

Healthy Meals

One Plate at a Time



New generation food icon

The USDA has moved to a new symbol for healthy eating – MyPlate. Broken into four sections that represent fruits, vegetables, grains and protein, accompanied by a side of dairy, this new symbol is intended to promote balanced eating at each meal. MyPlate replaces the previous food guide pyramids of 1992 and 2005 that were criticized for being too complicated and not putting enough emphasis on how much we should be eating.

MyPlate is part of a larger effort to communicate the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans which focus on balancing overall calories while increasing certain foods and decreasing others. Among the foods to increase are whole grains, low fat dairy and fruits and vegetables – all of which offer potential health benefits and are currently under consumed by most Americans. Foods to decrease include those that are high in sodium and added sugars.

Fruits and Vegetables Get Half of the Plate

MyPlate makes visual what many nutrition experts have been encouraging for years, to dedicate half of your plate to fruits and vegetables. For many, this is a change from featuring a protein food as the main focus of our plates, and one that offers many benefits. Fruits and vegetables are packed with nutrients that many Americans are not getting enough of including fiber, potassium and folic acid. Eating fruits and vegetables has been associated with lower risk for certain diseases such as heart disease and cancer. And because they tend to be lower in calories than other foods, filling half of our plates with fruits and vegetables can help control how many calories we get at each meal.



Getting More Plants on Your Plate

- Add fruit to cereal or yogurt
- Make salad the main dish or add it as a side
- Pair a vegetable soup with whole grain bread
- Switch up your sandwich by making the vegetables the main filling instead of just a topping
- Snack on vegetables with hummus or fruit and nuts

References:

1. USDA MyPlate. June 2, 2011. Retrieved from <http://choosemyplate.gov>.
2. U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010. 7th Edition, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, December 2010. Published June 2011. Written by Jennifer M. Ignacio, MS, RD Compass Group, North America