## Sengamala Thayaar Educational Trust Women’s College

## (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University)

**(Accredited with ‘A’ Grade {3.45/4.00} By NAAC) (An ISO 9001: 2015 Certified Institution)**

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**NUTRITION THROUGH LIFE CYCLE**

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**NUTRITION THROUGH LIFE CYCLE**

**MEAL PLANNING**

**OBJECTIVES:**

* categorise foods into food groups on the basis of nutrients;
* explain the term ‘balanced diet’;
* state the meaning of 'meal planning' and its importance;
* enumerate the factors influencing meal planning;
* analyse the nutritional needs of members of the family and modify the meals accordingly;
* define ‘therapeutic diet’ and its need;
* enumerate the types of modification of normal diet,
* suggest modifications of a normal diet for people suffering from common diseases.

Meal planning is making a plan of meals with adequate nutrition for every member of the family within the available resources. The term ‘available resources’ means whatever the family has in terms of time, energy and money.

**IMPORTANCE OF MEAL PLANNING**

Meal planning is important for meeting the nutritional requirements of the family members. It helps us to decide what to eat each day and in each meal. We can call it our ‘daily food guide’. Meal planning helps us to:

(a) fulfill the nutritional requirements of the family members

(b) make the food economical

(c) cater to the food preferences of individual members

(d) save energy, time and money

(e) use left over food

**FACTORS AFFECTING MEAL PLANNING**

1. Nutritional Adequacy This is the most important factor, which means that the nutritional requirements of all the family members are fulfilled. For example, you know a growing child needs more protein, a pregnant or lactating woman needs calcium, etc. While planning meals you will include food items from various food groups, that is, energy giving foods, body building foods and protective and regulating foods.

2. Age People normally eat according to their age. You must have observed in your family that the diet of various members of different age groups differs in quantity. A new born baby drinks only milk, a small child’s meal is also of very small quantity, an adolescent eats still more in amount and variety of foods. Similarly, you must have seen your grandfather eating less food and also that they prefer soft and easy to digest foods.

3. Sex Sex is another factor which determines the dietary intake. Dietary requirement of adolescent and adult males are more than their female counterparts.

4. Physical Activity The kind of work a person does affects the kind and amount of food they need to take. Do you remember that RDA is different for people eng aged in different activities? A labourer not only eats more quantity but needs more energy because he is engaged in hard work. His body uses up more energy while performing hard work. So, if you have to plan for such a person you will include more energy giving foods in the diet.

5. Economic Considerations Money available to the family to be spent on food is another major factor. Foods like milk, cheese, meat, fruits, nuts etc. are expensive. However, alternative sources like toned milk, seasonal fruits and vegetables are less costly and at the same time nutritious. You can therefore plan a balanced diet to suit every budget.

6. Time, energy and skill considerations While planning the meals, you should consider the resources like time, energy and skill available to the family. Meals can be elaborate with different dishes but you can simplify them by cooking a simple but nutritious dish. For example, a working mother could prepare a paushtik pulao, instead of preparing three or four items for dinner.

7. Seasonal availability Some foods are available in summers while some in winters. The off season foods are expensive and less nutritious, while those in season are fresh, nutritious, tasty and cheap. Hence, while planning seasonal foods should be used.

8. Religion, region, cultural patterns, traditions and customs Regional factors influence meal planning. For example, if you are a North Indian, you will consume more of wheat, while those near the coastal region, will consume more of coconut, fish, etc. Similarly your staple food would be rice if you are a South Indian. Religious beliefs prevalent in the family also have an influence. For example, if you are a vegetarian, your diet will not have any meat or meat product, Hindus do not eat beef and Muslims do not eat pork etc.

9. Variety in colour and texture it has variety in terms of colour, texture, flavour and method of preparation. These factors help you to make meals more appealing, attractive and hence more acceptable.

10. Likes and dislikes of individuals The food you serve should cater to the likes and dislikes of the individual family members. It is often better to change the form of some particularly nutritious food item, rather than omitting it completely. For example, if someone in your family does not like milk, you can give it in the form of curd, paneer, etc. Similarly, if one does not want to take green leafy vegetables in cooked form, what alternative would you suggest, so that it can be taken in adequate amount? Yes, it can be used in a variety of ways - mixed with flour and made into paranthas or poories; or as culets or pakodas. It can also be given in the form of koftas, idlis, vadas, etc.

11. Satiety Value While planning meals, take care that you select foods which provide satiety value. Meals which produce inadequate satiety, will lead to onset of hunger pangs, which in turn will affect the working capacity and efficiency of a person.

BALANCED DIET:

A balanced diet is one which contains different types of foods in such quantities that the individual’s need for the various nutrients is adequately met, and some amounts of nutrients are stored in the body to withstand short periods of low dietary intake.

Characteristics of a Balanced Diet

* A balanced diet contains both plant and animal foods and fulfills following requirements:
* meets the nutritional requirements of an individual
* includes foods from all the food groups
* contains a variety of foods
* consists of seasonal foods
* is economical
* suits the taste and meets the desires of the individual eating it