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URL of this page: //medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002093.htm

Food guide plate

By following the US Department of Agriculture's food guide, called MyPlate, you can make healthier food choices. The newest guide encourages you to eat more fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and low-fat dairy. Using the guide, you can learn what type of food you should eat and how much you should eat. You also learn why and how much you should exercise.

Information

USING MyPlate

There are 5 major food groups that make up a healthy diet:

- Grains
- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Dairy
- Protein

You should eat foods from each group every day. How much food you should eat from each group depends on your age, sex, and how active you are.

MyPlate [<https://www.myplate.gov>] makes specific recommendations for each type of food group.

GRAINS: MAKE AT LEAST HALF OF YOUR GRAINS WHOLE GRAINS

- Whole grains contain the entire grain. Refined grains have had the bran and germ removed. Be sure to read the ingredient list label and look for whole grains first on the list.
- Foods with whole grains have more fiber and protein than food made with refined grains.
- Examples of whole grains are breads and pastas made with whole-wheat flour, oatmeal, bulgur, faro, or cornmeal.
- Examples of refined grains are white flour, white bread, and white rice.

Most children and adults should eat about 5 to 8 servings of grains a day (also called "ounce equivalents"). Children age 8 and younger need only about 3 to 5 servings. At least half those servings should be whole grain. Examples of one serving of grains include:

- 1 slice of bread
- 1 cup (30 grams) of flake cereal
- 1/2 cup (165 grams) cooked rice
- 5 whole-wheat crackers
- 1/2 cup (75 grams) cooked pasta

Eating whole grains can help improve your health by:

- Reducing the risk for many long-term (chronic) diseases.
- Helping you lose weight. Remember that portion size is still the key. Because whole grains have more fiber and protein, they are more filling than refined grains, so you can eat less to get the same feeling of being full. But if you replace vegetables with starches, you'll gain weight, even if you eat whole grain.
- Promoting regular bowel movements.

Ways to eat more whole grains:

- Eat brown rice instead of white rice.
- Use whole-grain pasta instead of regular pasta.
- Replace part of white flour with wheat flour in recipes.
- Replace white bread with whole-wheat bread.
- Use oatmeal in recipes instead of breadcrumbs.
- Snack on air-popped popcorn instead of chips or cookies.

VEGETABLES: MAKE HALF OF YOUR PLATE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- Vegetables can be raw, fresh, cooked, canned, frozen, dried, or dehydrated.
- Vegetables are organized into 5 subgroups based on their nutrient content. The groups are dark-green vegetables, starchy vegetables, red and orange vegetables, beans and peas, and other vegetables.
- Try to include vegetables from each group. Try to make sure you aren't only picking options from the "starchy" group.

Most children and adults should eat between 2 and 3 cups (200 to 300 grams) of vegetables a day. Children age 8 and younger need only about 1 to 1 1/2 cups (100 to 150 grams). Examples of a cup include:

- Large ear of corn
- Three 5-inch (13 centimeters) broccoli spears
- 1 cup (100 grams) cooked vegetables
- 2 cups (60 grams) of raw, leafy greens
- 2 medium carrots
- 1/2 cup (100 grams) cooked pinto beans or black-eyed peas

Eating vegetables can help improve your health in the following ways:

- Lowers your risk for heart disease, obesity, and type 2 diabetes
- Helps protect you against some cancers
- Helps lower blood pressure
- Reduces the risk of kidney stones
- Helps reduce bone loss

Ways to eat more vegetables:

- Keep plenty of frozen vegetables handy in your freezer.
- Buy pre-washed salad and pre-chopped veggies to cut down on prep time.
- Add veggies to soups and stews.
- Add vegetables to spaghetti sauces.
- Try veggie stir-fries.
- Eat raw carrots, broccoli, or bell pepper strips dipped in hummus or ranch dressing as a snack.

FRUITS: MAKE HALF OF YOUR PLATE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- Fruits can be fresh, canned, frozen, or dried.
- Try to choose whole fruits rather than juice for at least half of your serving.

Most adults need 1 1/2 to 2 cups (200 to 250 grams) of fruit a day. Children age 8 and younger need only about 1 to 1 1/2 cups (120 to 200 grams). Examples of a cup include:

- 1 small piece of fruit, such as an apple or pear
- 8 large strawberries
- 1/2 cup (130 grams) dried apricots or other dried fruit
- 1 cup (240 milliliters) 100% fruit juice (orange, apple, grapefruit)
- 1 cup (100 grams) cooked or canned fruit
- 1 cup (250 grams) chopped fruit

Eating fruit can help improve your health, fruits may help to:

- Lower your risk of heart disease, obesity, and type 2 diabetes
- Protect you against some cancers
- Lower blood pressure
- Reduce the risk of kidney stones
- Reduce bone loss

Ways to eat more fruit:

- Put out a fruit bowl and keep it full of fruit.

- Stock up on dried, frozen, or canned fruit, so you always have it available. Choose fruit that is canned in water or juice instead of syrup.
- Buy pre-cut fruit in packages to cut down on prep time.
- Try meat dishes with fruit, such as pork with apricots, lamb with figs, or chicken with mango.
- Grill peaches, apples, or other firm fruit for a healthy, tasty dessert.
- Try a smoothie made with frozen fruit and plain yogurt for breakfast.
- Use dried fruit to add texture to trail mixes.

PROTEIN FOODS: CHOOSE LEAN PROTEINS

Protein foods include meat, poultry, seafood, beans and peas, eggs, processed soy products, nuts and nut butters, and seeds. Beans and peas are also part of the vegetable group.

