



**World Health
Organization**

Bhutan

SEAR Primary Healthcare Forum

Dr Bhupinder Kaur Aulakh
WHO Representative Bhutan

Background

1. NCDs cause 70% of total deaths in Bhutan, premature deaths
2. NCD risk factors on rise
 - Raised BP increased from 28% in 2019 to 30% in 2023
 - Raised blood glucose tripled from 2% in 2019 to 6% in 2023
 - Obesity has rose from 11% in 2019 to 13% in 2023
 - 75.6% consume less than 5 servings of fruits and vegetables/day
 - Mean salt intake is 8.5 grams per day
 - Physical inactivity has increased from 6% in 2019 to 18% in 2023
3. Diabetes prevalence in Bhutan rose from 1.9% (2019) to 5.8% (2023).
 - 59% of cases remain undiagnosed; only 26% of treated patients are controlled.

(Source: (National Health Survey 2023)



**World Health
Organization**

Bhutan

Food habits

1. Traditionally rich in whole grains/
fiber-rich foods replaced with modern
processed food
2. Anemia prevalence is 44.7% among
children
3. Substituting low-GI millets can lower
average blood glucose and HbA1c.



World Health
Organization

Bhutan

Food Based Interventions

- At National Referral Hospital, 100 inpatients
- 80% of white rice for diabetes and complicated NCDs patients and 10% of white rice in general patients was replaced with quinoa
- Study period- August 2024- January 2025 (6 months)
- **Results:**
 1. 45% patients reported feeling lighter and healthier
 2. 38% reported stable glucose level
 3. 32% reported easier on stomach and keeping full for longer
 4. Many showed interest in continuing it at home
- If 10% rice is replaced with quinoa in inpatient meal, then it will reduce rice consumption by 4000 kgs per annum, reduce rice import by Nu 184 million per annum and support local farmers.

(Source : Nutrition and diet services, JDWNRH, Thimphu, Jan 2025)



World Health
Organization

Bhutan

Food as Medicine Seminar



Talk on "Food as Medicine"



**World Health
Organization**

Bhutan

WHO Bhutan Employee wellness program



Well-being initiative: healthy cooking and Zumba sessions



Global Conscious Food Systems Summit



Focusing on sustainable food production and conscious mindful food consumption



31 August till 4 September 2026



WHO is a partner Organization



World Health
Organization

Bhutan

Food based interventions in India

In Uttarakhand State of India, 2500 severely malnourished children were identified

Ready to Use Therapeutic Food made from local food items like millet, gram flour, etc

Nutritional value tested by GB Pant Agriculture University

Distributed free of cost to the mothers of identified children

Within 6 months, children gained weight ranging from 500 grams to 1500 grams, thus coming out of malnourishment



World Health
Organization

Bhutan

Journey from Unhealthy to Healthy Platter



Unhealthy Plate



WHO recommends more than 400 grams of fruits and vegetables per day, which would be about 3 or 4 fruits and vegetables per day.



Avoid sweetened beverage and alcohol

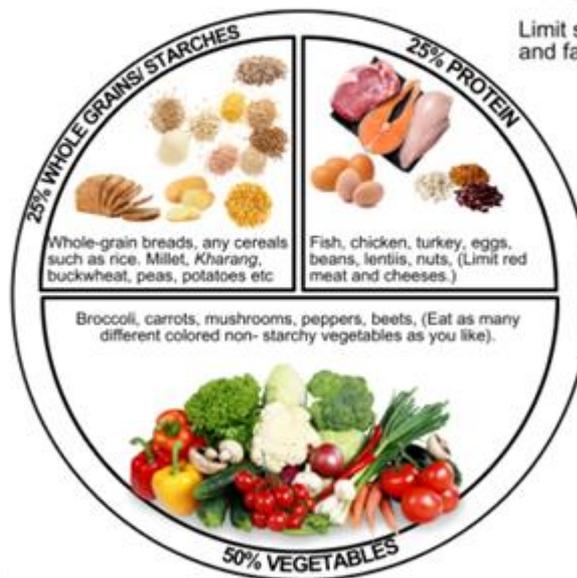
Reduce Tea & Coffee



Limit sugar, salt, and fat in all meals.



Reduce saturated & trans-fat



World Health Organization

Bhutan