



Make MyPlate work for you

I've been following the eating patterns depicted in "MyPlate," but do I have to incorporate all the food groups at every meal?

Not necessarily. Although it may be helpful to try it out for a short time to see if it makes a difference in your eating patterns, the idea is to make the MyPlate icon work for you.

For readers not familiar with MyPlate (the icon that replaced the food pyramid last year), it looks like a round dinner plate divided into four sections, with fruits and vegetables on one side and grains and protein on the other. The vegetables and grains sections are slightly larger than the fruits and protein sections. At the top right of the plate, there's a smaller circle representing dairy. You can see the icon and learn more at <http://www.choosemyplate.gov>.

The image is a great visual reminder for some basic nutrition guidelines, including:

- Eat more fruits and vegetables.

According to the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, most adults should get 1.5 to 2 cups of fruit per day, and 2 to 3.5 cups of vegetables. For ideas on what constitutes a "cup" (a small apple, for example), see the ChooseMyPlate website. If you tend to snack on fruit (a banana mid-morning; an apple or orange in the afternoon), it might make sense at meals to fill up that entire side of the plate with vegetables.

- Rethink the idea that a meal's

"main dish" should take up half (or more) of the plate. Most adults should eat just 5 to 6 ounces of protein foods each day (not each meal). Relegating meat, poultry or fish to less than one-quarter of the plate will help you avoid going overboard on protein foods.

- Be sure to get enough dairy.

Having a cup of fat-free or 1 percent lowfat milk with a meal can help you get the 3 cups of dairy recommended each day. But dairy products, such as yogurt or cheese, can also make great snacks. Note that a little cheese can go a long way — you can count 1.5 ounces of natural cheese or 2 ounces of processed cheese as "1 cup" of dairy.

- The grains section is a reminder to make at least half your grains whole grains. That means choosing brown rice instead of white; whole-grain pasta instead of regular; whole-grain bread instead of refined. Overall, most people tend to overdo it on refined grains. Avoid that by limiting snacking on grains (crackers and chips, for example) and put more focus on whole grains during meals.

When you look at the MyPlate icon, experts hope you think this: Enjoy your food, but eat less. At the same time, increase fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat or fat-free dairy. Keep this in mind and you won't go wrong.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@osu.edu.



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By **Martha Filipic**

614-292-9833

filipic.3@osu.edu

Editor:

This column was reviewed by Julie Kennel, nutrition program manager for Ohio State University Extension and director of the Dietetic Internship Program in the Department of Human Nutrition in the College of Education and Human Ecology.

Communications and Technology

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2021 Coffey Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1044
614-292-2011

208 Research Services
Building
1680 Madison Ave.
Wooster, OH 44691-4096
330-263-3780

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