Italy

Did you know that...

we have the right to an adequate quantity and variety of good quality and safe foods to meet our body’s needs and we must have information on how to make the right food choices in order to be healthy and well-nourished.

Some facts about my country

There are 58 million people living in Italy. It is a developed, food-secure nation with one of the largest economies in the world.

Yet, in 2004 seven and a half million people - two and a half million families - lived in poverty.

Some people in Italy are food-insecure; in 2004 over 1.2 million Italians received food aid. The needy are elderly people, young mothers, children, refugees, immigrants, drug-addicts and people living with HIV/AIDS.

Italians are known for their healthy and nutritious Mediterranean diet based on fruits, vegetables, cereals, legumes, dairy products, fish, olive oil and some red meat.

At the same time, malnutrition is a problem in Italy where many adults and children are overweight or obese.

Italy has nutrition education campaigns for primary and secondary school children to promote informed food choices and healthy diets.

Read our story to find out...

What we need to be healthy and well-nourished. What we need to be able to make healthy food choices. Where we can get information about food, nutrition and healthy diets.
ON A SUNNY AFTERNOON FOUR SCHOOL FRIENDS ARE HANGING OUT IN A LITTLE SQUARE OF AN ITALIAN CITY.

Where is Marco? He is always late!

He gets on my nerves!

Here he is. Wow! Look at his brand new motor scooter!

You are late again, Marco! What is the matter today?

I waited two hours to get these tickets for all of us.

The big concert next week! Great! In this case you are forgiven.

But we will miss the Rome-Milan match! It is on the same day...

Oh, no! Now they will talk about football for hours.

Come on, guys. It is getting late. We have to do our homework.

No way!

Good idea! We need some energy to face this task.

What’s the rush? Let’s have a slice of pizza first. I am starving.

I am ready now! What exactly do we have to do?

Come on, Anna. You are slim enough to become a fashion model. Forget about dieting!

Luca, Marco, I suggest you go to the supermarket. We’ll go to the grocer’s and meet you at the market in an hour. Okay?

Yes, boss.

You always have your head in the clouds, Marco! We have to interview customers in the supermarket, the grocery and at the market about the way they shop and eat. Then we have to write an article for the school newspaper.
**life-styles**: different ways of living our lives
**calorie**: a unit for measuring energy that food gives us
**nutrient**: the part of a food that is stored and used by the body for energy, growth and repair, and protection from disease
Yes, at school we have been learning about hunger and **malnourished** people around the world.

Your friend Anna chooses to eat less than she needs. Many people, even in our own country, do not have that choice. What they eat depends on what is available and what they can afford, not on what they would like.

Our school has been participating in activities to support poor and hungry people in other countries.

Sure, but what about your favourite TV show?

May I come with you today?

There is no list of ingredients here, Signora Francesca.

Could you help me read this label, please? I left my glasses at home... Check if there are any peanuts in the ingredients. You see, my grandson is **allergic** to peanuts.

Have a better look. **Accurate food labelling** is important so that we know what we are buying and eating.

Found it! Here are the ingredients: flour, eggs, sugar, butter, salt... No peanuts!

Thank YOU, Signora Francesca. Can we help you to carry your shopping bags?

**Good. thank you. That is what I needed to know.**

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**hunger:** not having enough food to meet our nutritional needs

**malnourished:** people who are unhealthy as the result of eating too little, too much or not having the right variety of food

**allergic:** an unpleasant reaction a person's body has to certain things, including food

**food label:** information about the food written on its package
IN THE MEANTIME, ANNA AND LISA ARE IN THE GROCERY STORE.

Bread, milk, tomatoes, olive oil...

What is it, Lisa?

A shopping list, can’t you see? I promised my mum I would buy her some food.

Of course, I do. Why not? In fact, I love it. It is the best salad dressing I know.

Isn’t it fattening? I never eat anything with oil, because I am afraid of putting on weight. TV stars are all slim and have beautiful bodies and if I want to become...

Excuse me, I am afraid you are wrong. You should not avoid olive oil if you want to be healthy and beautiful. Actually you need to eat some of everything, many kinds of foods.

Different foods contain different nutrients and other healthful substances. No single food can supply all the nutrients in the amounts you need to grow and be healthy.

