed of serving, even though it contains risks to long-term health. Based on data from the World Health Organization (WHO), unhealthy eating habits are one of the main risk factors for global death. In Indonesia, the Ministry of Health also reported a significant increase in the number of NCD sufferers in the last decade, which is mostly triggered by poor eating habits and lack of physical activity.

A balanced diet seeks to meet all of the body's nutritional needs, both macronutrients (carbohydrates, proteins, fats) and micronutrients (vitamins and minerals), along with adequate water consumption. In addition, a balanced diet also pays attention to behavioral aspects, such as the habit of washing hands before eating, not skipping breakfast, and regulating portion sizes and regular meal schedules. The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia through the "Isi Piringku" campaign and the Balanced Nutrition guide has provided a practical framework to help people understand and apply the basic principles of choosing and consuming healthy foods every day.

The main problems faced by the community in implementing a balanced diet lie in the lack of nutritional literacy, limited access to nutritious food, and the influence of modern consumer culture that does not always support health. On the other hand, advances in technology and information can be used as educational tools to spread the importance of balanced nutrition and a healthy lifestyle.

Therefore, it is important to develop a comprehensive, applicable, and evidence-based balanced diet guide. This guide is expected to be a reference not only for the general public, but also for educational institutions, health workers, and policy makers in designing public health improvement programs.

Several studies have underlined the importance of implementing a balanced diet in everyday life. According to Hardinsyah (2017), an imbalance in energy and nutritional consumption in the long term causes the risk of metabolic disorders that lead to NCDs. A study by Mirmiran et al. (2019) shows that a diet that is in accordance with the principles of balanced nutrition can reduce the risk of obesity by up to 30% and the risk of heart disease by up to 20%.

On the other hand, research by Sudargo (2021) shows that although Indonesian people have learned a lot about the importance of healthy eating, the practice of implementing balanced nutrition is still low. This is due to the lack of nutrition education, the influence of fast food advertisements, and limited access to fresh food, especially in remote areas. Therefore, there needs to be ongoing efforts to disseminate comprehensive balanced diet guidelines to all levels of society.

Writing purpose

This article aims to:

- a. Explains the basic concepts of a balanced diet based on national and international guidelines.
- b. Reviewing relevant previous research findings on the impact of diet on health.
- c. Providing practical guidance on implementing a balanced diet in everyday life.
- d. Increasing public awareness about the importance of healthy eating to support a quality lifestyle.

By understanding and implementing a balanced diet, people can obtain optimal health benefits and prevent various chronic diseases. A healthy lifestyle should be part of a culture of life that starts early.

2. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method. Data were collected from various reliable sources such as scientific journals, nutritional reference books, official reports from the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, and publications of the World Health Organization (WHO). The analysis was carried out descriptively by compiling relevant information in narrative form to provide a comprehensive picture of a balanced diet and its implications.

3. Results and Discussion

Definition of a Balanced Diet

A balanced diet is a daily food consumption arrangement that contains all nutrients in types and amounts that are appropriate to the body's needs, paying attention to the principles of food diversity, physical activity, clean living behavior, and weight monitoring. This concept emphasizes the consumption of diverse natural foods, low in saturated fat, sugar, and salt, and sufficient fiber.

Basic Principles of a Balanced Diet

A balanced diet is based on six basic principles that must be applied in everyday life:

