

# MyPlate Replaces the Food Pyramid



On June 2, 2011, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) released MyPlate, a new symbol for healthy eating that replaces the traditional food pyramid. The new plate was designed to provide a simple visual reminder to help consumers make healthy food choices. Also, general recommendations for healthier eating were released, derived from the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans:

- **Balance calories.** Enjoy your food, but eat less. Avoid oversized portions.
- **Increase healthy foods.** Make half your plate fruits and vegetables. Make at least half of your grains whole grains. Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1 percent) milk.
- **Reduce less healthy options.** Compare sodium in foods like soup, bread and frozen meals – and choose the foods with lower numbers. Drink water instead of sugary drinks.
- **Engage in physical activity.** Being active is an important partner to healthy eating. People should strive to get moderate to vigorous physical activity on a regular basis.

Below are suggestions and guidelines for fulfilling the food groups represented on the plate.

FRUITS	VEGETABLES	GRAINS	PROTEIN	DAIRY
<p>Any fruit or 100 percent fruit juice counts as part of the Fruit Group.</p> <p>Fruits may be fresh, canned, frozen or dried, and may be whole, cut-up or pureed.</p>	<p>Any vegetable or 100 percent vegetable juice counts in this group.</p> <p>Vegetables are divided into five sub-groups: dark green, red &amp; orange, beans and peas, starchy and other. Beans and peas also qualify as a protein (typically for vegetarians).</p>	<p>Examples of grains include bread, pasta, oatmeal, breakfast cereals, tortillas and grits.</p> <p>Grains are divided into whole grains and refined grains. Remember, aim to make at least half of your grains whole grains.</p>	<p>All foods made from meat, poultry, seafood, beans and peas, eggs, processed soy products, nuts and seed are considered protein.</p> <p>Choose lean or low-fat protein options and aim to eat a variety of protein foods each week.</p>	<p>Fluid milk products and many foods made from milk are in this group, such as cheese and yogurt. Choose mostly fat-free or low-fat dairy products.</p> <p>Foods that have little or no calcium, such as cream cheese, cream and butter, are not in this group.</p>

**Empty calories:** The USDA also recommends that Americans reduce the number of empty calories they consume – calories from solid fats and/or added sugars. Foods with empty calories include most desserts, soda and fruit drinks, pizza, ice cream, sausages, hot dogs and ribs. However, many of these foods can be substituted for a healthier option with fewer empty calories (sugar-free, fat-free, lean, unsweetened, baked, etc.). A small amount of empty calories is okay, but most people eat far more than is healthy. The USDA recommends smaller portion sizes and replacing sugary drinks with water.

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture. For more information on the new guidelines, visit [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov).

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