

Planning healthy meals for **weight management**



The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* suggest making healthy eating count by:

- Choosing healthy foods and beverage choices to maintain or reach your weight goal to help lower your risk of chronic diseases
- Including foods you enjoy that reflect your culture, preferences, and budget
- Focusing on foods and drinks that provide vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients—while staying within your calorie needs
- Limiting added sugars, saturated fats, sodium (*salt*), and alcoholic beverages

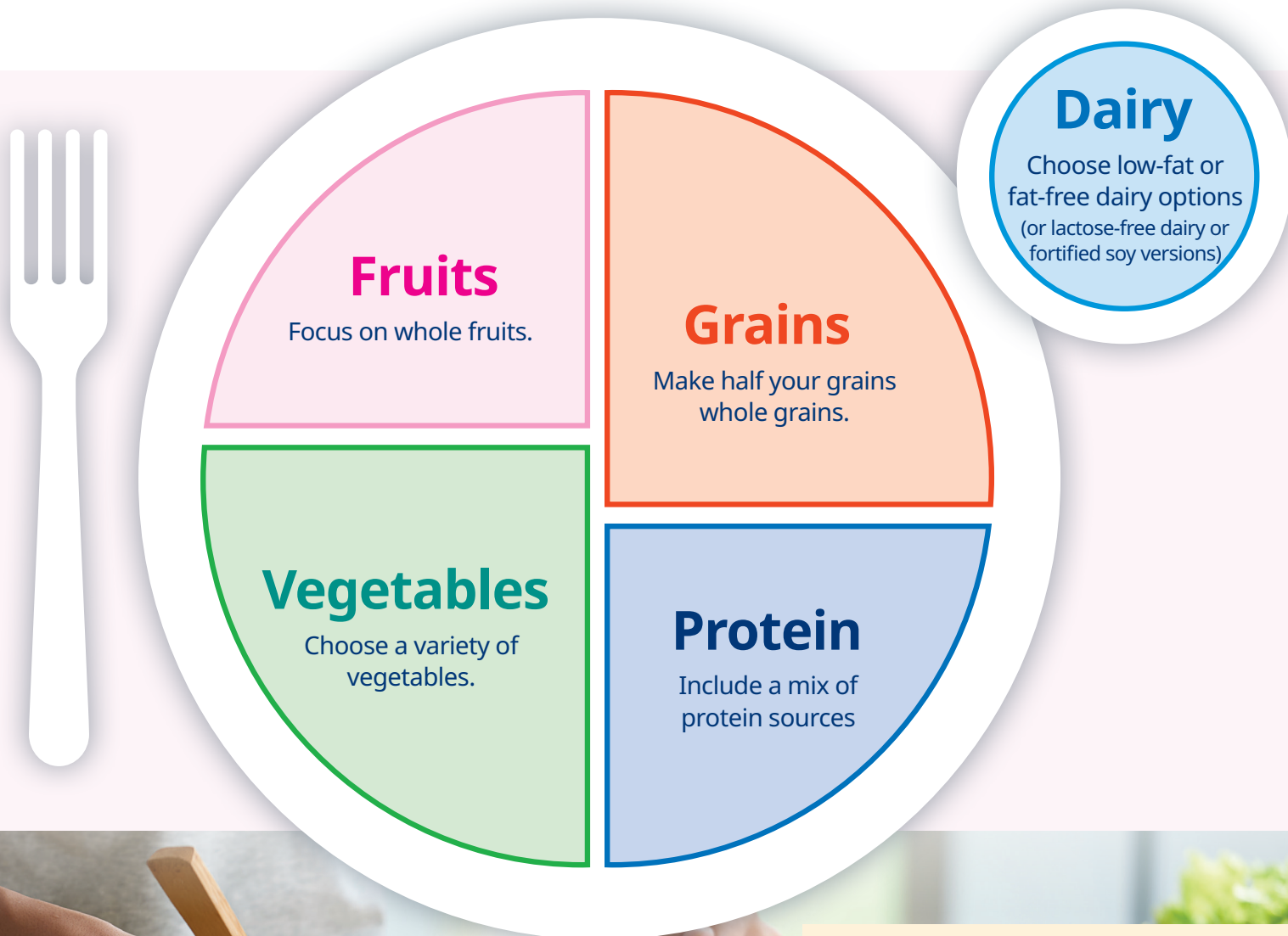
Before starting any new eating plan, it's important to check in with your healthcare professional. They know your health history and can help find an eating plan that is best for you.



