



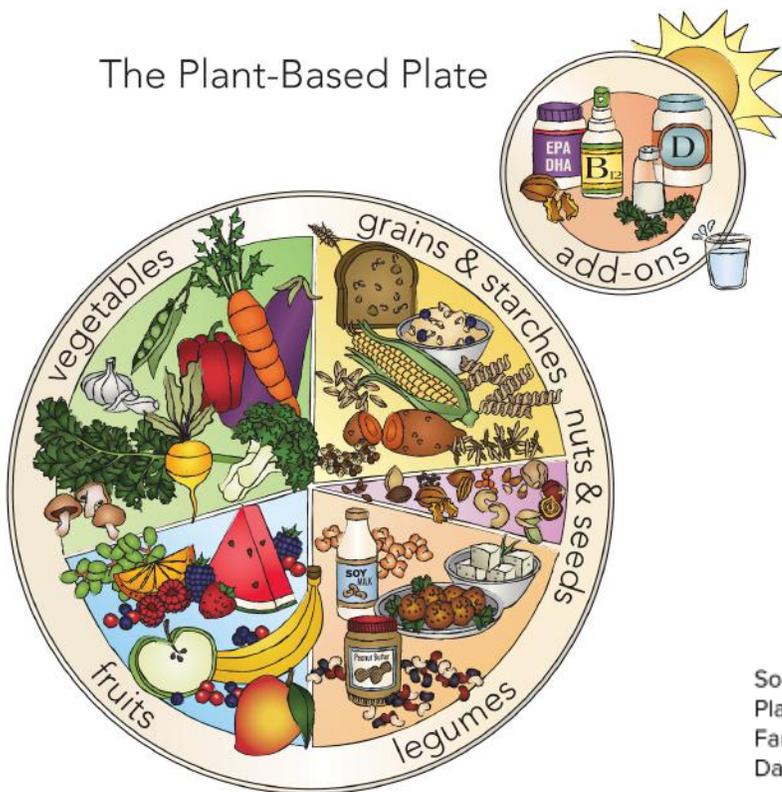
Creating your Healthy Heart Plate is as easy as 1-2-3!

First, take your dinner plate and split it in half.

Next, fill one half with fresh non-starchy vegetables and fruits of all colors. Leafy green vegetables, such as collards, kale, and bok choy, and other veggies, including broccoli, asparagus, brussels sprouts, red bell peppers, green or purple cabbage, or orange squash are all great choices. The options are limitless and delicious!

With the remaining half of your plate, fill one quarter with whole grains such as organic brown rice, wild rice, millet, or quinoa. Starchy vegetables, like sweet potatoes, purple potatoes, and yucca also fall into this category. Finally, fill the last quarter of your plate with healthy, plant-based proteins like lentils, beans, chickpeas, or organic soy, like tempeh, edamame, or tofu. Nuts and seeds are also protein-packed and can fit into the plant-based protein category. Because they're high in (healthy) fat and are calorie-dense, you may want to add just an ounce to your plate (sprinkling nuts or seeds on top of a dish or blending them with spices and other plant ingredients to use as salad dressings or sauces adds flavor, crunch, and nutrition!).

The Plant-Based Plate



Source: Nourish: The Definitive Plant-Based Nutrition Guide for Families (Reshma Shah and Brenda Davis, HCI books, 2020)



Ideally, on a plant-powered program, you are aiming for about 55–70% of calories from carbohydrates, 10–20% of calories from protein, and 15–25% of calories from fat. **When you follow this Plant-Powered Plate, your macronutrient distribution will naturally fall in this range.**

50% Colorful Non-Starchy Fruits & Vegetables

These colorful foods are naturally high in phytochemicals, also known as phytonutrients. Phytochemicals are compounds made by plants that offer health benefits to you when you eat them. There are thousands of phytonutrients that have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects.

Many of these phytonutrients have also been shown to affect the epigenome — or how your genes get turned on and off — and may help reduce the risk of lifestyle diseases, like heart disease, diabetes, and certain types of cancer.

Take resveratrol, for instance, found in grapes, berries, blueberries, and plums, resveratrol may positively affect blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, and inflammatory biomarkers. Another example is carotenoids, found in orange, red, yellow foods, like carrots, tomatoes, sweet potatoes. Carotenoids are important for vision, the immune system, and reproduction. Leafy greens also have carotenoids.

A simple way to ensure you're getting ample phytonutrients is to eat a variety of plant-based foods with different colors — including red, orange, yellow, green, purple, white, and tan (white and tan count when it comes to plants!). The different colors in food indicate the presence of different profiles of phytonutrients. By ingesting a variety of foods you'll ensure you are getting plenty of different types of phytonutrients.

