

# CHANGE YOUR DIET MINDSET



The sum of everything we eat and drink is called **nutrition**, and for better or worse, it impacts our health. Very simply, **every time you eat, you're either feeding disease or fighting it**. Unfortunately, in the U.S., we tend to feed disease, since most of our chronic diseases could be prevented with better nutrition. The solution to the problem is not a diet, but rather permanent changes to the way we normally eat (our eating patterns).

## “Rules” of a healthy eating pattern

According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, a healthy eating pattern:

- Includes a variety of foods from all food groups (fruits, vegetables, protein, dairy, grains, oils)
- Limits saturated and trans fats, added sugars, sodium
- Should be customized to fit your unique needs and preferences. Nutrition is not one-size-fits-all.

**MyPlate** is a tool to help follow the rules. At every meal, try to:

- **Make half your plate fruits and veggies.** This can be a combo of fresh, frozen, canned, 100% juice or dried fruits and veggies. The most nutrition will come from whole fruits and veggies (closest to their original harvested form).
- **Make your grains whole at least half of the time.** A whole grain is the entire grain and has more nutrition (Examples: brown rice, oatmeal, whole grain wheat). A refined grain has been processed (Examples: white bread and pasta).
- **Vary your protein choices** to include lean (less fatty) and unsalted forms. Plant proteins (legumes, nuts, seeds), poultry (chicken, turkey), and fish tend to be the most lean.
- **Choose low-fat or fat-free dairy** to get benefits like calcium and protein without the extra saturated fat, which is bad for your heart. Dairy includes milk, cheese, yogurt, lactose-free milk and soymilk.



*(MyPlate continued)*

- **Limit saturated fats** (butter, margarine, animal fats) and **trans fats** (common in fast foods, desserts, and other process foods – look for “hydrogenated” on the food label). Use oils instead.
- **Limit added sugars.** Reduce soft drinks, juice, sport and energy drinks, sweetened coffee/tea, and desserts.
- **Limit sodium** by choosing fresh food over processed products, looking for low-sodium items, cooking more at home, and using spices and herbs over salt.

## Other healthy eating tools

- Portion control
- Nutrition facts labels
- Registered Dietitians

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

MyPlate: [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)

Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics:  
[www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA):  
[www.nutrition.gov](http://www.nutrition.gov)

Learn more and figure out your personal recommendations by visiting [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov). Enter your age, sex, height, weight and physical activity.

