

A Colourful Diet After 30

The macros and micros your body needs, the best foods for each, and how to eat them

After 30, what you eat matters more for muscle, bones, energy, skin and long-term health. The simplest approach is a **colourful, varied plate** built around protein, whole carbs, healthy fats and plenty of plants. Below is each nutrient, **why it matters**, **foods that supply it** (at least four each) and **how to fit it into your day**, with Indian options throughout.

1. What Changes After 30

Know what your body needs now

Why this matters: Your body quietly changes after 30. Understanding what shifts helps you choose foods that protect muscle, bone, energy and long-term health.

CHANGE	WHAT'S HAPPENING	WHAT TO DO
Muscle declines	From about 30, people slowly lose muscle unless they train and eat enough protein. Muscle drives strength, metabolism and blood sugar control.	Protein at every meal plus strength training.
Bone density peaks	Bone mass reaches its peak around the late 20s to early 30s, then slowly declines. What you build now protects you later.	Calcium, vitamin D, magnesium, vitamin K and weight-bearing exercise.
Metabolism and fat storage shift	Lower muscle and less movement mean fewer calories burned, and fat gains around the waist become easier.	Whole foods, fibre, portion awareness and an active routine.
Recovery and hormones change	Stress, poor sleep and hormone shifts affect energy, mood, skin and recovery more than in your 20s.	Healthy fats, B vitamins, magnesium, antioxidants and good sleep.
Long-term risks start to build	Blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar quietly drift up for many people.	Fibre, potassium, omega-3 fats, less sugar, salt and ultra-processed food.

2. Eat the Rainbow

Each colour protects differently

Why this matters: Different colours come from different plant compounds, each protecting the body in its own way. Eating several colours a day covers a wide range of vitamins and antioxidants without counting anything.

COLOUR	FOODS	WHY IT HELPS	HOW TO INCLUDE IT
Red	Tomato, watermelon, pomegranate, beetroot, red capsicum	Lycopene and anthocyanins support heart health and skin. Beetroot adds nitrates for blood flow.	Add tomato to dal and chutneys, a pomegranate or watermelon bowl, beetroot poriyal.
Orange / Yellow	Carrot, pumpkin, papaya, mango, orange, turmeric	Carotenoids (turned into vitamin A) protect eyes, skin and immunity. Vitamin C supports collagen.	Carrot sambar or salad, papaya at breakfast, turmeric in curries.
Green	Spinach, methi, broccoli, drumstick leaves, coriander	Folate, vitamin K, magnesium and lutein for bones, blood and eyes.	One leafy green dish a day: keerai poriyal, methi paratha, palak dal.
Blue / Purple	Jamun, brinjal, purple cabbage, black grapes, blueberries	Anthocyanins are antioxidants linked with brain and heart health.	Brinjal curry, a handful of grapes or jamun in season.
White / Tan	Garlic, onion, cauliflower, mushroom, ginger, coconut	Sulphur compounds and quercetin support heart health and immunity.	Garlic and onion in tadkas, cauliflower sabzi, ginger tea.

3. Macronutrients

Protein, carbs, fats, fibre and water

Why this matters: Macronutrients give you energy and building blocks. Getting the right quality and balance matters more than extreme cutting of any one of them.

NUTRIENT	WHY IT MATTERS AND HOW IT HELPS	BEST FOODS	HOW TO INCLUDE IT
Protein	Protects muscle, bones, skin and hormones, and keeps you full. Needs rise after 30 as muscle declines.	Eggs, curd or Greek yoghurt, paneer, dal and chana, fish or chicken, tofu or soy chunks	Aim for 20 to 30 g per meal. Eggs or curd at breakfast, dal or fish at lunch, paneer or tofu at dinner.
Complex carbs	Steady energy for the brain and workouts, plus fibre for the gut. Quality matters more than cutting carbs.	Oats, ragi, jowar, bajra, brown or parboiled rice, whole wheat roti, sweet potato	Swap refined rice and maida for millets and whole grains. Pair with protein and vegetables.
Healthy fats	Support hormones, brain, skin and absorption of vitamins A, D, E and K. Keep portions moderate.	Almonds, walnuts, peanuts, seeds, avocado, groundnut or olive oil, a little ghee	A handful of nuts a day, and cook with 1 to 2 teaspoons oil per meal.
Omega-3 fats	Reduce inflammation and support heart and brain. Most diets lack them.	Sardines (mathi), mackerel (bangude), salmon, flaxseeds, chia, walnuts	Fish twice a week, or a spoon of ground flax or chia in curd or smoothies.
Fibre	Feeds gut bacteria, lowers cholesterol, steadies blood sugar and helps weight control. Aim for 25 to 30 g a day.	Dal and legumes, vegetables, oats, guava, apple with skin, chia	Add vegetables to every meal and fruit as a snack. Raise fibre gradually and drink water.
Water	Needed for digestion, energy, skin and focus. Thirst is often mistaken for hunger or tiredness.	Water, buttermilk, coconut water, cucumber, watermelon, lemon water	Keep a bottle in sight and sip through the day. Needs vary with heat and activity.