Components of a Balanced Diet

- a. Complex Carbohydrates: As the main source of energy. Examples include brown rice, wheat, cassava.
- b. A balanced diet is based on six basic principles that must be applied in everyday life:
- c. Eat a Variety of Foods
Consume a variety of foods from the five main food groups: staple foods, side dishes, vegetables, fruit, and milk.
- d. Consumption of Vegetables and Fruits
Vegetables and fruits are rich in vitamins, minerals and fiber which are important for body health.
- e. Fulfill Protein Needs
Protein is needed for the growth and repair of body cells. Sources of protein can come from animals (meat, fish, eggs) and plants (nuts, tempeh, tofu).
- f. Complex Carbohydrate Consumption
Carbohydrates are the body's main source of energy. Choose complex carbohydrates such as brown rice, corn, sweet potatoes, and wheat.
- g. Limit Consumption of Sugar, Salt, and Fat
Reduce consumption of sugar, salt and excess fat to prevent the risk of non-communicable diseases.
- h. Pay Attention to Portion Size
Controlling portion sizes helps prevent excess calorie consumption and maintain ideal body weight.: Needed for cell repair. Sources include fish, eggs, tempeh, tofu.
- i. Healthy Fats: Needed in limited amounts. Examples include olive oil, nuts.
- j. Vitamins and Minerals: Important for body metabolism. Obtained from fruits and vegetables.
- k. Water: To maintain body fluid balance. Recommended at least 2 liters per day.

Principles of Balanced Nutrition According to the Indonesian Ministry of Health

- a. Eating a variety of foods
- b. Getting used to clean living behavior
- c. Do physical activity regularly
- d. Monitor ideal body weight regularly

General Guidelines for Balanced Nutrition in Indonesia The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia introduced the "Balanced Nutrition Guidelines" which replaced the concept of 4 Healthy

5 Perfect. One of the guidelines used is "Isi Piringku", which is the division of the contents of the dinner plate into:

- a. 50% consists of fruit and vegetables
- b. 50% consists of staple foods and side dishes

These guidelines also emphasize the importance of:

- a. Wash your hands before eating
- b. Drink at least 8 glasses of water per day
- c. Physical activity at least 30 minutes per day
- d. Reading packaged food labels

Macronutrient Needs: Carbohydrates, Protein, and Fat

Macronutrients are nutrients that the body needs in large amounts. The three main types of macronutrients are carbohydrates, proteins, and fats.

- a. Carbohydrates are the body's main source of energy. Healthy sources of carbohydrates include brown rice, potatoes, sweet potatoes, corn, and whole grains. Avoid refined carbohydrates such as white bread and added sugars.
- b. Protein functions to build and repair body tissues. Protein can be obtained from animal sources (meat, fish, eggs, milk) and vegetable sources (nuts, tofu, tempeh).
- c. Fat is needed to absorb fat-soluble vitamins and as an energy reserve. Healthy fats come from avocados, nuts, olive oil, and fatty fish like salmon.

Micronutrient Needs: Vitamins and Minerals

Micronutrients are needed in small amounts but are very important for body function.

- a. Vitamins help the metabolism process, maintain the body's resistance, and prevent disease. For example, vitamin A is important for eye health, vitamin C for immunity, and vitamin D for bones.
- b. Minerals such as iron, calcium, and zinc are needed for the formation of blood, bones, and various enzyme functions.

The main sources of vitamins and minerals are fruits, vegetables, dairy products, lean meats, and whole grains.

Balanced Daily Menu Planning

Daily menu planning helps maintain nutritional balance and avoid unhealthy foods.

Example of a daily menu:

- a. Breakfast: Brown rice, boiled eggs, stir-fried vegetables, and bananas.
- b. Lunch: Rice, grilled chicken, spinach and papaya
- c. Dinner: Steamed potatoes, grilled fish, stir-fried broccoli
- d. Healthy snacks: Low-fat yogurt, almonds, or cut fruit.

Tips:

- a. Use healthy cooking techniques (boiling, steaming, baking)
- b. Limit the use of oil and sugar
- c. Prepare supplies to avoid fast food

Balanced Diet for All Ages

Nutritional needs vary depending on age and stage of life:

- a. Children: Need energy and protein for growth
- b. Teenagers: Calcium and iron are especially important during puberty.
- c. Adults: Need to maintain energy balance and prevent disease
- d. Elderly: Need food that is easy to digest and high in nutrients

Adapting your diet to your age helps improve your quality of life and avoid health problems.

Balanced Diet for Special Conditions

Some conditions require special attention to diet:

- a. Pregnant and breastfeeding women: Require higher calories, protein, iron and calcium
- b. Athletes and active people: Need high energy, complex carbohydrates, and adequate hydration.
- c. People with diseases: For example, people with diabetes must control their blood sugar, while people with hypertension must reduce their salt intake.