What do you mean? I need to eat fats and oils too?
Sure. They give you energy, build brain cells, carry **vitamins** through our bodies. We don’t need a lot of fat, but we do need some healthful fats, like olive oil.

Anyway, coming back to our assignment, describe a typical meal you prepare for your family, Signora…?

Giulia. Well, my family likes traditional food: pasta, meat or fish, vegetables, cheese, olive oil, salads and fruit. Now I stay home with the baby and have time to cook.

Lucky you! My parents work and come home late. When I am hungry I just eat whatever I find in the fridge.

Why not learn to cook instead? You are old enough to shop for food and prepare meals. Imagine how happy your parents would be to find a healthy home-cooked meal waiting for them after a long day’s work! Here, try this recipe, it is simple and delicious.

Do you go in for sports, girls?

I play volleyball.

And I go hiking with the scouts and guides. What about you?

What time is it?

Marco and Luca must be waiting for us. Thank you for the advice and the interview, Signora Giulia. Ciao, Bianca.
AT THE MARKET.

We learned that we need to eat the right amount of food to meet our needs.

Hey, guys. How was it? What did you find out?

We also need to eat the right mix and balance of food.

What about this stall? The colours are amazing.

Good. Now let us take some photos for the article and we are done.

A kilo of tomatoes, please.

Here you are.

Know what you eat. Make informed food choices.

Look at this bag of tomatoes. There is no label on it!

That’s because nutrition labelling is generally not mandatory, and besides, it is impossible to label fresh foods, such as fruits and vegetables. However, the ingredients of processed foods are usually listed on labels.

But if we buy food here at the market, how can we know what is in it?

Well, not everything we saw in the supermarket had a label on it either.

Food producers are responsible - morally and in many countries legally - for producing safe food.

Safe food? What do you mean?

**mandatory:** something which must be done by law
It is our right to have access to safe, good-quality foods. Then, to make healthy eating choices, we should know more about the nutrients different foods provide us and how our bodies use different foods in different ways.

A food is safe when it does not cause harm to the person eating it. Producers and sellers of food must take care to limit any harmful substances in foods and prevent food-borne diseases. And the government has to put in place laws and policies to ensure that food producers meet their responsibility.

Nutrition education is the key! You should ask your parents or teachers. Somebody from our association could come to talk with your class. You can also look for books or do some Internet research.

I say enough for today. We can start writing the article tomorrow.

Well! That was good. What time is it?

Half past four. Time to go to the swimming-pool, Luca.

All right, boss.

IN THE EVENING ANNA’S FAMILY IS HAVING DINNER.

What about your meeps?

How did the interviews go, Anna?

Really well, mum! I felt like a real journalist!

It is okay. The swimming pool is not far from here, we can walk. Bye!

nutrition: eating and using food for living, growing and being healthy
protein: a nutrient needed to build and maintain muscle, blood, skin and bones

fat: component of food that gives energy to the body

calcium: a mineral present in some foods that makes our bones and teeth strong

Just the Right Mix

Could you pass me some cheese, daddy?

Cheese? I cannot believe my ears! Did you hear what I heard, Giovanni?

I thought you didn’t eat cheese, Anna. What about the slimming diet and becoming a model?

I don’t want this soup, mummy!

Food gives you energy to do all the things you like – play, run, swim. Food also contains nutrients. Some of them are like little bricks that build up your body. Because you are growing, Giorgio, you need many bricks, I mean, many kinds of food.

I like this attitude, Anna. Here, have some olive oil for your salad.

Here it shows the amount of protein, fat, calcium, vitamins A, B and D in this cheese. My body needs all these to be healthy and beautiful. Calcium and vitamin D, for example, keep the bones strong.

Imagine that you are a car, Giorgio. And the soup is your petrol. Can the car move without petrol?

Well done, Anna. This homework did you a lot of good.

I know. As for becoming a model, maybe I would rather be a journalist!

The End
Think about our world

So, what do YOU think?

Have you thought about...

why some people have many safe good foods available to choose from, while others have little choice?

why Anna changed her mind about what foods she chooses to eat?

what a good, healthy diet is for you?

Is it fair that...

food producers should be responsible for producing food that is safe for us to eat?

the government should make sure that we get the right information on foods and healthy diets?

Everyone can do something

Lisa, Anna, Marco and Luca are interviewing people about the ways they shop for food and eat. Can you do the same?