



Build a healthy meal

Each meal is a building block in your healthy eating style. Make sure to include all the food groups throughout the day. Make fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy, and protein foods part of your daily meals and snacks. Also, limit added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium. Use the [MyPlate Daily Checklist](#) and the tips below to meet your needs throughout the day.

1 Make half your plate veggies and fruits

Vegetables and fruits are full of nutrients that support good health. Choose fruits and red, orange, and dark-green vegetables such as tomatoes, sweet potatoes, and broccoli.



2 Include whole grains

Aim to make at least half your grains whole grains. Look for the words “100% whole grain” or “100% whole wheat” on the food label. Whole grains provide more nutrients, like fiber, than refined grains.



3 Don't forget the dairy

Complete your meal with a cup of fat-free or low-fat milk. You will get the same amount of calcium and other essential nutrients as whole milk but fewer calories. Don't drink milk? Try a soy beverage (soymilk) as your drink or include low-fat yogurt in your meal or snack.



4 Add lean protein

Choose protein foods such as lean beef, pork, chicken, or turkey, and eggs, nuts, beans, or tofu. Twice a week, make seafood the protein on your plate.



5 Avoid extra fat

Using heavy gravies or sauces will add fat and calories to otherwise healthy choices. Try steamed broccoli with a sprinkling of low-fat parmesan cheese or a squeeze of lemon.

6 Get creative in the kitchen

Whether you are making a sandwich, a stir-fry, or a casserole, find ways to make them healthier. Try using less meat and cheese, which can be higher in saturated fat and sodium, and adding in more veggies that add new flavors and textures to your meals.

7 Take control of your food

Eat at home more often so you know exactly what you are eating. If you eat out, check and compare the nutrition information. Choose options that are lower in calories, saturated fat, and sodium.



8 Try new foods

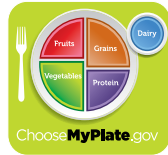
Keep it interesting by picking out new foods you've never tried before, like mango, lentils, quinoa, kale, or sardines. You may find a new favorite! Trade fun and tasty recipes with friends or find them online.

9 Satisfy your sweet tooth in a healthy way

Indulge in a naturally sweet dessert dish—fruit! Serve a fresh fruit salad or a fruit parfait made with yogurt. For a hot dessert, bake apples and top with cinnamon.

10 Everything you eat and drink matters

The right mix of foods in your meals and snacks can help you be healthier now and into the future. Turn small changes in how you eat into your MyPlate, MyWins.



Add more vegetables to your day

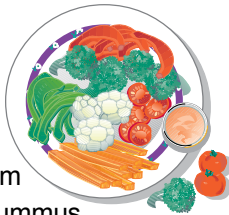
It's easy to eat more vegetables! Eating vegetables is important because they provide vitamins and minerals and most are low in calories. To fit more vegetables in your day, try them as snacks and add them to your meals.

1 Discover fast ways to cook

Cook fresh or frozen vegetables in the microwave for a quick-and-easy dish to add to any meal. Steam green beans, carrots, or bok choy in a bowl with a small amount of water in the microwave for a quick side dish.

2 Be ahead of the game

Cut up a batch of bell peppers, cauliflower, or broccoli. Pre-package them to use when time is limited. Enjoy them in a casserole, stir-fry, or as a snack with hummus.



3 Choose vegetables rich in color

Brighten your plate with vegetables that are red, orange, or dark green. They are full of vitamins and minerals. Try acorn squash, cherry tomatoes, sweet potatoes, or collard greens. They not only taste great but are good for you, too.

4 Check the freezer aisle

Frozen vegetables are quick and easy to use and are just as nutritious as fresh veggies. Try adding frozen vegetables, such as corn, peas, edamame, or spinach, to your favorite dish. Look for frozen vegetables without added sauces, gravies, butter, or cream.



5 Stock up on veggies

Canned vegetables are a great addition to any meal, so keep on hand canned tomatoes, kidney beans, garbanzo beans, mushrooms, and beets. Select those labeled as "reduced sodium," "low sodium," or "no salt added."