For more information read, [Eating The Rainbow: Why Eating a Variety of Fruits and Vegetables Is Important for Optimal Health.](#)

25% Fiber-Rich Whole Grains & Starches

There are two main types of carbohydrates — simple and complex. Carbohydrates are naturally found in foods but they may also be added to foods as sugar or sweetener. When it comes to your diet, you generally want to include carbohydrate-rich foods that are whole or minimally processed while minimizing intake of refined or ultra processed carbohydrate-rich foods. When foods are refined or ultra processed, parts of what is naturally found

in them (e.g. fiber, micronutrients) are removed. Whole and minimally processed foods contain many to all of the nutrients naturally found in them. Examples of refined carbohydrate-rich foods include table sugar, refined



—flours, candies, syrups, and soft drinks. Minimally processed carbohydrate-rich foods include whole grain — products, such as whole grain cereal, whole grain bread, and whole grain pasta. Unprocessed whole grains include brown rice, millet, quinoa, and barley, to name a few.

Generally speaking, refined sources of carbohydrates like ultra processed bread, baked goods, and crackers, are absorbed and used by your body more easily and more quickly than sources of unrefined carbohydrates. Because they're absorbed rapidly, carbohydrates from refined sources can lead to blood sugar spikes and drops or "sugar highs and lows." Thus, ingesting carbohydrates from refined sources are also dangerous because they're often converted to triglycerides when you consume them. Elevated triglycerides in blood can increase your blood pressure and risk of heart disease.

Unrefined carbohydrate sources, on the other hand, are found in starchy vegetables such as beets, carrots, and potatoes, and whole grains such as organic brown rice, wild rice, millet, or quinoa and provide more sustained energy. The slower digestion of unrefined carbohydrates is due to their more complex structure and higher fiber content, which slows down both carbohydrate digestion and absorption. In addition, the fiber content is important because it aids in lowering your cholesterol and keeping blood sugar levels stable.

In addition to avoiding refined carbohydrate sources we should be mindful of sources of added sugar. For example, many canned fruits, such as peaches, pears and others are canned with light or heavy syrup. Sugar can also be hidden in products such as ketchup, dressings, and sauces.

For more information on the benefits of whole grains, read [Are Grains Good For You?](#). And for more about the benefits of root vegetables, read [How to Cook & Use Root Vegetables + 7 Root Vegetable Recipes](#).

25% Plant-Based Protein

Plant-based sources of protein, with some exceptions, contain mostly unsaturated fat and zero cholesterol. Nuts contain small amounts of saturated fat but they do not contain cholesterol. Most of the fat in nuts is unsaturated. By comparison, all animal proteins come with saturated fat and cholesterol and many animal sources of protein are associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular disease. Animal proteins are also devoid of any fiber, whereas plant sources of protein are packed with fiber and they contain a variety of beneficial phytonutrients — making them ideal for the prevention of heart and other types of diseases.

Diets that are higher in animal protein intake and low plant protein intake have also been associated with a greater risk of heart disease, cancer, and diabetes, as well as overall mortality. That means that people who eat a lot of animal protein tend to have more heart disease; they develop heart problems earlier in life; and, as a result, have higher mortality rates. Although many people fear that they can't get enough protein on a



plant-centered diet, the truth is that most Americans eat significantly more protein than they need. In fact, vegetarians and/or vegans have never been shown to have protein deficiency in research studies. Protein deficiency occurs in regions of the world where people do not have enough food to eat. If you're eating a whole-foods, plant-strong diet with a variety of plant protein sources, such as beans, nuts, seeds, and grains, you're more than likely getting plenty of dietary protein.

Heart-healthy sources of protein include lentils, beans, nuts and seeds, chickpeas, and organic soy products, like tempeh, edamame, and tofu. Of course, there is also some protein available in whole grains and vegetables.

For more information on the benefits of plant-based protein, read [Can You Get Your Protein From Plants?](#). And for more about beans and nuts, read [Benefits of Beans + 12 Recipes That Will Make You Love Them](#) and [You Won't Believe How Healthy Nuts Are for You](#).

A Note About Fiber

Soluble fiber helps lower blood glucose levels and cholesterol and is found in foods such as oatmeal, beans, and legumes, as well as in many fruits and vegetables. Insoluble fiber acts like a broom, cleaning out your digestive tract, and is found in foods such as whole grains, kidney beans, bran, and fruits and vegetables.

Insoluble fiber is also important for digestion and elimination, but soluble fiber is the real all-star when it comes to heart health. That's because it can lower your LDL cholesterol and stabilize blood sugar levels while also feeding the beneficial bacteria in your gut.

Many plant-based experts recommend fiber intake of about 40 grams per day. Less than 5% of all Americans get enough of it. In fact, on average, American adult women ingest about 15 grams a day, while American men about 18 grams a day.

Fiber is found naturally in whole plant foods. Meat, dairy products, eggs, and oils do not contain any fiber. Refined foods, such as white flour, contain very little fiber because fiber is removed as part of making refined flour.

Instead of going headlong into a fiber-rich diet, you may want to start by gradually increasing your intake — especially if you don't already eat much fiber. Adding lots of fiber right away can cause gas and bloating. Also, remember to drink plenty of water alongside your increased fiber intake! Over time, your gut and your body will adjust, and you'll start to recognize the benefits of your fiber-rich menu.

For more information on fiber, read [Why Is Fiber Good For You? \(And How To Get Enough Fiber!\)](#).