

From the Nutritionist

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Choose MyPlate

The right mix of foods can help you be healthier now and in the future. Although most people know this is true, many don't know how to choose the right mix of foods. Did you know that a plate can be one of the best tools for helping you eat right? The USDA's MyPlate can show you a simple way to make healthy choices each day. Learn how to use your plate as a guide to a balanced diet.

For most meals, balance your plate with foods from all the food groups:

- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables — most Americans don't eat enough of these foods loaded with vitamins, minerals and fiber. Aim for lots of different colors of fruits and veggies for the best nutrition.
- Fill one quarter of your plate with grains — and aim to make at least half of your grains whole grains. Whole grains like brown rice, whole wheat pasta, oatmeal, quinoa, and 100% whole wheat bread are more nutritious than refined grains like white bread, white rice, and white pasta, which have much of the fiber, vitamins, and minerals removed during processing.
- Fill one quarter of your plate with food high in protein — such as meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, nuts, or tofu. Many people believe that more protein is better, but too much protein can actually be harmful to your health.
- Add a serving of dairy 3 times a day — such as low fat or fat free milk, yogurt or cheese, or an alternative such as soy milk. Many Americans are low in this food group which is an important source of nutrients such as calcium and vitamin D.

If you can't get all of the food groups in at each meal, try to get as many of them on your plate as possible. If you have veggies, dairy, and protein at one meal, include fruit and grains in the next to cover all five food groups. All of the dining halls have options for adding more food groups to your meal. At both Neubig and The Bistro you can find plenty of options from all of the food groups. Don't just check the hot food lines — you can find great options at the deli, cereal, and salad bars as well. Throughout campus, check the grab-and-go coolers for items such as salads, veggie bowls, fruit cups, milk, yogurt, and soy milk. Mix it up so you eat a variety of foods from each food group, which will help you get all of the nutrients your body needs. With so many choices, it's easy to build healthy meals each day.

Andrea Hart, registered dietitian nutritionist and New York state-certified dietitian/nutritionist, is available for free, confidential, one-on-one counseling and as a speaker or facilitator for campus groups, panels or classes.