Consultation with a nutritionist is highly recommended to tailor individual needs..

Other Healthy Diet and Lifestyle Patterns

A balanced diet does not stand alone, but must go hand in hand with other healthy lifestyles such as:

- a. Regular exercise: Improves metabolism and fitness
- b. Get enough sleep: Helps the body recover and balance hormones
- c. Stress management: Reducing emotional eating habits and improving mental well-being

This combination of factors will result in optimal health.

Challenges in Implementing a Balanced Diet

Some challenges that are often faced:

- a. Busy lifestyle and minimal time for cooking
- b. Social environment that encourages consumption of unhealthy foods
- c. Lack of education about nutrition
- d. Economic limitations or access to healthy food

Solution:

- a. Plan a weekly menu
- b. Prepare healthy food ingredients at home
- c. Use technology like nutrition apps and healthy recipes

Benefits of a Balanced Diet

- a. Maintain Ideal Body Weight
By controlling calorie and nutrient intake, a balanced diet helps maintain ideal body weight.
- b. Improve Immune System Function
Proper nutrition supports the immune system in fighting infections and diseases.
- c. Prevent Chronic Diseases
Reduces the risk of diseases such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease.
- d. Improving Quality of Life
Improves energy, sleep quality, and overall well-being.
- e. Reduce the risk of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and heart disease
- f. Maintain ideal body weight
- g. Increase body resistance
- h. Supports optimal growth and development in children
- i. Maintaining mental health

Challenges of Implementing a Balanced Diet

- a. Lack of public knowledge about nutrition
- b. Dependence on instant and fast food
- c. Massive unhealthy food advertising
- d. Fast-paced lifestyle that neglects nutritious breakfast and lunch
- e. Dominance of instant and fast food
- f. The habit of consuming foods that are high in calories and low in nutrition
- g. Lack of nutritional education in families and educational institutions
- h. Economic inequality and access to healthy food

Practical Tips for Implementing a Balanced Diet

To make it easier to implement a balanced diet, here are some practical tips:

- a. Plan Daily Menu
Creating a daily meal plan helps ensure a varied and balanced diet.
- b. Choose Fresh and Natural Foods
Prioritize consuming fresh and natural foods, and avoid processed foods that are high in sugar, salt, and fat.
- c. Breakfast with a Healthy Menu
A healthy breakfast provides energy to start activities and prevents overeating during the day.
- d. Drink Enough Water
Fulfill your body's fluid needs by drinking at least 8 glasses of water per day.
- e. Regular Physical Activity
Do physical activities such as walking, cycling, or other light exercise regularly

Table 1. Example of a Daily Menu with a Balanced Diet

Meal Time	Food menu
Breakfast	Oatmeal with pieces of fruit and a glass of low-fat milk
Snack	Fresh fruit such as apples or bananas
Have lunch	Brown rice, grilled fish, spinach, and fried tempeh
Snack	Low-fat yogurt or a handful of almonds
Dinner	Chicken soup with vegetables and a small plate of white rice

Solutions for Implementing a Balanced Diet

- a. Early nutritional education through schools and media
- b. Developing healthy food policies in the workplace and school environment
- c. Control of unhealthy food advertising
- d. Providing affordable healthy food

Conclusion

A balanced diet is the foundation of a healthy lifestyle. By paying attention to macro and micro nutrient intake, limiting sugar, salt, and fat, and increasing fiber, fruit, and vegetable consumption, we can prevent disease and improve quality of life. The implementation of a balanced diet should start from small but consistent steps. Start from being aware of choosing food, reading labels, and planning a menu. With commitment and environmental support, a healthy diet is not just a choice, but a sustainable lifestyle. A balanced diet plays a very important role in maintaining and improving the quality of individual and community health. Through consistent understanding and application of balanced nutrition principles, various disease risks can be prevented early on. Support from the government, health workers, and the wider community is needed to create an environment that supports healthy eating patterns. Therefore, forming balanced and nutritious eating habits must be part of a daily lifestyle.

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