



# Tips for Building a Healthy Plate\*

## Shopping for Healthy Foods

- Be sure to have plenty of healthy food choices on hand in your refrigerator and pantry.
  - Read labels to understand exactly which choices are best.
  - You'll find an excellent guide to food labels at [choosemyplate.gov/budget-food-label](https://www.choosemyplate.gov/budget-food-label).
- Plan for easy snacks by cutting fruits or vegetables in advance.
- Keep whole-grain crackers, low-fat cheese or yogurt and low-salt nuts on hand.
- Search for recipes that include fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean meats.

## Foods to Eat More Often

- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.
  - Eat a variety of red, orange and dark-green vegetables, like tomatoes, sweet potatoes and broccoli.
  - Try fruit in side dishes, main dishes or as dessert.
- Switch to skim or 1% milk.
  - You'll get the same amount of calcium and essential nutrients as you would in whole milk, but less fat and fewer calories.
- Make at least half of your grains whole.
  - Choose 100% whole-grain cereals, breads, crackers, rice and pasta.
  - Look for “whole grain” in the ingredients list on food packages.
- Switch up your proteins.
  - Aim to make seafood the protein on your plate twice a week.
  - Eat beans, which are a natural source of fiber and protein.
  - Keep meat and poultry portions small, and always choose lean cuts.

## Foods to Eat Less Often

- Choose foods and drinks with little or no added sugar.
  - Drink water instead of sugary drinks. There are about 10 packets of sugar in one 12-ounce can of soda!
  - Eat fruit for dessert. Save sugary desserts for an occasional treat.
  - Choose 100% fruit juice instead of fruit-flavored drinks.
- Check labels carefully for added salt (sodium). Too much salt can lead to high blood pressure.

- Compare sodium in foods like soup, bread and frozen meals — and choose the foods with lower numbers.
- Use spices or herbs, instead of salt, to season foods while cooking.
- Stay away from foods that are high in solid fats.
  - Major sources of saturated fats include cakes, cookies, ice cream, pizza, cheese, sausages and hot dogs. Save these for once in a while, not every day.
  - Select lean cuts of meat or poultry and fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt and cheese.
  - Use oils like olive, canola or vegetable for cooking instead of solid fats like butter, margarine, cream and shortening.

## Balanced Calories

- Find out how many calories per day you should get by using the MyPlate Plan calculator:
  - **[choosemyplate.gov/MyPlatePlan](http://choosemyplate.gov/MyPlatePlan)**
  - You can also consult your doctor, or meet with a dietitian to make a more customized plan based on medical needs.

### Also keep in mind:

- Avoid oversized portions. Consider using a smaller plate, bowl or glass.
- Try to avoid eating food prepared at restaurants, including carry-out. This gives you more control over what's in your food. If you do eat out, order a smaller portion, share your meal, or save part of it to take home.

## Be Physically Active

- Staying active can help to balance calories. The more activity you get, the more calories you can eat.
- Your health care professional can help you find appropriate exercises for you.
- Start slowly. Even 10 minutes at a time can add up. Many exercises can be done at home, from a seated or standing position. If possible, start with short walks and build from there.

**[UHCCommunityPlan.com/CA](http://UHCCommunityPlan.com/CA)**

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