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YOU would very probably have come across the Malaysian Food Pyramid before.

It is a pyramid-shaped visual guide that assists consumers in making food choices with the aim of promoting healthy nutrition.

Healthy nutrition is the key to strengthening your immunity to combat Covid-19, as well as being indispensable for the prevention of diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

The Health Ministry recently announced a new version of the Malaysian Food Pyramid with some significant changes.

This article provides an explanation of the updated food pyramid and how it can be an easy guide to making healthier daily food choices.

Part of the MDG

Before going into detail about the new Malaysian Food Pyramid, let us take a quick look at the Malaysian Dietary Guidelines (MDG) in order to have a proper perspective of the food pyramid within the MDG.

The MDG is a set of science-based advisory statements that provide practical dietary guidance to the population, so that we can select diets that promote health and prevent nutrition-related deficiencies and excesses.

It comprises specific food-based messages regarding healthy eating, such as eating a variety of food, specific food groups, maintaining healthy body weight, reading food labels and food safety.

Included in the MDG is the Malaysian Food Pyramid.

This visual guide is intended to assist consumers in making food choices and should be used together with the MDG's key messages.

The first formal MDG was published in 1999 and subsequently updated in 2010.

Food pyramid update

The Malaysian Food Pyramid has been revised to better guide Malaysians in making healthy food choices.

After a decade, a further revision of the guidelines has been carried out to take into account the changes in dietary patterns and lifestyles of Malaysians.

While the complete MDG 2020 has yet to be officially published, the Health Ministry has went ahead and released the revamped Malaysian Food Pyramid.

Before we take a closer look at what's new and the significance of the update, it may be useful to learn more about the food pyramid itself and how you can use it effectively.

What is a food pyramid?

The Malaysian Food Pyramid is a pictorial representation that graphically translates the food-based dietary guidelines into a single illustration.

It addresses the recommended diet pattern that embodies the overall message included in the dietary guidelines.

Also known as the food guide pyramid, its main purpose is to serve as a tool to assist individuals in selecting the appropriate food intake, i.e. the types and amounts of food that should be eaten in combination to provide a healthy diet that meets daily nutrient needs.

The Malaysian Food Pyramid consists of four levels.

Three of the levels are occupied by five food groups, with the foods having similar nutritional values being grouped together.

The group of foods at the tip of the pyramid – the fourth level – is not truly a “group” as they differ in their nutritional content, but more on that later.

The levels of the pyramid are arranged in such a way as to give a visual guide on the amounts of each food group to be consumed in accordance with the shape of the pyramid.

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