

What Should I Eat?



Using Harvard's Healthy Eating Guide below, we recommend eating mostly vegetables, fruit, and whole grains, healthy fats, and healthy proteins. We suggest drinking mainly water instead of sugary beverages. It's also important to stay active and maintain a healthy weight.

The main message: Focus on diet QUALITY

HEALTHY EATING PLATE

The diagram shows a circular plate divided into four equal quadrants. The top-left quadrant is green and labeled 'VEGETABLES'. The top-right quadrant is brown and labeled 'WHOLE GRAINS'. The bottom-left quadrant is red and labeled 'FRUITS'. The bottom-right quadrant is orange and labeled 'HEALTHY PROTEIN'. To the left of the plate is a yellow oil dispenser labeled 'HEALTHY OILS'. To the right is a glass of blue liquid labeled 'WATER'.

HEALTHY OILS
Use healthy oils (like olive and canola oil) for cooking, on salad, and at the table. Limit butter. Avoid trans fat.

WATER
Drink water, tea, or coffee (with little or no sugar). Limit milk/dairy (1-2 servings/day) and juice (1 small glass/day). Avoid sugary drinks.

VEGETABLES
The more veggies – and the greater the variety – the better. Potatoes and French fries don't count.

WHOLE GRAINS
Eat a variety of whole grains (like whole-wheat bread, whole-grain pasta, and brown rice). Limit refined grains (like white rice and white bread).

FRUITS
Eat plenty of fruits of all colors.

HEALTHY PROTEIN
Choose fish, poultry, beans, and nuts; limit red meat and cheese; avoid bacon, cold cuts, and other processed meats.

STAY ACTIVE!
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Eating 101

- Plan to eat **3 meals a day** and maybe 1-2 snacks. Skipping meals decreases your basal metabolic rate and makes it more difficult to maintain a healthy weight. Eating small meals frequently works better for some.
- The **type of carbohydrate** in the diet is more important than the amount—such as **vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and legumes**. The healthiest carbs are those that have been **minimally processed**. Selecting a variety of fruits and vegetables of different colors will help to insure you get all the nutrients you need. As the shown in the Healthy Eating Plate above, half of your meal should consist mainly of vegetables and some fruit.

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- Limit the amount of sugar and "white" highly-refined carbohydrates as they digest quickly and lead to a rapid rise in blood sugar and insulin—this can often cause you to feel hungry soon after you've eaten.
- For **protein**, choose plant sources more often such as legumes (lentils, soybeans, chickpeas, etc), nuts and nut butters, and grains including quinoa, kamut, bulghur, and wild rice. Along with fish and poultry, these are all high quality proteins that are lower in fat and cholesterol.
- Include **healthy fats** in the diet, such as plant oils (olive, canola, sunflower, soy, corn), nuts, avocado and fatty fish, like salmon and tuna. Fat in the diet is broken down slowly and helps promote satiety. Limit saturated fats from animal sources (red meat, butter, cheese) and avoid foods that contain trans fats.
- **Calcium** is an important component of a healthy diet, but milk and dairy products are not the only sources. Dark green leafy vegetables are also a good source of calcium without the saturated fat. Choose low fat dairy products most of the time.

For more details in extensive information about food, diet, and health:
<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/>

The Healthy Eating Plate summarizes the best evidence-based dietary information available today. As nutrition researchers are continually discovering valuable information, The Healthy Eating Plate will be updated to reflect new findings.

kcw 8/23/17

