Theory 8 - Factors affecting food choice
Learning objectives

• To understand the variety of factors that influence food choice.
• To know the sources and types of information available to help people make informed food choices.
Balanced diet

Eating the right balance of a wide range of foods provides most people with the energy and nutrients that they need to stay healthy.

A balanced diet, together with regular physical activity, can help people to maintain a healthy weight and may reduce their chance of developing diet related illness, such as obesity.
The guide for a balanced diet

All around the world people choose to eat different foods for many different reasons.

The eatwell plate provides guidance in the UK on how everyone can achieve a healthy varied diet.
The environment in which we have evolved, over 40,000 years, has shaped our nutritional needs. Our ancestors had to find out what they could and could not eat by trial and error. Many of them sacrificed themselves in finding out what was safe!

Up until 10,000 years ago we were a civilisation of hunter gatherers, we moved around in the search of food.
Time line for factors affecting thoughts on a HD

10,000 years ago
Hunter gatherer society began to change - Cereal farming began, cattle were domesticated and people became settled. Diet changed; as well as cereal and meat we began to consume eggs, dairy products, alcoholic beverages & salt

1906 – Education Act
http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/intermediate2/history/cradle_to_the_grave/liberal_reforms/revision/3/

National School Meals Service
was started. This service increased public awareness of children to eat foods which provided them with energy & protein they needed for growth

1899 - 1902
Boer War
The Boer War broke out between the powerful British Empire and the Boer Republics of South Africa. It took 450,000 British Troops to eventually defeat 35,000 South African boer farmers. Serious concerns for our soldiers heath were put to question and sparked National Concern

1930
School milk was introduced and doses of cod liver oil were given to prevent rickets

1939 - 1945
WW2
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/topics/rationing_in_ww2

The Second World War meant that there was strict food rationing to avoid widespread malnutrition, emphasis was placed on growing you own, and the consumption of milk, butter, meat & bread. The diet was filling, it avoided deficiencies and was available to everyone

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By the 50's people were released from rationing, and began to demand luxury food items which they had not been able to obtain through the war years, for example large quantities of meat, dairy, sugar and other sweet foods.

Cheap food began being produced in larger quantities, due to agricultural and technological advancements.

Intensive Farming began

As the UK became more affluent, the nation's diet changed to be one high in animal fats, salt, sugar and low in starchy, fibrous foods. People shifted their concept of food as a matter for survival and health to one of pleasure and indication of social status.

Changes in the way we shop and the increase in labour saving devices meant a shift towards processed, preserved and packaged foods.
Factors influencing food choice

Food choices for a balanced diet depend on many factors, such as:
- individual energy and nutrient needs;
- health concerns;
- cultural or religious practices;
- cost;
- food availability;
- food preferences;
- social considerations;
- environmental considerations;
- advertising and other point of sale information.

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Individual energy and nutrient needs

The amount of energy, carbohydrate, fat, protein, vitamins and minerals needed differs between different age groups and between males and females.

For example, women of child-bearing age should consume extra amounts of folate and foods with added folic acid during early pregnancy to decrease the risk of fetal neural tube defects, e.g. spina bifida.

Energy needs also depend on activity levels. Athletes will have much higher energy requirements due to their high level of physical activity.
Health concerns

Diets which exclude many foods due to a person’s health concerns or for medical reasons need to be planned carefully.

For example, people who are lactose intolerant cannot eat some dairy products and so must make sure that they eat other foods which are good sources of calcium, e.g. soft edible bones in fish such as tinned salmon or sardines.

However, they can consume hard cheese, as it is low in lactose, and also yogurt in moderate amounts, because the bacteria in yogurt helps digest the lactose.
Cultural or religious practices

Ethical and religious practices, such as avoiding meat, may limit the range of foods people eat.

For example, a strict Vegan will not consume any meat products. They should choose non-meat food sources which are high in protein, iron and vitamin B₁₂.
Cost

Cost of food is a particularly important factor for people with low incomes.

Food prepared food at home is often cheaper than eating out or buying take-aways.
Food availability

Most foods are grown in a particular season of the year, e.g. strawberries are harvested in summer. These are called ‘seasonal foods’.

Buying foods when they are in season will often ensure the food price is lower.

Technology and the importation of food, however, has allowed food to be available all year round.

Frozen foods such as vegetables are a great alternative to fresh, if they are unavailable.
Food preferences

Not everyone likes the same food, but some foods are particularly popular or unpopular.

The taste, texture or appearance of foods can affect people in different ways.

People should choose a balanced diet with a wide range of foods they enjoy by choosing from the 4 main food groups of the eatwell plate.
Social concerns

Human welfare and fair trading, where growers or producers in developing countries are paid a good minimum price to cover their costs, can be a high concern for some people.

Animal welfare can also be a concern for some people. This can affect the choice between caged or free-range hens, or ‘dolphin friendly’ tuna.
Environmental concerns

Scientific intervention in the food chain also causes concerns for some people. Genetically modified (GM) ingredients changing a plant, animal or micro-organism's genes or inserting one from another organism. These foods are labeled so people may decide to choose non-genetically modified food products.

People may also choose foods labelled as organic. The word 'organic' has come to have the meaning of foods grown without the use of inorganic fertilisers, or pesticides. Food sold as 'organic' must come from growers, processors and importers who are registered and approved by organic certification bodies, which are shown on the food label.
Food advertising

Advertisements encouraging people to choose certain foods often appear on the television, internet, radio, posters, magazines and newspapers.

Point of purchase information and product placement are strategies often used to provide information to consumers. This can assist people in making healthier choices.
Sources of information

There are many sources of information to assist people making food choices.

In the UK, the Department of Health and the Food Standards Agency help to increase understanding about what makes a healthy and varied diet.

The use of front of pack sign post labeling is another good source of information. This provides information in the high, medium or low amounts of fat, saturated fat, sugars and salt. The label also tells you how much of each nutrient is in a portion, to make healthier food choices easier.
Other sources of information

Supermarkets and food manufacturers, charities and other groups also produce information on what we should be eating.

The most common source of information for many people, however, is the media, i.e. internet, newspapers, radio, magazines and television programmes.

It is important that advice is clear and consistent so that people are not confused about what good nutrition means.
Types of information

Nutrition panel and ingredients lists can provide information on food. Information about the nutrient content of food from a food label can be helpful when planning a balanced diet.

Recipe and cookery ideas, and information about how to use less familiar ingredients, can make it easier to put healthy dietary advice into practice.
Review of the learning objectives

• To understand the importance of eating a balanced diet for good health.
• To understand the variety of factors that influence food choices.
• To know the sources and types of information available to help people make informed food choices.
For more information visit

www.nutrition.org.uk

www.foodafactoflife.org.uk