

# Making the most of every bite

Tips to help you make smarter food choices



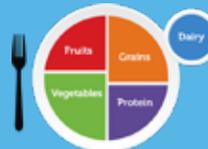
Eating well, along with being active, is one of the most positive steps you can take to stay healthy. Taking a bit of time each week to plan ahead and make healthy meals can increase your energy, improve how you feel, and add years to your life.<sup>1</sup>

## How to choose healthy foods

Before you begin making nutritious meals, it's important to understand which foods are most beneficial to your health.<sup>2,3</sup>

- **Carbs** fuel your body for physical activity. Focus on whole grains, vegetables, fruits, and beans, which are rich in vitamins, minerals, fiber, and other important nutrients. Skip white bread, white rice, pastries, soda, and highly processed packaged snacks. Those carbs come from refined grains and won't keep you satisfied for long.
- **Protein** builds strong muscles and bones, and carries oxygen in the blood. Lean protein from plant-based foods such as beans and nuts is the healthiest. Fish and poultry are also good sources. If you want to eat red meat, pick the leanest cuts and only eat it once in a while.
- **Fiber** helps protect you against certain health problems. Savor the satisfying flavor and texture of whole grains, beans, vegetables, and fruits, which provide the fiber your body needs.
- **Vegetables and fruits** also help protect your health. Enjoy the rainbow of colors: purple, dark green, yellow, orange, and red.
- **Fats** are part of a healthy diet when they come from plant oils, nuts, and fish. Limit the amount of foods you eat that have saturated fats — such as cheeses and meats — and avoid trans fats. Read the labels on packaged foods to ensure they don't have trans fat.

### Explore MyPlate



Visit [myplate.gov](https://myplate.gov) for recipes, information about nutritious foods, and how to build healthy habits.



- **Calcium** is important for healthy bones. Milk and other dairy products are good sources for calcium, but they're not the only ones. Nondairy sources of calcium include collards, bok choy, fortified soy milk, sardines, and baked beans.
- **Salt** can cause health problems if your diet includes too much of it. Cut down on processed foods, which are usually high in salt. Read the labels of the foods you buy to check how much salt — listed as sodium — is in them.
- **Alcohol** can be healthy in moderation, but not for everyone. Moderate drinking for women is up to one drink a day; for men, it's up to two drinks a day. Benefits include improved heart health, but drinking also increases risks of health problems such as breast and colon cancer.
- **Daily multivitamins**, especially one with vitamin D, can help your health. Don't take more than what's recommended, and make sure your doctor knows about the vitamins you take.
- **Portion size matters**, so see what a serving of a particular food looks like on a plate to know if you're eating too much or too little. Try using smaller plates for your meals, and fill your plate at the stove instead of at the table, so you think twice before having seconds.<sup>3</sup>



## Keeping calories low when you're on the go

Eating out can make it harder to track how many calories you're consuming. Follow these tips for healthy eating away from home.<sup>4</sup>

- Order water or unsweetened tea instead of drinks with added sugar.
- Start your meal with a salad (with dressing on the side). This may keep you from overindulging.
- Choose dishes that include vegetables, even if it's only pasta with tomato sauce.
- Order steamed, grilled, or broiled foods instead of ones that are fried or sautéed.
- For car trips, pack snacks such as fresh fruits or vegetables, low-fat string cheese, or a handful of unsalted nuts.
- Skip the buffets. Order small or half-sized portions or ask for half of your food to be packaged to go when you order.
- Order fruit for dessert.

Finding the healthy foods you love has its benefits. Bite by bite, you can boost your brain power, fuel your movement, and support your overall well-being.

1 American Cancer Society website: *Diet and Physical Activity: What's the Cancer Connection?* (accessed March 2021): cancer.org.

2 U.S. Department of Agriculture website: *What is MyPlate?* (accessed March 2021): myplate.gov.

3 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: *Healthy Weight* (accessed March 2021): cdc.gov/healthyweight.

4 United States Department of Agriculture website: *Dine Out/Take Out* (accessed March 2021): myplate.gov.

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