4. Vitamins

Small amounts, big roles

Why this matters: Vitamins work in small amounts but run key processes: energy, immunity, skin, bones and nerves. Most can be met from a varied, colourful diet.

NUTRIENT	WHY IT MATTERS AND HOW IT HELPS	BEST FOODS	HOW TO INCLUDE IT
Vitamin D	Helps absorb calcium and supports bones, muscles, immunity and mood. Low levels are common in India.	Egg yolks, fatty fish, fortified milk, UV-exposed mushrooms (plus sensible sunlight)	Food alone rarely covers it. Get a blood test and ask a doctor about a supplement.
Vitamin B12	Needed for nerves, red blood cells and energy. Vegetarians and people with gut issues are at higher risk.	Eggs, milk, curd, paneer, fish, chicken, fortified foods	Include dairy or eggs daily. Vegetarians should get tested and may need a supplement.
Folate (B9)	Helps make red blood cells and DNA and supports brain and heart health.	Dal, chana, rajma, spinach, beetroot, sprouts, oranges	Dal daily, a leafy green dish, and sprouts as a snack.
Vitamin C	Builds collagen for skin and joints, supports immunity and boosts iron absorption.	Amla, guava, oranges, lemon, capsicum, kiwi, tomato	A fruit or amla daily, lemon on dal and greens.
Vitamin A	Supports eyesight, skin and immune function.	Carrot, sweet potato, pumpkin, papaya, mango, spinach, eggs	Eat orange and green vegetables daily with a little fat for absorption.

NUTRIENT	WHY IT MATTERS AND HOW IT HELPS	BEST FOODS	HOW TO INCLUDE IT
Vitamin E and K	E protects cells from damage. K supports blood clotting and bone health.	E: almonds, sunflower seeds, groundnuts. K: palak, methi, broccoli, cabbage	Nuts and seeds as snacks, leafy greens cooked in a little oil.

5. Minerals

Bones, blood, nerves and balance

Why this matters: Minerals build bone, carry oxygen, balance fluids and run the nerves and muscles. Many people fall short on calcium, iron and magnesium.

NUTRIENT	WHY IT MATTERS AND HOW IT HELPS	BEST FOODS	HOW TO INCLUDE IT
Calcium	Builds and maintains bone and supports muscles and nerves. Bone loss slowly starts after 30.	Ragi, milk, curd, paneer, sesame, calcium-set tofu, almonds	Ragi dosa or mudde, curd with meals, a spoon of sesame (til) chutney.
Magnesium	Supports muscles, sleep, mood, blood pressure and energy production.	Pumpkin seeds, almonds, spinach, banana, oats, dark chocolate	A handful of seeds or nuts and a green leafy dish daily.
Iron	Carries oxygen in the blood. Low iron causes fatigue, hair fall and poor focus, especially in women.	Spinach, beetroot, dates, chana, lentils, ragi, eggs, red meat or liver	Pair with vitamin C (lemon, amla) and avoid tea or coffee with meals.
Zinc	Supports immunity, skin, wound healing and hormones.	Pumpkin seeds, chickpeas, cashews, eggs, curd, chicken or fish	Add seeds to salads and curd, and include pulses daily.
Potassium	Balances sodium to help control blood pressure and supports muscles.	Banana, coconut water, potato with skin, beans, tomato, spinach	A banana or coconut water daily, plus vegetables at each meal.
Iodine	Needed by the thyroid for metabolism and energy.	Iodised salt, milk, curd, fish, eggs	Use iodised salt in moderation. Consult a doctor for thyroid concerns.

6. Build Your Plate

A simple daily pattern

Why this matters: You don't need to count every nutrient. A simple plate pattern repeated most days covers nearly everything.

PART OF THE PLATE	WHAT GOES THERE	WHAT IT GIVES YOU
Half the plate: vegetables and fruit	Aim for 3 to 5 colours across the day. Fresh, seasonal and local is fine.	Fibre, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants.
A quarter: protein	Dal, eggs, paneer, fish, chicken, tofu or sprouts. Rotate sources.	Muscle, bones, fullness.
A quarter: complex carbs	Millets, whole wheat, brown rice, oats, sweet potato. Adjust to activity.	Steady energy and fibre.
A thumb of healthy fat	Nuts, seeds, a little ghee or oil, fatty fish.	Hormones, absorption, heart health.
Daily extras	Water through the day, curd or buttermilk, a handful of nuts, limit sugar, salt and packaged foods.	Hydration, gut health and protection.

Note: This is general nutrition information, not medical advice. Needs vary with age, sex, activity, pregnancy and health conditions. Vitamin D, B12 and iron levels are best checked with a blood test before supplementing. Consult a doctor or registered dietitian for personal advice, especially with a medical condition.