

# PHYSICAL HEALTH

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# INTRODUCTION

*Our physical health is closely tied to all areas of our life.* From our work life to our love life, our physical health plays an important part, and it can even impact our role as parents or caregivers.

Most of our discussions here and on social media tend to revolve around mental health. However, **our physical health has a BIG impact on our mental too.** That's why I'm taking a moment to discuss ways that we can achieve better physical health. It's a great way to start the New Year, looking at one of the basic building blocks of our health.

Before we get started, a quick disclaimer: *individual health needs vary. These tips are provided as general guidance, and you should always check with your health practitioner before beginning any new diet or exercise regimen.*

Now that's out of the way, let's look at what you can do to stay fit. Since the requirements can and do vary with different age groups and conditions, these health tips are intended to meet the average adult's needs.

I've grouped them simply by: **Food, Supplements, Exercise, and Relaxation Techniques.** I hope your appetite is ready, we're starting with food first.





# FOOD:

***YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT,  
AND YOU AREN'T WHAT YOU DON'T.***

Primary amongst physical health concerns is what type of food you are eating. Food is essential. We all need to eat, and we all need the nourishment it provides to sustain us.

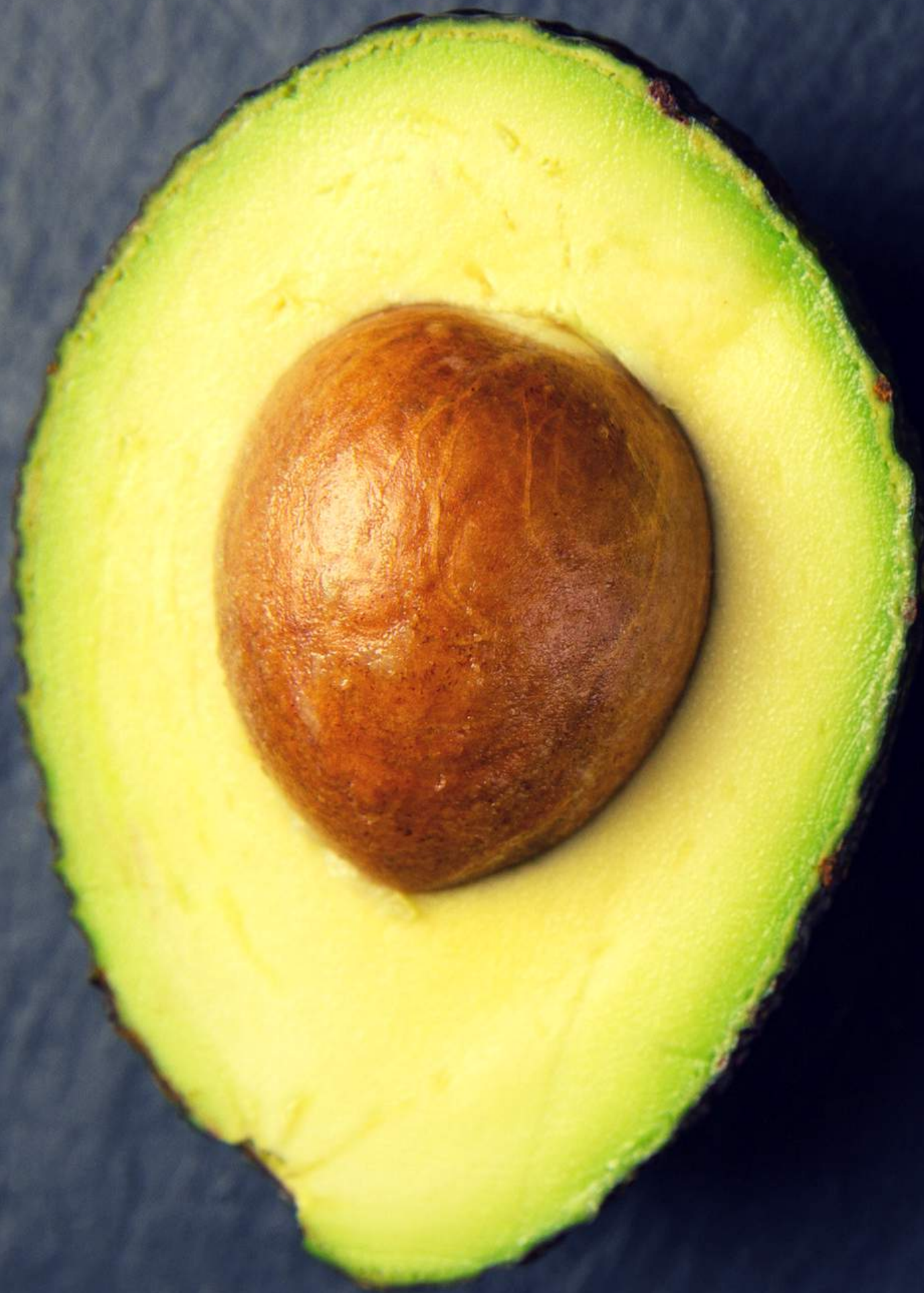
As with everything in life, eating the right food is about maintaining a healthy balance.

