

Definition of Food

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Food is that which nourishes the body. Food may also be defined as anything eaten or drunk, which can be absorbed by the body to be used as an energy source, building, regulating or protective material.

In short, food is the raw material from which our body is made. Intake of the right kinds and amounts of foods can ensure good health, which may be evident in our appearance, efficiency and emotional well being.

Classification of Foods

Based on the functions foods are grouped into energy-yielding, body-building and protective foods.

Nutrients which engage in these activities are known as energy-yielding nutrients, body-building nutrients and protective nutrients.

Carbohydrates, fats and proteins release energy on metabolism in our body.

Food may be broadly classified into 11 groups based on their nutritive value :

- (1) Cereals and millets
- (2) Pulses (Legumes)
- (3) Nuts and oilseeds
- (4) Vegetables
- (5) Fruits
- (6) Milk and Milk products
- (7) Eggs
- (8) Meat, fish and other animal foods
- (9) Fats and oils
- (10) Sugar and other carbohydrates foods
- (11) Spices and condiments.

(1) Cereals and millets : Cereals and millets constitute by far the most important group of foodstuffs as they form the staple food of a large majority of the population throughout the world. They form about 70 to 80 per cent of the diets of the low income groups in India and other developing countries. They contain about 6 to 12 per cent proteins and are good sources of some vitamins e.g., thiamine, niacin, pantothenic acid and vitamin B6 and minerals e.g., Phosphorus and iron. Hence, they provide 70 to 80% of the calories, 6-10% of proteins and other nutrients mentioned above in the diets of the low income groups. All cereals except ragi are poor to moderate sources of Calcium. Ragi is one of the richest sources of Calcium containing about 344 mg/100 g. Cereals are deficient in Vitamins A, D, B12 and C. Puffed cereals are consumed widely as a snack by the low income groups in India.