

It's All About Balance: Eat Smart, Move More, Rest Well

4 Tasty Ways to Enjoy Balanced Meals and Snacks

Start with fruits and vegetables.

Produce is the place to start planning a balanced meal for two reasons. First, fruits and vegetables give you a nearly perfect nutrient-rich package. They are low in fat and calories. They are cholesterol-free. They are packed with fiber, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. Second, many American adults and most children do not eat enough fruits and veggies. At lunch or dinner, divide your plate in half with an imaginary line. Fill half with tasty veggies and fruits.

Add in the goodness of whole grains.

Whole grains, like whole-wheat bread, multi-grain cereal, oatmeal, brown rice and whole-grain pastas are also rich in nutrients and flavor. Like all plant foods, they are good sources of fiber and antioxidants. Enriched grain products have vitamins and minerals added. These are lost with the bran during processing. On the other side of your plate's imaginary line, divide that half into quarters. Fill one quarter of the plate with grains.



Include the power of protein foods.

Are you wondering what goes into that empty quarter of your plate? The power of protein, of course! There are plenty of yummy ways to get the protein your muscles crave. This includes lean beef, pork, lamb, fish, seafood, chicken, turkey and, dried beans and peas. Other good sources of protein are reduced-fat dairy foods (cheese, cottage cheese, yogurt and milk). You'll get plenty of protein from 2-3 ounces of lean meat or an equal amount (like ½ cup beans) per meal.

Choose your beverages wisely.

It's time to re-think your drink! Move away from sugary beverages with lots of calories and no nutrients. Here's a simple rule of thumb for getting the fluids you need. You'll also get some important nutrients at the same time. Drink milk with meals and drink water with snacks. That would be three 8-ounce glasses of low-fat milk and 2-3 glasses of water. That's enough for most folks to stay well-hydrated and meet their calcium needs for the day.

No one food group gives you all the nutrients that your body needs for good health. A variety of tasty foods from all groups is the best way to meet your daily nutrition needs. If you'd like more information on how to enjoy a healthy eating style, go to www.nutrientrichfoods.org/. There are recipe and menu planning ideas, and tips on getting around the grocery store. There also ideas on how to get the most out of MyPyramid.



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