

# Redesign Your Plate

Just about everyone could use a few tweaks to their diet—like eating more fruits and vegetables, or cutting down on fatty, sugary, or fried foods. Many of us suffer from “portion distortion.” As restaurant portion sizes have ballooned, we’ve lost the ability to know exactly how much food we should be eating.

One of the best ways to learn how to eat a healthy, balanced meal is with a “portion plate.” (Even the USDA has replaced the old food pyramid concept with a portion plate.) By following the plate’s layout, it is easy to choose the right types of foods, in the right amounts, for every meal.



Let’s see how the Portion Plate is divided up, and look at some healthy food choices you can include in each section.

## Fruits and Vegetables

Half of the plate is for fruits and vegetables. They fill you up, are low-calorie, and are packed with nutrients. The more of them you eat, the better they taste.

Most people need to eat more fruits and vegetables, so don’t worry about limiting your portion size of these. You want to eat a lot of fruits and vegetables. That means at least 1 cup of fruits, plus 1 cup of vegetables. In general, you can think of a cup as about the size of a baseball.

One vegetable to limit is the potato. They have a lot of starch. If you do have one, try to keep it to no more than a medium-sized potato and don’t put too much butter and salt on it.

### Tips:

- Eat a variety of colors. Try a different fruit or combination of fruits each week to get the best mix of nutrition.
- Limit high-calorie sauces and dips. Try herbs, fat-free dressing, lemon or lime juice, vinegar, and garlic for flavoring.
- Buy canned fruits in 100% fruit juice—not syrup.

- Buy pre-cut fruits or vegetables that you can keep in your fridge and grab whenever you need them. Baby carrots are perfect snack size.
- Buy vegetables at peak season. Fresh vegetables taste better.
- Avoid cooking vegetables in butter and heavy sauces, which add fat and calories.

## Whole Grains

You need some whole grains in your diet, but not too much. No more than 1/4 of your plate should be grains. Always aim for WHOLE grains. They are much healthier than refined white grains.



Here are some examples of a healthy serving of whole grains:

- 1 slice of whole wheat bread
- 1 multi-grain pancake (no bigger than a DVD)
- 5 whole wheat crackers
- 1/2 cup cooked brown rice
- 1/2 cup whole wheat pasta
- 1/2 cup oatmeal
- 1/2 of a whole grain bagel

## Lean Meat or Protein

Meat is a good source of protein, but don't let it fill more than 1/4 of your plate. This amounts to 2-3 oz of cooked meat – about the size of a deck of cards. Fish and skinless chicken are better than red meat. Avoid fatty meat and stay lean.

You can also get protein from eggs, cheese, yogurt, lowfat milk, cooked beans, tofu, soy, seeds, and nuts.

