Our Diet Matters

Section I

The average person swallows about half a ton of food a year – not counting drink – and though the body is remarkably efficient at extracting just what it needs from this huge mixture, it can only cope up to a point.

If you go on eating too much of some things and not enough others, you'll eventually get out of condition and your health will suffer.

So think before you start eating. It may look good. It may taste good. Fine! But how much good is it really doing you?

Section II

What you eat and the way it affects your body depend very much on the kind of person you are. For one thing, the genes you inherit from your parents can determine how your body-chemistry (metabolism) copes with particular foods. The tendency to put on weight rather easily, for example, often runs in families – which means that they have to take particular care.

And your parents may shape your future in another way. Your upbringing shapes some basic attitudes to food – like whether you have a sweet tooth, nibble between meals, take big mouthfuls or eat chips with everything.

And there is your lifestyle. How much you spend on food (time as well as money), how much exercise you get – these can alter the balance between food and fitness.

And finally, both your age and your sex may affect this balance. For example, you are more likely to put on weight as you get older, especially if you are a woman.

So, everybody's different and the important thing is to know yourself.

Section III

If you are eating a fairly varied diet, it is just about impossible to go short of proteins, vitamins or minerals. It is likely, too, that you have more than enough fats and carbohydrates.

Take proteins for instance. On average, we eat about twice as much protein as we need.

Vitamin pills are not likely to help either. A varied diet with plenty of fresh fruit, vegetables and cereals along with some fish, eggs, meat and dairy products will contain more than enough vitamins. Unless you have some special medical reason, it is a waste of time and money to take vitamin pills.

As for minerals, there is no shortage in the average diet and it is useless to have more than you need.

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Section IV

Just about everything you eat contains energy – measured as calories; the higher the number of calories, the more energy. But don't make the mistake of thinking that eating extra energy-rich foods will make you more energetic. The amount of energy in your daily diet should exactly balance the energy your body-machine burns up. If you eat more than you use, the extra energy is stored as body fat. And this is the big problem.

Section V

Over hundreds of thousands of years, man's food came mainly from plants.

He ate cereals (like wheat), pulses (like beans and peas), vegetables, fruit and nuts. So our ancestors were used to eating the sort of food that contains a lot of fibre.

In comparison with our ancestors, the sort of food we eat today contains very little fibre. Our main foods are meat, eggs and dairy products, which contain no fibre at all.

Lack of fibre seems to be connected with various disorders of the digestive system. Some experts also believe that lack of fibre may even lead to heart disease.

If you are worried about your weight, eating more fibre may actually help you to slim! Food with plenty of fibre like potatoes or bread can be satisfying without giving you too many calories.

The reading passage *Our Diet Matters* has 5 sections numbered I-V. Choose the most suitable heading for each section from the list of headings below. Write the appropriate letters (A-G). There are more headings than you can use.

A. Extra energy makes us fat.
B. Eating more fibre is important.
C. It is better to change the bad eating habits.
D. A bad diet is harmful.
E. People differ from each other.
F. Enough proteins, vitamins and minerals are provided in a good diet.
G. We do not need vitamin pills.

9. Section I
10. Section II
11. Section III
12. Section IV
13. Section V

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