Using your plate to build a balanced meal

The **MyPlate Plan** can help you create a healthy eating routine. Use your plate as you aim to meet your **food group goals** for vegetables, fruits, grains, protein, and dairy.

Keep in mind you don't have to make your plate look exactly like this one. Think of it as a starting point, a **visual guide** you can use to get an idea of how to create a **balanced meal**.



Make your plate your own!

This method is very flexible and can be easily adapted across many different cuisines, budgets, or dietary restrictions.

Daily food group goals

Your daily nutritional needs depend on your age, sex, height, weight, and activity level. If you are trying to reduce or manage your weight, your needs may differ. Talk to your healthcare professional about your specific calorie goals. Below are general guidelines for a **2,000-calorie daily meal plan**.

Fruits

Nutrition: fiber, potassium, vitamin C

Goal: 2 cups per day

What counts as 1 cup:

- 1 cup of fresh, frozen, or canned fruit
- ½ cup of dried fruit
- 1 cup of 100% fruit juice

Vegetables

Nutrition: low in fat and calories, high in fiber

Goal: 2½ cups per day

What counts as 1 cup:

- 1 cup of raw, cooked, frozen, or canned vegetables
- 2 cups of raw leafy salad greens
- 1 cup of 100% vegetable juice

Grains

Nutrition: fiber, carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals

Goal: 6 ounces per day

What counts as 1 ounce:

- 1 medium slice of bread, tortilla, or flatbread
- 1 cup of ready-to-eat cereal
- ½ cup of cooked rice, pasta, or cereal

Protein

Nutrition: protein, healthy fats, fiber, vitamins, minerals

Goal: 5½ ounces per day

What counts as 1 ounce:

- 1 ounce of lean meat, poultry, or fish
- ¼ cup of cooked beans or tofu
- 1 egg
- 1 tablespoon of nut or seed butter
- ½ ounce of nuts or seeds

Protein power

Protein is an important part of your eating plan. It helps with important bodily functions, nourishes the body (including muscles), and helps you feel fuller longer.

Dairy

Nutrition: calcium and vitamin D

Goal: 3 cups per day

What counts as 1 cup:

- 1 cup of milk, yogurt, or fortified soy milk
- 1½ ounces of natural cheese
- 2 ounces of processed cheese

Learn more online at [MyPlate.gov](https://www.MyPlate.gov).



Reading a Nutrition Facts label

There is a lot of helpful information on the **Nutrition Facts label** on packaged foods and drinks. Use it to compare foods and to help you make healthy food choices that fit your weight-management goals only.

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size	2/3 cup (55g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	230
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 8g	10%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%
* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.	

Check serving size

Information on the label is based on 1 serving. Some packages contain more than 1 serving. This example shows a package that contains 8 servings. But the food facts given are for 1 serving only.

Pay attention to how many calories are in 1 serving

To maintain or reach a healthy weight, try to balance the number of calories you eat or drink with the amount your body uses. Discuss your specific calorie goals with your healthcare professional.

Look over the % Daily Values

As a general guide for each nutrient listed, 5% or less is low and 20% or more is high. Try to choose items higher in dietary fiber, vitamin D, calcium, iron, and potassium and lower in saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars.

Remember: Nutrition labels are based on a 2,000-calorie meal plan—your needs may vary. Talk with your healthcare professional to decide on your goals.