

National Nutrition Week (NNW) is commemorated every year from 9–15 October

Each year, the National Department of Health's Nutrition Directorate coordinates a campaign with a theme that is developed in consensus with a number of other government departments, professional associations, health NGOs and academic partners. NNW 2021 aims to raise awareness of the nutritional and health benefits of consuming more vegetables and fruit as part of a diversified, balanced and healthy diet and lifestyle.

This is aligned with the United Nations declaration of 2021 as the "International Year of Fruits and Vegetables". The theme for the year is highly relevant in the context of declining vegetable and fruit consumption worldwide.¹

In South Africa, consumption of fresh vegetables has declined whilst consumption of ultra-processed foods increased dramatically between 1994 and 2012.²

The South Africa Demographic and Health Survey (SADHS) of 2016 also reported that only 59% of adults consumed vegetables during the previous day, while 49% reported they had consumed fruit.³

NNW 2021 has five main interrelated focus areas for increasing vegetable and fruit in the diet:

1. Increase knowledge of Benefits,
2. Increase knowledge of Portion sizes,
3. Increase knowledge of Complementary feeding,
4. Improve attitudes about Snacking,
5. Increase confidence on "Growing your own".

References

1. FAO. Fruit and vegetables – your dietary essentials. The International Year of Fruits and Vegetables, 2021, background paper. 2020. Rome: FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb2395en>.
2. Ronquest-Ross L, Vink N, Sigge GO. Food consumption changes in South Africa since 1994. *S. Afr. J. Sci.* 2015;111(9–10):1–12. <https://doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2015/20140354>.
3. National Department of Health. Demographic and Health Survey 2016: Report. National Department of Health (NDoH), Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC), and ICF. 2019. Pretoria: National Department of Health. <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR337/FR337.pdf>.