

Family Mealtime Using MyPlate for Our Plates

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Family mealtime gives us the opportunity to communicate, strengthen relationships, and introduce healthy eating habits. MyPlate gives a guideline for building nutritious meals. Small changes over time add up. Here are some simple steps to begin.

A Basic Guide to Meal Planning

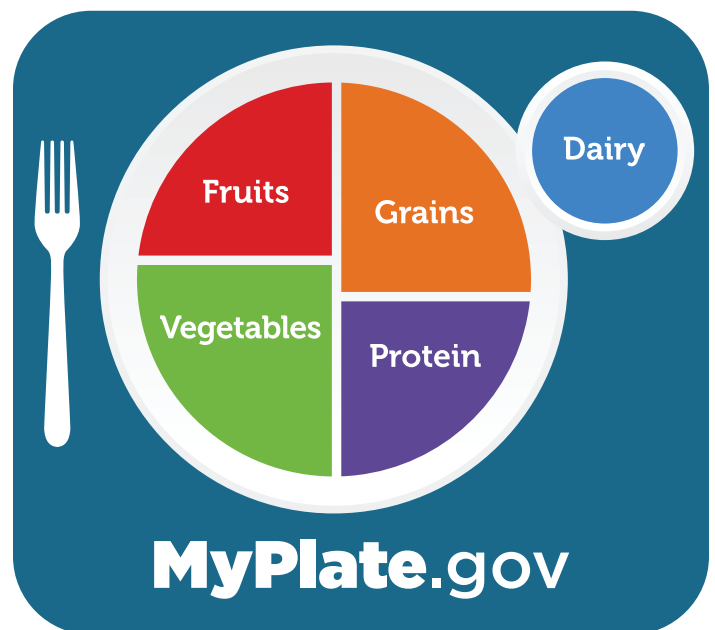
- Building a meal can be simple. Start with a serving of a protein food like chicken, lean meat, beans, peas, etc.
- Next, add some grains like rice, pasta, or bread. Choose whole grains when you can.
- Add some color to the plate with fruits and vegetables.
- A glass of milk or water can help hydrate. Milk provides calcium, vitamins, and minerals for strong bones for all, young and old.

Making Healthy Food Choices

Do you ever wonder what foods you should include in meals to make them healthy? It is easy to become overwhelmed with all the steps needed to plan nutritious meals each day. The MyPlate graphic helps consumers make sound good choices by showing groups of food and the proportions that contribute to a balanced meal.

Choose My Plate

- Choose a dinner plate that is nine inches in diameter. Using a larger plate may distort portion sizes.
- Imagine that your plate is divided into four sections. See the MyPlate logo as a guide.



One Half of Your Plate

The goal is to make half your plate fruits and vegetables. Fruits and vegetables contain vitamins, minerals, and other substances that promote good health and protect the body from chronic diseases.

- Add non-starchy vegetables such as green salad, cooked or raw broccoli, carrots, green beans, or cauliflower. The space for vegetables on your plate should be a little more than the space for fruit. Aim to vary your veggies. These can be fresh, frozen, or canned. Try cooking them in different ways, such as roasting, sautéing, baking, and eating them raw when appropriate.
- Add a serving of fruit. Fruits may be fresh, frozen, canned, or pureed.



On the Other Half of Your Plate

- Add starchy food such as pasta, rice, potatoes, or grains. Try to make half of your grain whole grains, such as whole-wheat bread, pasta, and brown rice. When choosing refined grains, like white bread, cereals, pasta, and white rice, reach for enriched options to add vitamins and minerals.
- Add protein. Choose a variety of protein foods such as chicken, turkey, fish, beef, pork, eggs, cheese, beans, peas, lentils, or soy products, like tofu. Aim to incorporate 8 to 12 ounces of seafood a week. Consider baking, grilling, steaming, or broiling meat, poultry, and fish instead of frying.
- Add an 8-ounce glass of fat-free or low-fat milk. Many Americans do not get enough calcium and vitamin D in their diets. Low-fat dairy products are good sources of these nutrients.



The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* encourage Americans to consume more vegetables, fruits, whole grains, fat-free and low-fat dairy products, and seafood as well as less sodium, saturated and *trans* fats, added sugars, and refined grains. The following suggestions make it easier to offer healthy foods to your family.

Recommendations	Reality
<p>Eat a variety of vegetables, including dark-green, red, and orange vegetables and beans and peas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetables come in fresh, frozen, and canned varieties. Reach for low-sodium or “no salt added” when possible. • Include vegetables and fruit with meals and snacks throughout the day. • Use pureed cooked vegetables such as carrots, squash, and tomatoes to thicken sauces, stews, and soups.
<p>Consume at least half of all grains as whole grains.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose whole grains more often. Use whole-grain bread for breakfast, sandwiches, and snack. • Use brown rice or whole wheat pasta. • Add whole-grain flour or oatmeal when making cookies or other baked desserts. • Use whole-grain bread, oats, or whole-grain cracker crumbs in meatloaf.
<p>Increase intake of fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products, such as milk, yogurt, cheese, almond milk, or fortified soy beverages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include low-fat or fat-free milk at each meal. • Use milk or yogurt when making cream soups, smoothies, and desserts. • Make oatmeal with milk.
<p>Choose a variety of protein foods, which include seafood, lean meat and poultry, eggs, beans and peas, soy products, and unsalted nuts and seeds.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose beans or peas as a main dish, for example, chili with kidney or pinto beans; baked beans; lentil or split pea soup; rice and beans or a veggie burger. • Add nuts to salads, cooked vegetables, and desserts. Or grab a handful as a snack.
<p>Choose seafood in place of some meat and poultry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose fish often for lunch or dinner. Canned tuna is an affordable and convenient option. • Serve salmon, tuna, and other seafood twice a week.
<p>Replace protein foods that are higher in saturated fats with choices that are lower in saturated fats.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose lean cuts of beef (round steaks and roasts); pork (pork loin, tenderloin, and center loin); lamb (leg, arm, and loin); goat (chops, steak, tenderloin). • Remove skin and fat from chicken. • Drain fat from cooked ground meats before using it. • Trim away all visible fat from meats and poultry before cooking. • Grill, roast, or broil poultry and fish instead of frying. • Prepare peas and beans without added fat.
<p>Use oils to replace solid fats where possible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use olive, canola, soybean, or corn oils when making pancakes or waffles, and in baked goods.
<p>Choose foods that provide more potassium, dietary fiber, calcium, and vitamin D. These nutrients are generally lacking in American diets.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy vegetables that are rich in potassium, like, sweet potatoes, soybeans, winter squash, spinach, and beet greens. • Select fruits rich in potassium often, such as bananas, prunes and prune juice, dried peaches and apricots, cantaloupe, honeydew melon, and orange juice. • Fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and beans, peas, and lentils are great sources of fiber. • Milk and dairy products are a major source of calcium and vitamin D in the American diet.

Source: Dietary Guidelines for Americans

References

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