



“MAKE MY PLATE YOUR PLATE” WORKSHOP FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why is physical activity not illustrated on the MyPlate icon?

To keep the image simple, the MyPlate icon includes only the five food groups to help remind consumers to eat healthfully. It does not include all of the messages of the Dietary Guidelines. Although it is not shown on the icon, physical activity is still very important for an overall healthy lifestyle.

How much should I eat from each of the food groups?

The amount you should eat from each of the food groups depends on factors such as your age, gender, height, weight, and how much physical activity you usually do. In general, the USDA Food Patterns provide recommended intake from each food group at various calorie levels. For the 2000 calorie level (average adult female calorie need), recommended intakes include: 2 cups fruit, 2.5 cups vegetables, 6 oz. grains, 5.5 oz protein foods, and 3 cups dairy. To get a personalized Daily Food Plan, visit the website at www.choosemyplate.

Why is it important to focus on lean or low-fat choices from the Protein Foods group?

It is important to focus on eating lean or low-fat choices from the Protein Foods group to help keep your blood cholesterol levels healthy. Non-healthy protein sources include fatty cuts of beef, pork, and lamb; regular ground beef; regular sausages, hot dogs, and bacon; some luncheon meats such as regular bologna and salami; and some poultry such as duck. These foods are high in saturated fats and cholesterol and may raise “bad” cholesterol levels in your blood. The “bad” cholesterol is called LDL (low-density lipoprotein) cholesterol. Having high LDL cholesterol increases one’s risk for coronary heart disease. Focus on eating lean or low fat meat like round or sirloin that is at least 90% lean, poultry with out the skin, seafood, and vegetable proteins including beans and peas, processed soy products, nuts, and seeds. Strive to eat a variety of seafood in place of red meat or poultry twice per week. Seafood contains a range of nutrients including healthy omega-3 fats which may help prevent heart disease.

What counts as a cup of vegetables?

In general, 1 cup of raw or cooked vegetables or vegetable juice, or 2 cups of leafy salad can be considered as 1 cup from the Vegetable Group. For a chart that list specific amounts that count as 1 cup of vegetables go to http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/vegetables_counts_table.html. Eating a variety of colorful vegetables is important because they are full of vitamins and minerals and most are low in calories.

Why are beans in both the Protein Foods Group and the Vegetable Group?

Beans and peas can be counted in either the Vegetable Group (beans and peas subgroup) or in the Protein Foods Group. This is because beans and peas contain nutrients similar to foods in both groups. Beans and peas are excellent sources of plant protein, and also provide other nutrients similar to meats, poultry, and fish found in the Protein Foods Group. However, they are also considered as part of the vegetable subgroup because they are excellent sources of dietary fiber and nutrients such as folate and potassium. Generally, individuals who regularly eat meat, poultry, or fish would count beans and peas in the Vegetable Group. Individuals who infrequently or never eat meat, poultry, or fish (vegetarians and vegans) would first count the beans and peas they eat in the Protein Foods Group, and then any remaining could be counted in the Vegetable Group.

How do you classify fruit juice and fruit drinks?

100% fruit juice is considered to be part of the Fruit Group. However, 100% fruit juice lacks fiber provided from whole fruit. Fruit drinks that are not 100% fruit juice contain added sugars and only the amount of the drink that is 100% fruit juice would be counted towards the fruit group. It is recommended that you keep your juice or other sweetened beverage intake to no more that ½ cup a day and that you choose whole or cut-up fruit, rather than juice, for the benefits that dietary fiber provides.

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What if I don't eat or drink dairy products?

Foods in the Dairy Group provide calcium, potassium, vitamin D, and protein that are essential for health and maintenance of your body. In particular, calcium and vitamin D play a key role in boosting bone health. If you cannot eat or drink dairy products, then make sure you include calcium-rich non-dairy sources in your diet such as leafy green vegetables (collard greens, turnip greens, bok choy, mustard greens, and others) and broccoli, tofu made with calcium sulfate, calcium-fortified soymilk, calcium-fortified breakfast cereals and bone-in fish like canned salmon and sardines. Beans can also supply some calcium. Consuming enough plant foods to meet calcium needs may be unrealistic for some people, so speak with your physician or medical provider about a calcium supplement.

Vitamin D functions in the body to maintain proper levels of calcium and phosphorous, thereby helping to build and maintain bones. Non-dairy sources include Vitamin D fortified soymilk (soy beverage) and ready-to-eat breakfast cereals. Based on much scientific research, many people do not get enough Vitamin D to protect their health. You may want to discuss the need for a supplement with your doctor.

Where are oils on the MyPlate icon?

To simplify the image, the MyPlate icon includes only the five food groups, to help consumers prioritize their choices. Oils are typically a component in food and usually not a separate item on the plate. The emphasis on the food groups helps consumers think about their entire meal instead of just components or ingredients. Oils are not a food group, but they provide essential nutrients. Therefore, oils are included in USDA food patterns. It is recommended that individuals include small amounts of healthy oils like olive, canola, soy, corn, sunflower, and peanut in their diet.

How do I count cookies, cakes, pies, etc.?

Sweets or desserts can be included in a healthy diet as long as you have eaten the recommended servings from each food group and you are not getting more calories than your body needs. Many of the calories from desserts and sweets come from unhealthy fats and added sugars and are referred to as "empty calories". They don't provide your body with many nutrients.

How do mixed dishes (e.g. pizza, burrito, etc.) fit into MyPlate?

Many popular foods don't fit neatly into one food group. For example, a cheese pizza counts in several groups: the crust in the Grains Group, the tomato sauce in the Vegetable Group, and the cheese in the Dairy Group. A large burrito with beef, beans, rice, and cheese counts in several groups: the tortilla and rice in the Grains Group, the beef in the Protein Group, the beans in the Protein Group or Vegetable Group, and the cheese in the Dairy Group. To count the dish, you must visually take it apart and think about each food component of the dish and to which group it belongs. Some other common mixed dishes and how they count in each food group are listed in the chart found at <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/downloads/MixedDishes.pdf>. You must also remember that some mixed food also contain a lot of fat, oil, or sugar, which adds calories.