6 Make your garden salad glow with color

Brighten your salad by using colorful vegetables such as black beans or avocados, sliced red bell peppers or onions, shredded radishes or carrots, and chopped red cabbage or watercress. Your salad will not only look good but taste good, too.

7 Sip on some vegetable soup

Heat it and eat it. Try tomato, butternut squash, or garden vegetable soup. Look for reduced- or low-sodium soups. Make your own soups with a low-sodium broth and your favorite vegetables.

8 While you're out

If dinner is away from home, no need to worry. When ordering, ask for an extra side of vegetables or a side salad instead of the typical fried side dish. Ask for toppings and dressings on the side.

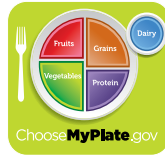
9 Savor the flavor of seasonal vegetables

Buy vegetables that are in season for maximum flavor at a lower cost. Check your local supermarket specials for the best in-season buys. Or visit your local farmers market.



10 Vary your veggies

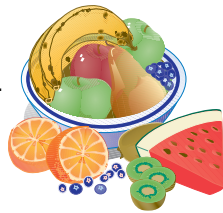
Choose a new vegetable that you've never tried before. Find recipes online at WhatsCooking.fns.usda.gov.



Focus on fruits

Eating fruit provides health benefits. People who eat more vegetables and fruits as part of an overall healthy eating style are likely to have a reduced risk of some chronic diseases. Fruits provide nutrients vital for health, such as potassium, dietary fiber, vitamin C, and folate. Focus on whole fruits—fresh, canned, frozen, or dried—instead of juice. The sugar naturally found in fruit does not count as added sugar.

1 **Keep visible reminders**
Keep a bowl of whole fruit on the table, counter, or in the refrigerator.



2 **Experiment with flavor**
Buy fresh fruits in season when they may be less expensive and at their peak flavor. Use fruits to sweeten a recipe instead of adding sugar.

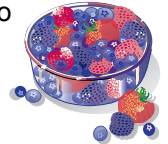
3 **Think about variety**
Buy fruits that are dried, frozen, and canned (in water or 100% juice) as well as fresh, so that you always have a supply on hand.



4 **Don't forget the fiber**
Make most of your choices whole or cut-up fruit, rather than juice, for the benefits that dietary fiber provides.

5 **Include fruit at breakfast**
At breakfast, top your cereal with bananas, peaches, or strawberries; add blueberries to pancakes; drink 100% orange or grapefruit juice. Or, try a fruit mixed with fat-free or low-fat yogurt.

6 **Try fruit at lunch**
At lunch, pack a tangerine, banana, or grapes to eat or choose fruits from a salad bar. Individual containers of fruits like peaches or applesauce are easy to carry and convenient for lunch.



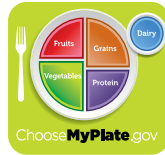
7 **Enjoy fruit at dinner, too**
At dinner, add crushed pineapple to coleslaw or include orange sections, dried cranberries, or grapes in a tossed salad. Try fruit salsa on top of fish.

8 **Snack on fruits**
Fruits make great snacks. Try dried fruits mixed with nuts or whole fruits like apples. They are easy to carry and store well.

9 **Be a good role model**
Set a good example for children by eating fruit every day with meals or as snacks.

10 **Keep fruits safe**
Rinse fruits before preparing or eating them. Under clean, running water, rub fruits briskly to remove dirt and surface microorganisms. After rinsing, dry with a clean towel.





Make half your grains whole grains

Any food made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley, or another cereal grain is a grain product. Grains are divided into two subgroups, whole grains and refined grains. Whole grains contain the entire grain kernel—the bran, germ, and endosperm. People who eat whole grains as part of a healthy eating style have a reduced risk of some chronic diseases.

1 Make simple shifts
To make half your grains whole grains, choose 100% whole-wheat bread, bagels, pasta, or tortillas; brown rice; oatmeal; or grits.

2 Whole grains can be healthy snacks
Popcorn is a whole grain. Make it with little or no added salt or butter. Also, try 100% whole-wheat or rye crackers.



3 Save some time
Cook extra brown rice or oatmeal when you have time. Refrigerate half of what you cook to heat and serve later in the week.