At the most basic level we need carbohydrates, fats (yes we do need it, even though many are concerned with cholesterol etc), proteins, vitamins and other trace elements (the latter mainly obtained from the various coloured elements of vegetables, etc.).

Let's take a closer look at each of these building blocks of our diet and how they impact our health:



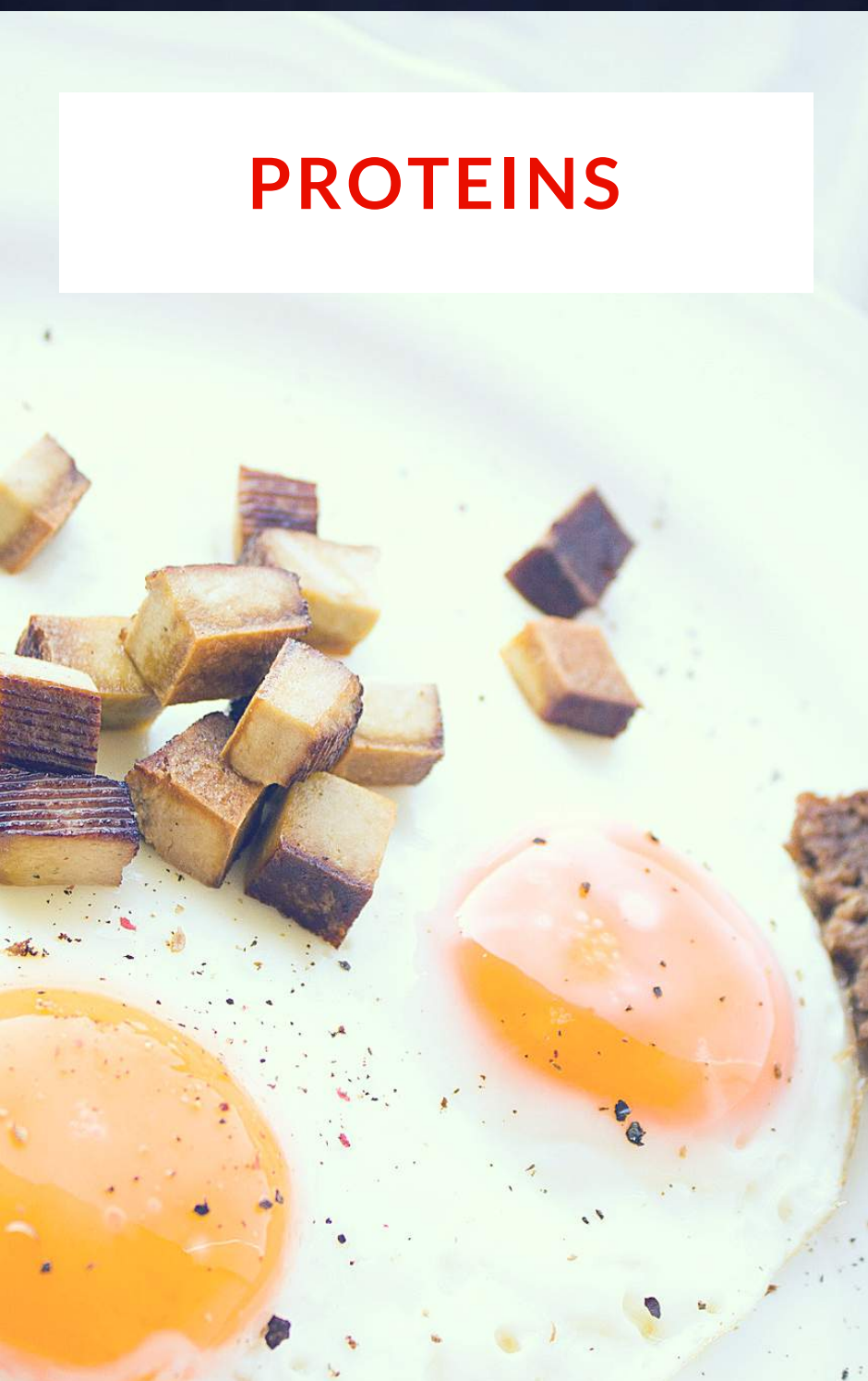
**FATS**



**VITAMINS AND  
OTHER TRACE  
ELEMENTS**



**PROTEINS**



**CARBOHYDRATES**





## FATS

*Fat is a subject that is surrounded with many controversies. For those of you who may be concerned about cholesterol, it helps to remember that 70% of cholesterol is produced in your body and only the balance is absorbed from the food you eat.*

*Also, there are the so called 'good fats' and 'bad fats'. In order to keep it simple, I think moderation here is the key, especially if your work is sedentary. Many people now spend their work day seated and, quite often working on a computer, and therefore burn less calories. Fat is a good source of energy (calories). Our body does not waste and hence unused calories are stored in the body as fat. If you limit your fat intake then you are less likely to have extra energy.*

