



Building a Healthy Plate

Whether preparing a meal at home, packing lunch to go, or ordering at a restaurant, use this guide to make your meal healthy, balanced, and satisfying.

HEALTHY MEAL MODEL



Water

Tap water, sparkling water, water infused with fruit and/or herbs, and unsweetened coffee or tea are good choices. Limit or eliminate sweetened beverages such as soda, smoothies, sports drinks, energy drinks, fruit drinks, sweetened coffee drinks and teas, and even diet sodas.

Whole Grains

Whole grains are more filling and nutritious than refined grains, and can positively impact weight control and energy levels. The best choices are whole, intact grains such as brown rice, buckwheat, quinoa, and steel cut oats, as well as whole grain varieties of breads, pasta, tortillas, and other baked goods.

Right-Sized Portions

Try to match the proportions shown in the healthy meal model. This may mean smaller or half-sized portions since portions served are often excessively large.

Vegetables and Fruit

A healthy plate is half non-starchy vegetables (or combination of veggies and fruit). Selecting a variety of colors provides a variety of nutrients and makes a meal more appealing. Avoid fruit juices and smoothies, high in calories and low in fiber, and choose whole fruit instead.

Healthy Proteins

Choose plant-based protein options more often, such as tofu, beans, lentils, nuts, nut butters, and seeds. Other healthy protein options include skinless poultry, seafood, lean cuts of meat, eggs, and plain yogurt. Try adding beans to salads, vegetable side dishes, chili, soups, brown rice, burritos, or tacos. Start with small portions and rinse beans to reduce intestinal gas.

Healthy Fats

Olive and canola oils, nuts and seeds, nut butters, hummus, avocado, tuna, and salmon are sources of heart-healthy, unsaturated fats. Limit saturated fats, found in red meat, processed deli meats, butter, cheese and other high-fat dairy products. Avoid trans fats, found in some processed foods, fried foods, and baked goods made with “partially hydrogenated” oils.

Sugar and Salt Limits

The average person consumes more than double the recommended added sugar limit. Besides obvious sources to reduce or eliminate, some surprising sugar sources include fat-free

salad dressings, snack bars, and flavored yogurts. Also, limit salt because we consume too much from restaurant and processed foods.

