

MyPlate: USDA's New Food Icon for Healthy Eating



MyPyramid Is Now MyPlate

Building a healthy meal just got easier. MyPlate, the federal government's new food icon for what to eat, was unveiled on June 2, 2011 to replace USDA's food pyramid with a familiar image, a plate.

MyPlate is an easy-to-understand place setting that reminds Americans to think about their food choices and build a healthy plate at meal times. It encourages people to eat healthfully by choosing foods that contain essential nutrients without too many calories.

The plate is divided into four wedges that emphasize vegetables, fruits, grains and protein. It calls for filling half the plate with vegetables and fruits and dividing the other half of the plate between grains and lean protein foods. A circle adjoining the plate adds a serving of dairy, such as a glass of fat-free milk.

The five food groups and all their guidelines remain the same as in MyPyramid, the previous food icon. However, MyPlate changed the names of two food groups. The former "Meat & Beans Group" is now the "Protein Group," which emphasizes eating a variety of protein foods.

- Eat plant protein foods more often, including beans, which are a natural source of fiber and protein.
- Choose seafood twice a week.
- Keep meat and poultry portions small and lean.

The former "Milk Group" is now the "Dairy Group," which encourages eating and drinking more fat-free or low-fat dairy foods. This name change shows that, in addition to milk, the "Dairy Group" contains yogurt, cheese and fortified soymilk.

ChooseMyPlate.gov

USDA has set up a new website, ChooseMyPlate.gov. This site provides practical, user-friendly nutrition tips and resources to help people build healthier diets and establish eating habits consistent with the *2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. It features selected messages for healthy eating, including:

- Enjoy your food, but eat less.
- Avoid oversized portions.
- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.
- Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk.
- Make at least half your grains whole grains.
- Compare sodium in foods like soup, bread, and frozen meals—and choose foods with lower numbers.
- Drink water instead of sugary drinks.

10 Tips Nutrition Education Series

ChooseMyPlate.gov contains these 14 sheets that provide 10 easy-to-follow tips to start making small changes toward healthier eating.

- Choose MyPlate
- Add More Vegetables to Your Day
- Focus on Fruits
- Make Half Your Grains Whole
- Got Your Dairy Today?
- With Protein Foods, Variety Is Key
- Build a Healthy Meal
- Healthy Eating for Vegetarians
- Smart Shopping for Veggies and Fruits
- Liven Up Your Meals With Vegetables and Fruits
- Kid-Friendly Veggies and Fruits
- Be a Healthy Role Model for Children
- Cut Back on Your Kid's Sweet Treats
- Salt and Sodium

Other Resources Found on ChooseMyPlate.gov

ChooseMyPlate.gov includes resources such as sample menus for a week at the 2,000-calorie level, food-group-based recipes, and personal daily calorie limits for consumers. The new website also contains

much of the consumer information formerly found on MyPyramid.gov, including a special section for interested health professionals and nutrition educators.

More to Come

Later this year, USDA will unveil an exciting “go-to” online tool that consumers can use to personalize and manage their dietary and physical activity choices.

At a time when Americans are experiencing epidemic rates of overweight and obesity, this online “how to” information can help people to make healthier food choices for themselves, their families and their children.

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