

The composition of the food groups

NUTRIENT CONTENT

Foodstuffs are grouped according to their nutrient content. They often comprise several nutrients, but foodstuffs in the same group provide the same principal nutrient or nutrients.

WATER



It comes as no surprise that **water** is the main nutrient in drinks. It is a key element in all the body's vital processes. Some kinds of water are rich in **minerals**, such as calcium and magnesium. Others contain less minerals.

FRUIT AND VEGETABLES



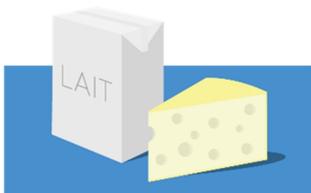
Vegetables are rich in **vitamins**, particularly vitamin C, beta-carotene and some B vitamins. They also contain **fibre** and numerous **minerals** such as potassium. Fruit has a similar composition to vegetables. In general, fruit has a higher **carbohydrate** content.

MEAT, FISH, EGGS, TOFU



Meat is the group principally associated with a relatively high **protein** content. The food in this group also contains **minerals** and **vitamins**. Meat contains iron, fish contains iodine and egg yolks are rich in vitamin A. We also need to remember the **fats** provided by some kinds of meat or oily fish.

DAIRY PRODUCTS



Dairy products primarily provide **minerals**. Milk is very rich in calcium. It also provides phosphorous which makes it easier for the body to digest calcium. The food in this group also contains **proteins** and greater or lesser amounts of **lipids**, depending on the product. The food in this group also provides **vitamins**. Almost all B vitamins are present in milk.

Vitamin A is found in full-fat milk but not in skimmed milk. Finally, some dairy products are not classed under this group as they do not have the same nutritional properties. Butter and cream are included under fats.

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CEREALS, POTATOES, PULSES



The cereals group is primarily a source of starch, which is a **complex carbohydrate**. We should also be aware of the vegetable **protein**, **B vitamin**, **mineral** and **fibre** content. Dietary fibre, minerals and vitamins are present in larger quantities in unrefined products such as wholegrain cereals, pulses and potatoes.

SUGARY PRODUCTS



Food in the sweets or sugary products group basically contains **simple carbohydrates**, such as sucrose, glucose and fructose. The body easily absorbs sugar so it is a source of energy we can use quickly during intense physical effort. Some foodstuffs in this group also contain **lipids**. This is true for chocolate or toffees. The food in this group provides energy but no, or very few vitamins or minerals.

FATS



The fats food group is characterised by food with a high **fat** content. Cream contains approximately 30 to 35% fat; butter and margarine over 80% and oil is 100% fat! However, fats also provide **vitamins**; butter and cream provide vitamin A and oils provide vitamin E.

DIGESTIX

DIGESTIX illustrates the nutrient content of food. Food is first broken up into fragments which are then transformed into nutrients. It quickly becomes clear that fruit and vegetables are rich in vitamins, and that meat contains proteins.
