

## Fact Sheet 16

## Information that may be required for culturally relevant diet and lifestyle interventions

(Source: *Easing the Transition*, Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc. (2000))

<b>Food preferences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What staple foods are used (ie. foods that form the foundation of the diet such as rice, bread, potatoes)</li> <li>• What protective foods are used (ie. foods that are rich in nutrients such as vegetables, legumes, nuts, fish, egg, meat, poultry and grains)? While these may differ from culture to culture, they are also determined by individual taste.</li> <li>• What status foods are used (ie. foods that are generally rare and expensive in a cultural group's country of origin. They are not usually a typical part of the daily diet)?</li> <li>• What foods have a low status?</li> <li>• What seasonings are used?</li> <li>• Is breast or bottle-feeding seen as better for babies?</li> </ul>
<b>Food preparation methods</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What cooking methods are used (eg. Stir frying, deep frying, casseroles, baking, steaming)?</li> <li>• How long is food cooked for? Is it lightly stir fried (as in Asian cuisine) or stewed for a long time (as in many African cuisines)?</li> </ul>
<b>Food preparation technology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What units of measure are used (eg. handfuls, ladles, cups)</li> <li>• Familiarity with refrigeration, gas and electronic cooking</li> <li>• Cooking implements</li> </ul>
<b>Food and health beliefs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What foods are considered to be essential to health?</li> <li>• What foods are thought to have medicinal properties?</li> <li>• Are there any special foods that are fed to people when they are sick?</li> <li>• Are there any cultural 'comfort' foods (ie. foods thought to nurture the soul)?</li> <li>• Are there any foods thought to be important at particular life stages such as pregnancy, infancy or old age?</li> </ul>
<b>Culturally based attitudes toward food</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceptions of weight (eg. are fat babies valued? What is the relationship thought to be between body weight, health and physical attractiveness)?</li> <li>• Is it acceptable to throw out uneaten foods?</li> <li>• Is it acceptable to precook foods or eat leftovers?</li> </ul>
<b>Traditional food celebrations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the significant celebrations and events (eg end of Ramadan, births, marriages)?</li> <li>• What foods are used for special celebrations?</li> <li>• What foods are offered to guests?</li> <li>• What foods are used to honour special achievements or people?</li> </ul>
<b>Food prohibitions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any forbidden foods and drinks?</li> <li>• Are any foods forbidden at certain times of the year?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is fasting practiced?</li> </ul>
<b>The division of labour and gender issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who usually does the shopping?</li> <li>• Who usually cooks?</li> <li>• What role does the extended family play in food preparation?</li> <li>• Do certain family members have priority for food (eg. men are served before women)?</li> </ul>
<b>Meal times</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there meals that the family come together to share?</li> <li>• What meal is considered the most important of the day and why?</li> </ul>