

The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010* emphasize a few key points that are helpful to consider when preparing meals.

- Enjoy your food, but eat less
- Avoid oversized portions
- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables
- Make at least half your grains whole grains
- Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk
- Compare sodium in foods like soup, bread, and frozen meals—choose the foods with lower amounts of sodium by looking at the Nutrition Facts Label
- Drink water instead of sugary drinks

The MyPlate icon is based on the above concepts. It is also a convenient reminder to consume foods from the five main food groups (vegetables, fruits, protein foods, grains, and dairy). However, keep in mind that it is not necessary to consume all five food groups at every meal. Rather, your overall eating pattern should meet calorie and nutrient needs over time.



MyPlate displays each food group separately, but this does not always reflect how people eat. It is important to remember that there are many ways to adopt the MyPlate concept for different meal patterns. If you are eating a sandwich, a casserole, salad or soup, your plate will look very different, but the same concepts still apply. This brochure provides several examples for how to make a healthy plate at a variety of eating occasions.

EATING OUT THE **MyPlate** WAY

When you are not preparing your own meal, it may seem more challenging to get a balanced plate. Restaurants do not always make this easy. However, there are a few things we can do to build a better plate when eating out:

- Be aware of portion sizes. If the restaurant serves large plates, consider boxing up half the meal and taking the rest home for the next day.
- Pay attention to the descriptions on the menu. If vegetables or fruit are not a central part of the dish, order an extra side of vegetables or ask to substitute a vegetable or salad instead for the customary chips or fries.
- Be wary of buffets—even seemingly healthy ones can tempt you to overfill your plate.



NIH Division of Nutrition Research Coordination
National Institutes of Health
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

<http://dnrc.nih.gov>

National Nutrition Month was created by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

March is National Nutrition Month

GET YOUR PLATE IN SHAPE



NIH Division of Nutrition
Research Coordination
National Institutes of Health
U.S. Department of Health
& Human Services

<http://dnrc.nih.gov>

Just like we need physical activity to get our bodies in shape, we need to think about making changes to our diet that will help us get our plate in shape and help us prepare healthy meals for ourselves and our family.

Last year the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) introduced the MyPlate icon (ChooseMyPlate.gov) to help people do just that. MyPlate is a handy tool that can be used to encourage us to think differently about our food choices. It was designed as an easy way to put the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010* into action. The Dietary Guidelines, which were released jointly by DHHS and USDA, provide nutrition information and advice for people ages 2 and older.

This brochure provides information about the Dietary Guidelines and offers several recommendations you can use to help you get your plate in shape!



GETTING YOUR BREAKFAST IN SHAPE

For many Americans, breakfast is the hardest meal to model after MyPlate. Breakfast is often skipped or eaten on the run and typical favorites generally come from only one food group—a slice of toast, a muffin, or a granola bar. However, breakfast has been declared the most important meal of the day by many, and there is no doubt that research supports starting the day with a nutritious breakfast. Here are a few of ideas to help you rethink your breakfast plate and incorporate key nutrition concepts:

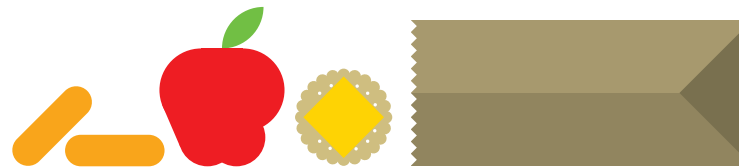
- Egg sandwich with a scrambled egg, sliced tomato, avocado, and a slice of low-fat cheese on a whole-wheat English muffin. Grab a piece of fruit and you are set.
- Whole grain toast spread with peanut butter and sliced banana. Serve with low-fat vanilla yogurt.
- Oatmeal with low-fat or fat-free milk, toasted walnuts and sliced strawberries.



LUNCHTIME THE BROWN-BAG MAKEOVER

At some point during the week, many of us have to pack a lunch for ourselves or family members. Making lunches at home not only saves money, but it gives you control over what you eat, which is important in situations where the lunchtime offerings aren't always healthy. Here are some helpful tips to make balanced meal preparation easier for all:

- Include as many of the five food groups as you can.
- Consider purchasing reusable food containers that have divided compartments to make planning/packing easier.
- On weekends, or when time permits, prepare recipes that can be frozen into single portions and eaten later for lunch.
- Pack lunches the night before so you are not rushed in the morning and tempted to grab the first thing you see when you open your cupboard.
- Be sure to use an insulated lunch box/bag and include an icepack or frozen water bottle if your lunch will not be refrigerated. Perishable foods should be kept at room temperature for no more than 2 hours, so it is important to have a cold source to keep food safe.



Balanced lunch ideas:

- Whole wheat pasta salad (pasta, spinach leaves, roasted chicken, cherry tomatoes, and light Italian dressing), low-fat string cheese and an apple.
- Whole wheat pita with tuna salad, sliced red peppers, fat-free or low-fat milk, and an orange.
- Hummus wrap (whole wheat tortilla, hummus, romaine lettuce, and shredded carrots), low-fat yogurt, and a box of raisins.
- Whole grain crackers and reduced or low-fat cheese, apple slices with peanut butter, and baby carrots.



DINNER WHEN MEAT AND POTATOES AREN'T ON THE MENU

If you are preparing a “traditional” meal with a meat, starch, and vegetable, the MyPlate icon gives a pretty good idea of what a healthy plate should look like. However, what if you are eating a mixed dish—something that has protein, vegetables, and grains mixed together such as a stir-fry or a burrito? The dish will look very different, but it can still have a similar composition. For example, this balanced recipe below has about half its ingredients coming from vegetables, a quarter from grains, and a quarter from protein. It also includes a little bit of dairy from the cheese.

EMPAÑAPITA

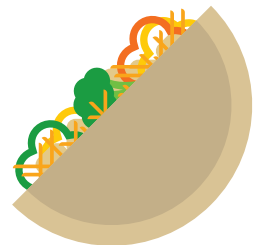
Serving Size: 1 stuffed pita half • Yield: 4 servings

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|--|---|
| 2 cups canned low-sodium black beans, rinsed | 1 Tbsp fresh cilantro, rinsed, dried, and chopped (or substitute 1 tsp dried coriander) |
| 2 cups frozen broccoli, corn, and pepper vegetable mix, thawed | 2 Tbsp scallions (green onions), rinsed and chopped (or substitute red onions) |
| 2 cups cooked boneless, skinless chicken breast, diced (about 4 small breasts) | 2 (6 ½ inch) whole-wheat pitas |
| ½ cup shredded low-moisture part-skim mozzarella cheese | 1 cup salsa |

PREPARATION

- 1 Preheat oven to 400°F.
- 2 Combine beans, vegetables, chicken, cheese, and seasonings. Mix well.
- 3 Cut pitas in half, and open the pockets. Divide filling evenly between the four halves (about 1 cup each).
- 4 Place pitas on a nonstick baking sheet, and bake for about 10 minutes until the filling is hot, cheese melts, and chicken is reheated (at least 165°F).
- 5 Serve each empañapita with ¼ cup salsa on the side.



Source: Keep the Beat™ Deliciously Healthy Family Meals and **We Can!**® (Ways to Enhance Children's Activity & Nutrition)