*Another rule of thumb is to limit fried foods. (I did not say eliminate, especially for personal favorites and traditional family foods). Again, the key here is limit or judicious use.*

*The best source of vitamins is to eat healthy food. Fresh fruits, in season are a good overall source of vitamins and some trace elements. Vegetables, leafy or otherwise, in different colours contain trace elements that can be easily absorbed by the body – and they make your plate more attractive.*

## VITAMINS AND OTHER TRACE ELEMENTS

## PROTEINS

*These are mainly derived from animal sources. Vegetarians don't despair, there are many sources of proteins. Animal proteins are considered 'high quality' and to match your own nutritional requirements you may need to get advice from a reputable source such as a dietitian.*

## CARBOHYDRATES

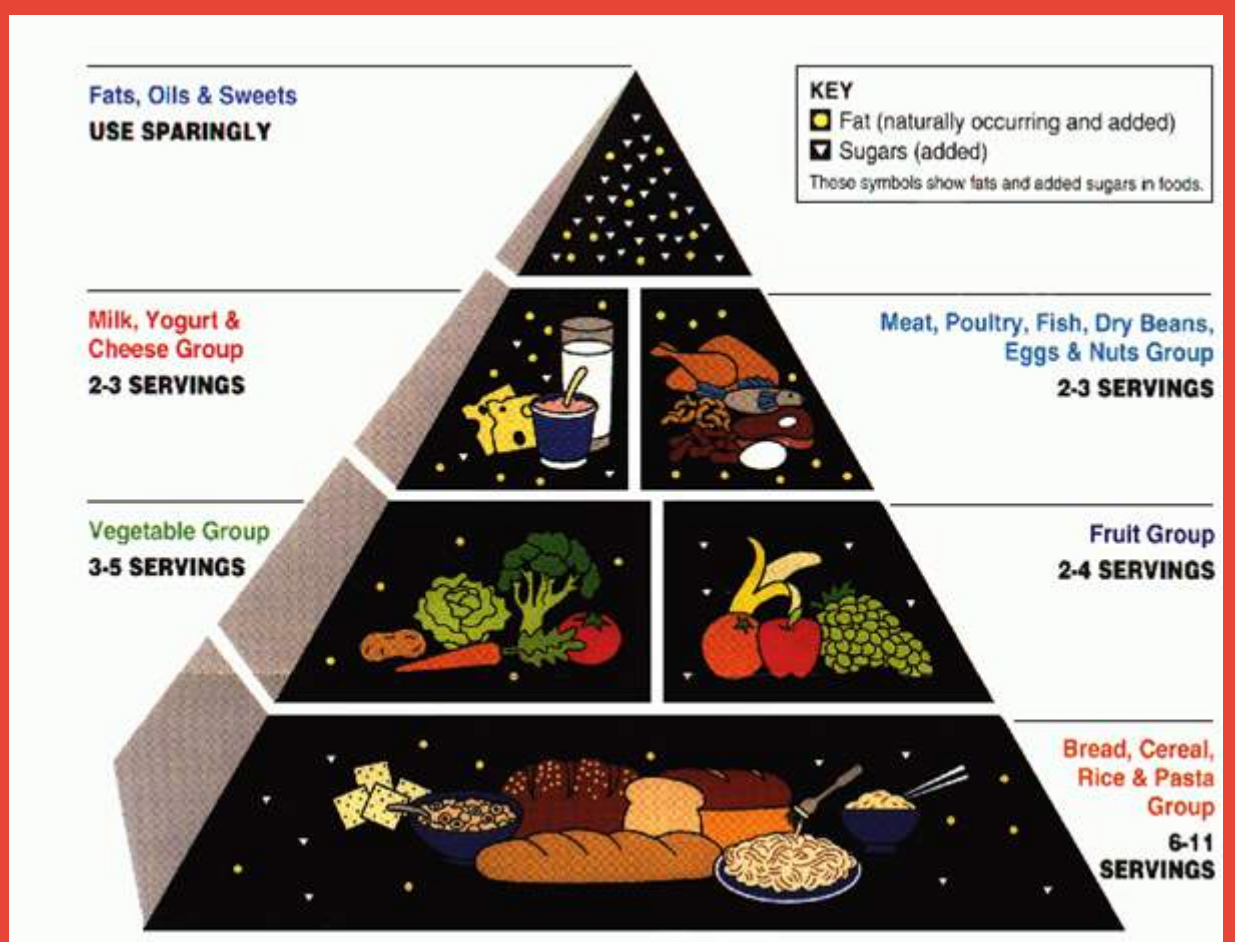
*It's best to consume carbohydrates or carbs with a low Glycemic Index (GI). What this means in general terms is that they are digested slowly and hence the glucose entry to the blood stream is slower. Eating carbs low on the GI does not put as much strain on the insulin production.*

