



Using the New “MyPlate” For a Healthier You

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Let’s face it; all of us could stand to improve our diets. The government’s newest symbol, MyPlate is the perfect tool to help improve the nutrition in your diet and makeover your family’s eating habits. Simple and easy to use, MyPlate is a visual and colorful reminder of what you should eat and serve your family every day. It’s so easy to use, the kids will be reminding you if the plate you serve doesn’t measure up to the new symbol.

MyPlate is a round plate divided into four quadrants, one each for fruit, vegetables, protein and grains. Sitting alongside the plate is a circle labeled as ‘dairy’ to remind you to include eight ounces of non-fat or low-fat (1%) milk or yogurt with meals. The new symbol replaces mypyramid and is based on the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

MyPlate’s simple key messages

To help you improve your diet, MyPlate focuses on several key messages to guide your meal planning. Keep in mind, doing all these tips at once may be overwhelming so go slowly and work on one message at a time. Once you have mastered one key message and incorporated it into your lifestyle, move on to the next one, and so on.

MyPlate messages:

- ▶ Enjoy your food, but eat less, and avoid oversized portions. Restaurant sized mega portions can be confusing because they are not the amount of food we need for good health and weight control. One of the easiest ways to trim calories is by getting a grip on normal

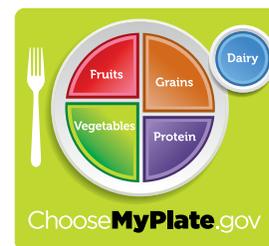
portion sizes. Check out the recommended serving sizes at www.myplate.gov and use these as guidelines to help control portions and cut calories.

- ▶ Make half of your plate fruits and vegetables. This is one of the easiest and healthiest tips to adopt. Eating too many fruits or vegetables is not why we battle the bulge. Eat more fruits and vegetables

that are chock full of nutrients and naturally low in calories. Eating more produce of any kind – fresh, frozen or canned – will improve the health

of your diet. Fresh in season is usually best but plain frozen is just as healthy and when you choose lower sodium canned foods, they can be healthy too. Adults and children do not eat enough produce, and as a result, our diets typically lack nutrients such as potassium and fiber.

- ▶ Make at least half your grains whole grains. Read labels to make sure you are making half your grains whole. Look for the word ‘whole’ before the grain on the list of ingredients. Whole grains are more nutritious; and contain more fiber and nutrients than refined grains like white bread and white rice. Oats, whole wheat, brown rice, quinoa and even popcorn are whole grains.



- ▶ Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk. All milk is high in protein and potassium, pasteurized, fortified with vitamin D and one of the best sources of dietary calcium. The only difference between most milk is the amount of saturated fat. Slash calories in your diet by simply switching to lower fat milk. Once you get accustomed to the taste, try the next lower fat milk until you can enjoy the taste of non-fat milk without any saturated fat.
- ▶ Check the sodium in prepared foods, and choose the foods with lower numbers. More than half of all adults should only get 1500 milligrams of sodium per day to reduce the risk of high blood pressure. The maximum amount of sodium recommended is 2300 milligrams according to the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Most of the sodium in our diets comes from processed foods, not the salt shaker. Eat more natural foods, less highly processed foods and add the salt at the table instead of during cooking to lower sodium intake.
- ▶ **Drink more water.** Twenty-two percent of our calories come from sweetened beverages. Sweet alcoholic beverages, soda, punch, juice drinks and sports drinks add lots of extra calories and very little nutritional goodness, so enjoy them in moderation. Try adding a variety of citrus fruits, cranberry juice or cucumbers to give plain or sparkling water a little kick.

There are no key messages specifically directed at fats and sweets. The Dietary Guidelines recommend eating less solid fats and added sweets (called SOFAs) because these are where we tend to get lots of extra calories and little nutrition. Use liquid vegetable oil like olive and canola while limiting sweet treats to reasonable portions. A half cup of ice cream, frozen yogurt, pudding or a few plain cookies can fit within the new guidelines.

Be active every day

A healthy diet alone is not enough; you also need to be physically active for better health. The MyPlate program relies on the physical activity recommendations in the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans advising at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily for kids, and a minimum of 30 minutes a day for adults on most days of the week.

Find family activities that are fun for the whole family that everyone can enjoy. Go swimming, for a bike ride, play tennis or go for a hike. Kids that make a habit of being more active are developing lifelong habits that will go the distance toward good health.

Shopping tips for MyPlate

Meals cooked at home are typically healthier, and nearly always less expensive than take-out or restaurant fare because you control the ingredients and portion sizes. Stock your kitchen with healthy ingredients for meals and snacks.

Use these tips to keep your kitchen well stocked with nutritious foods:

- ▶ Purchase nutrient-rich foods, such as fat-free and low-fat (1%) milk and yogurt, fruit, vegetables, whole grains, and lean sources of protein, like 95% lean ground beef, skinless chicken, pork tenderloin, salmon, nuts and legumes. These foods are packed with healthy nutrients.
- ▶ Keep convenient lower-fat protein foods on hand for quick meals. These foods include canned light tuna and salmon, eggs, and canned, reduced-sodium beans, such as black beans.
- ▶ When purchasing convenience items, focus more on fresh and lightly processed foods. Examples include pre-cut fruits and vegetables; prewashed lettuce; plain frozen fruits and vegetables; dried fruit; and fruits canned in water or 100% juice.
- ▶ Slash your family's sodium intake by choosing natural foods or lower-sodium versions of packaged foods with the terms "low sodium," "reduced sodium," and "no salt added."
- ▶ Spend lots of time in the fresh produce section to select a rainbow of fruits and vegetables in season.
- ▶ Opt for 100% whole grain breads, cereals, rice, pasta, and crackers at meals and snacks. If your family is used to highly processed white grains, try whole grain blends or white whole wheat. When your family is ready, try farro, wild rice, and quinoa. And remember popcorn is a whole grain.



Sources

1. MyPlate. United States Department of Agriculture. May 12, 2011. www.choosemyplate.gov
2. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/DGAs2010-PolicyDocument.htm>
3. 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. <http://www.health.gov/PAGuidelines>