4 Mix it up with whole grains
Use whole grains in mixed dishes, such as barley in vegetable soups or stews and bulgur wheat in casseroles or stir-fries. Try a quinoa salad or pilaf.



5 Try whole-wheat versions
Change up your favorite meal with whole grains. Try brown rice stuffing in baked green peppers or tomatoes, and whole-wheat noodles in lasagna.

6 Bake up some whole-grain goodness
Experiment by substituting buckwheat, millet, or oat flour for up to half of the flour in your favorite pancake or waffle recipes. To limit saturated fat and added sugars, top with fruit instead of butter and syrup.

7 Be a good role model for children
Set a good example for children by serving and eating whole grains every day with meals or as snacks.

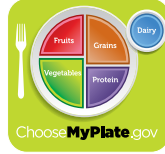


8 Check the label
Most refined grains are enriched. This means that certain B vitamins and iron are added back after processing. Check the ingredients list to make sure the word “enriched” is included in the grain name.

9 Know what to look for on the ingredients list
Read the ingredients list and choose products that name a whole-grain ingredient **first** on the list. Look for “whole wheat,” “brown rice,” “bulgur,” “buckwheat,” “oatmeal,” “whole-grain cornmeal,” “whole oats,” or “whole rye.”

10 Be a smart shopper
The color of a food is not an indication that it is a whole-grain food. Foods labeled as “multi-grain,” “stone-ground,” “100% wheat,” “cracked wheat,” “seven-grain,” or “bran” are usually not 100% whole-grain products, and may not contain **any** whole grain.





Vary your protein routine

Protein foods include both animal (meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs) and plant (beans, peas, soy products, nuts, and seeds) sources. We all need protein—but most Americans eat enough, and some eat more than they need. How much is enough? Most people, ages 9 and older, should eat 5 to 7 ounces* of protein foods each day depending on overall calorie needs.

1 Vary your protein food choices
Eat a variety of foods from the Protein Foods Group each week. Experiment with beans or peas, nuts, soy, and seafood as main dishes.

2 Choose seafood twice a week
Eat seafood in place of meat or poultry twice a week. Select a variety of seafood, including those that are higher in oils and low in mercury, such as salmon, trout, and herring.



3 Select lean meat and poultry
Choose lean cuts of meat like round or sirloin and ground beef that is at least 93% lean. Trim or drain fat from meat and remove poultry skin.

4 Save with eggs
Eggs can be an inexpensive protein option and part of a healthy eating style. Make eggs part of your weekly choices.

5 Eat plant protein foods more often
Try beans and peas (kidney, pinto, black, or white beans; split peas; chickpeas; hummus), soy products (tofu, tempeh, veggie burgers), nuts, and seeds. They are lower in saturated fat and some are higher in fiber.



6 Consider nuts and seeds
Choose unsalted nuts or seeds as a snack, on salads, or in main dishes. Nuts and seeds are a concentrated source of calories, so eat small portions to keep calories in check.

7 Keep it tasty and healthy
Try grilling, broiling, roasting, or baking—they don't add extra fat. Some lean meats need slow, moist cooking to be tender—try a slow cooker for them. Avoid breading meat or poultry, which adds calories.

8 Make a healthy sandwich
Choose turkey, roast beef, canned tuna or salmon, or peanut butter for sandwiches. Many deli meats, such as regular bologna or salami, are high in fat and sodium—make them occasional treats only.



9 Think small when it comes to meat portions
Get the flavor you crave but in a smaller portion. Make or order a small turkey burger or a “petite” size steak.

10 Check the sodium
Check the Nutrition Facts label to limit sodium. Salt is added to many canned foods—including soups, vegetables, beans, and meats. Many processed meats—such as ham, sausage, and hot dogs—are high in sodium. Some fresh chicken, turkey, and pork are brined in a salt solution for flavor and tenderness.

* What counts as an ounce of protein foods? 1 ounce lean meat, poultry, or seafood; 1 egg; ¼ cup cooked beans or peas; ½ ounce nuts or seeds; or 1 tablespoon peanut butter.