*Some examples of carbs that are low on the GI are: multigrain bread, brown rice, and oatmeal.*



# THE FOOD PYRAMID

The Food Pyramid offers a good general guideline for healthy eating of each of the basic food groups:



# LOCAL AND ORGANIC FOOD

Locally produced foods are more in keeping with the needs of the body. I admit that in this day and age, growing your veggies in the backyard and raising your own farm animals is not likely to happen. However, you might try growing a small vegetable garden or a few potted plants.

Whether or not you are able to grow your own food, you should purchase local produce that is in season when you can.

Although some organic food may be priced more expensive than non-organic alternatives, the difference can often be slight and it's worth it for your health and your taste buds. When you can't buy organic, look for all-natural foods and avoid processed foods with long ingredient lists.

# SUPPLEMENTS



Yes, stores are replete with various potions with diverse claims. Do we need them?

My view is that if one partakes of a balanced diet and is in otherwise good health, supplements are probably not necessary.

Certainly, supplementation may be required but be discerning about their use. Normally, our body will excrete many of these elements, and accumulation can cause harm to your health. Additionally, specific medical conditions – especially kidney and other digestive disorders – may require you to avoid supplements, or specific types of supplements.





# EXERCISE

I like to think of exercise as a lubricant for your body functions. While there are many different fitness gurus and exercise routines, the key features of a good exercise routine are fun, enjoyment, regularity and consistency.

I do not advocate spending money on equipment but if this is your preferred mode, if it encourages a regular habit and it works for you – then go for it! Otherwise, even simple activity such as walking briskly or swimming will be of benefit. There are many good exercises that can be performed with relatively little or no equipment.

For those just getting started, and others who may be conscious of their bodies, you can exercise at home! Above all, be safe when you exercise

## RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

**UnstressYourself.com** has a great set of relaxation techniques for stress relief. Relaxation and de-stressing are the 'yin' to the 'yang' of fast-paced life and also are a good complement to exercise.

While meditating on a beach at sunrise like the photo above is often the image that comes to mind, many relaxation techniques can be practised at anytime and anywhere.

It's best to give yourself 5 minutes at the beginning and end of each day for deep breathing and letting go. At work you may be able to have what I call a 'mini-break'. During your meal time: eat your food in a quiet place, and sit for a few minutes before rushing to the next errand.





# IN CONCLUSION...

*Life is a journey and what we make of it is, I would say, in our control if not all of the time at least most of the time.*

*Common sense has to prevail and life is to be lived to its fullest. **Taking care of your body is your responsibility, after all it's the only one you've got.***

*I have offered food for thought and it's now over to you dear reader, to decide what suits you and how to individualise and operationalise your actions.*

*To your health! - Mahendra*