- Choose meats that are low in saturated fat and cholesterol, such as lean cuts of beef, chicken and turkey without skin.
- Most adults need 5 to 6 1/2 servings of protein a day (also called "ounce equivalents"). Children age 8 and younger need only about 2 to 4 servings.
- Eat a variety of proteins.

Examples of a serving include:

- 1 ounce (28 grams) lean meat like beef, pork, or lamb
- 1 ounce (28 grams) poultry such as turkey or chicken
- 1 large egg
- 1/4 cup (50 grams) tofu
- 1/4 cup (50 grams) cooked beans or lentils
- 1 tablespoon (15 grams) peanut butter
- 1/2 ounce (14 grams) of nuts or seeds; 12 almonds

Eating lean protein can help improve your health:

- Seafood high in omega-3 fats, such as salmon, sardines, or trout, can help prevent heart disease.
- Peanuts and other nuts, such as almonds, walnuts, and pistachios, when eaten as part of a healthy diet, can help lower the risk of heart disease.
- Lean meats and eggs are a good source of iron.

Ways to include more lean protein in your diet:

- Choose lean cuts of beef, which include sirloin, tenderloin, round, chuck, and shoulder or arm roasts and steaks.
- Choose lean pork, which includes tenderloin, loin, ham, and Canadian bacon.
- Choose lean lamb, which includes tenderloin, chops, and leg.
- Buy skinless chicken or turkey or take the skin off before cooking.

- Grill, roast, poach, or broil meats, poultry, and seafood instead of frying.
- Trim all visible fat and drain off any fat when cooking.
- Substitute peas, lentils, beans, or soy in place of meat at least once a week. Try bean chili, pea or bean soup, stir-fried tofu, rice and beans, or veggie burgers.
- Include 8 ounces (225 grams) of cooked seafood a week.

DAIRY: CHOOSE LOW-FAT OR FAT-FREE DAIRY FOODS

Most children and adults should get about 3 cups (720 milliliters) of dairy a day. Children age 2 to 8 need only about 2 to 2 1/2 cups (480 to 600 milliliters). Examples of a cup include:

- 1 cup (240 milliliters) milk
- 1 regular container of yogurt
- 1 1/2 ounces (45 grams) hard cheese (such as cheddar, mozzarella, Swiss, Parmesan)
- 1/3 cup (40 grams) shredded cheese
- 2 cups (450 grams) cottage cheese
- 1 cup (250 grams) pudding made with milk or frozen yogurt
- 1 cup (240 milliliters) calcium-fortified soymilk

Eating dairy food can improve your health:

- Consuming dairy foods is important for improving bone health especially during childhood and adolescence, when bone mass is being built.
- Dairy foods have vital nutrients including calcium, potassium, vitamin D, and protein.
- The intake of dairy products is linked to reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and lower blood pressure in adults.
- Low-fat or fat-free milk products provide little or no saturated fat.
- Fortified soy beverages ("soy milk" and soy yogurt) are good alternatives

Ways to include low-fat foods from the dairy group in your diet:

- Include milk or calcium-fortified soy milk as a beverage at meals. Choose fat-free or low-fat milk.
- Add fat-free or low-fat milk instead of water to oatmeal and hot cereals.
- Include plain yogurt or cottage cheese in smoothies.
- Top casseroles, soups, stews, or vegetables with shredded reduced-fat or low-fat cheese.
- Use lactose-free or lower lactose products if you have trouble digesting dairy products. You can also get calcium from non-dairy sources such as fortified juices, canned fish, soy foods, and green leafy vegetables.

OILS: EAT SMALL AMOUNTS OF HEART-HEALTHY OILS

- Oils are not a food group. However, they provide important nutrients and should be part of a healthy diet.
- Saturated fats such as butter and shortening are solid at room temperature. Butter, margarine, and oils that are solid at room temperature (such as coconut oil) contain high levels of saturated fats or trans fats. Eating a

lot of these fats can increase your risk of heart disease.

- Oils are liquid at room temperature. They contain monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. These types of fats are generally good for your heart.
- Children and adults should get about 5 to 7 teaspoons (25 to 35 milliliters) of oil a day. Children age 8 and younger need only about 3 to 4 teaspoons (15 to 20 milliliters) a day.
- Choose oils such as olive, canola, sunflower, safflower, soybean, and corn oils.
- Some foods are also high in healthy oils. They include avocados, some fish, olives, and nuts.

WEIGHT MANAGEMENT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

MyPlate also provides information about how to lose excess weight:

- You can use the Daily Food Plan to learn what to eat and drink. You just enter your age, sex, height, weight, and exercise habits to get a personalized eating plan.
- If you have any specific health concerns, such as heart disease or diabetes, be sure to discuss any dietary changes with your health care provider or registered dietitian first.

You can also learn how to make better choices, such as:

- Eating the right amount of calories to keep you at a healthy weight.
- Not overeating and avoiding big portions.
- Eating fewer foods with empty calories. These are foods high in sugar or fat with few vitamins or minerals.
- Eating a balance of healthy foods from all 5 food groups.
- Making better choices when eating out at restaurants.
- Cooking at home more often, where you can control what goes into the foods you eat.
- Exercising 150 minutes a week.
- Decreasing your screen time in front of the TV or computer.
- Getting tips for increasing your activity level.

Alternative Names

MyPlate

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Review Date 8/21/2023

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