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DDI Data-Driven Innovation
Part of the Edinburgh & South East Scotland City Region Deal

"Good" foods
and "bad" foods

Photo by Nancy Hughes on Unsplash

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Myths

- Some foods are "good for you"
- Some foods are "bad for you"
- Some foods are "healthy"
- Some foods are "unhealthy"

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Assigning "good" and "bad" labels to foods can cause health and mental problems

- People consume food for reasons other than physical health, which is normal.

- People might consume foods for emotional or social reasons

- People might need to eat a certain way due to medical conditions
  - Sometimes this looks different than what is presented as a "general healthy diet"

- People might consume foods for traditional and cultural reasons

- People might consume foods for economic or financial reasons

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We need to know more about the food and the context, instead of assigning labels to foods

- How will the food contribute to the nutrient needs of the individual person?

- How will the food interact with other foods, recently or habitually consumed?

- Is the person already eating a lot of this food, or not much of it?

- Does the person have any relevant food intolerances?

- Is the person allergic to the food?

If a food is a good fit for a meal or a day, what do we really know about its healthfulness?

- What about all the measurement error in nutrient content of foods?
- What about all the invisible, non-nutrient content of the food?

Foods are healthful – they promote health

- What a "healthful diet" looks like depends on the person
- Foods chosen can be more in alignment with individual nutrient needs, or less in alignment with individual nutrient needs.
- The only **unhealthful** foods are:
  - Foods that a person is allergic to
  - Foods that a person has an intolerance to
  - Foods that are unsafe to eat, such as contaminated with pathogens
- Otherwise, all foods fit.

Labelling foods as "good" or "bad" leads to problems, which can disproportionately affect children

- Eating disorders
- Restriction
- Stress
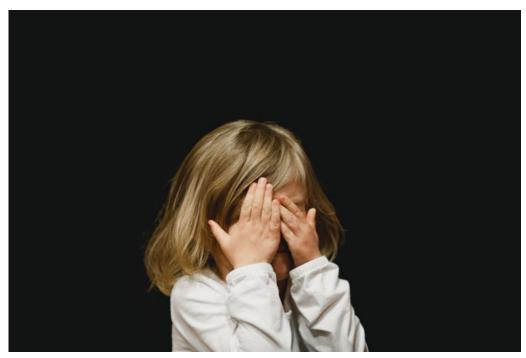- Shame
- Guilt
- Connecting eating with morality

Photo by Caleb Woods on Unsplash

Enjoy all your foods

Photo by Suzy Hazelwood via Pexels

- Human bodies thrive with a varied diet
- There is no "one way" to eat healthfully
- Eating a variety of foods helps prevent cravings
- Eating regularly throughout the day helps prevent cravings
- Enjoyment is physical and mental

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Some resources

- [A great blog post by Rachel Hartley, dietitian](#)

- [Blog post from an eating disorder treatment center](#)

- [Blog post from Equipe Nutrition](#)

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Thank you

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