

Family Mealtime

Nutrition for Busy Families

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Family mealtime is not a thing of the past. Many families eat dinner together at least five times per week. In our busy schedules, it is easy to forget that family mealtime provides opportunities to communicate, build relationships, and introduce healthy eating habits. To prepare healthy meal, a basic knowledge of nutrition is needed.



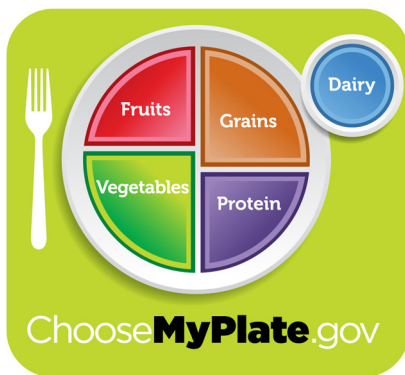
Making small changes in your eating habits can improve your health and the health of your family.

A “basic” guide to meal planning

- Begin with a protein food such as baked chicken, grilled salmon, meatballs, beans or peas, etc. (Allow one serving of protein for each family member. One serving of protein is three to four ounces. This is about the size of a deck of cards or the palm of your hand.) Remember peas and beans can also be used as a source of protein.
- Add two servings from the grain group, such as rice, pasta, or bread. If you are having meatballs you may choose to have pasta. One serving of food from the grain group is ½ cup rice or pasta, 1 slice of bread or 1 flat tortilla. Choose whole grain such brown rice, whole wheat pasta, and whole grain bread.
- Select a cooked and a raw vegetable. Eat a variety of vegetables, especially dark-green, red and orange vegetables. Try to eat 4 to 5 servings of vegetables each day. To make this a reality, include vegetables at each meal of the day.
- Include a fruit. Aim to eat 2 to 4 servings of fruits each day.
- Choose low-fat or fat-free milk as the beverage of your choice in place of soda and sugar sweetened beverages. Individuals who are lactose-intolerant should choose low-lactose and lactose-free milk products. Soy beverages fortified with calcium and vitamins A and D are good substitutes for people who do not drink milk or eat dairy products.
- Making small changes in your eating habits can improve your health and the health of your family. Identify one or two of the recommendations you can work on. As you master these areas choose others to work on until you put all the recommendations into practice.

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 Choose



My Plate graphic helps consumers make sound food choices by showing groups of food and average quantities that should be included in a meal.

“Choose My Plate”

- Use a dinner plate that is nine inches in diameter. Using a larger plate may encourage you to eat larger portions of food.
- Imagine that your plate is divided into four sections. See diagram at left.
- Fill your plate according to the following proportions:

One half of your plate

- 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. Look at the section for vegetable in the diagram. Eating both a raw and a cooked vegetable at each meal allows you to vary your veggies.
- Add a serving of fruit. Fruits may be fresh, frozen, canned, or pureed. Fruits provide vitamins, minerals, fiber and phytochemicals that promote health.

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 against chronic diseases. Adding fruits and vegetables to your plate instead of other foods that are high in calories also helps manage your weight.

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 and pasta, and brown rice. You could increase the amount of whole grains in your diet by replacing refined grains with whole grains.
- Add protein foods. Choose a variety of protein foods such as chicken, turkey, fish, beef, pork, eggs, cheese, or tofu. Try to increase the amount and variety of seafood you eat each week. You should aim to eat 8 to 12 ounces of seafood a week. Choosing seafood in place of meat and poultry will help you meet this goal. Bake, grill, steam, or broil 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. Replacing sugar-sweetened beverages with low-fat or fat-free milk also helps reduce calories.



The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* encourage Americans to consume more healthy foods such as 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	Make it Happen
<p>Eat a variety of vegetables, especially dark-green, red, and orange vegetables and beans and peas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try a salad for lunch. This could be as easy as adding leaf lettuce to a bowl; add your favorite vegetables; add your favorite fruit; add 2 tablespoons of nuts; add 2-3 ounces of chicken, fish, beans, or low-fat cheese. Remember, go lightly on the dressing as this could be a source of extra calories. • Include salad, or steamed vegetables, and fruit with dinner each night • 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 by replacing refined grains with whole grains.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substitute whole grains for refined grains. Use whole-grain bread instead of white bread. • Use brown rice or whole wheat pasta. • Add whole grain flour or oatmeal when making cookies or other baked desserts. • Use whole grain bread 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 fat-free milk when making cream soups, smoothies and desserts. • Add fat-free or low-fat milk to oatmeal and hot cereals. • Use soy or almond milk instead of coffee creamer.
<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 dry 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 salad, cooked vegetables and desserts.
<p>Choose seafood in place of some meat and poultry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose fish often for lunch or dinner. • Serve salmon, tuna, and other seafood twice a week.
<p>Replace protein foods that are higher in solid fats with choices that are lower in solid fats and calories.</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. • 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"> • Use more vegetables rich in potassium, for example, 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.

Source: Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010

Resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables every day. <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/>.
- School Wellness. <http://www.school-wellness.org/AtHome.aspx>.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture. Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010. <http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2010/DietaryGuidelines2010.pdf>.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture. ChooseMyPlate. <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>.
- Wellness in the Rockies. Family mealtime. http://www.uwyo.edu/WINTHEROCKIES_EDUR/FamilyMealtimes.asp.

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