

# Use food labels to help you make better choices

Most packaged foods have a Nutrition Facts label and an ingredients list. For a healthier you, use this tool to make smart food choices quickly and easily.

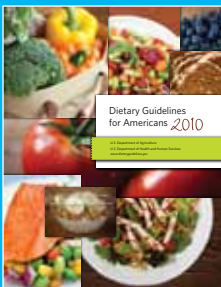
Check for calories. Be sure to look at the serving size and how many servings you are actually consuming. If you double the servings you eat, you double the calories.

Choose foods with lower calories, saturated fat, *trans* fat, and sodium.

Check for added sugars using the ingredients list. When a sugar is close to first on the ingredients list, the food is high in added sugars. Some names for added sugars include sucrose, glucose, high fructose corn syrup, corn syrup, maple syrup, and fructose.



## Dietary Guidelines for Americans



The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010* are the best science-based advice on how to eat for health. The Guidelines encourage all Americans to eat a healthy diet and be physically active.

Improving what you eat and being active will help to reduce your risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, some cancers, and obesity. Taking the steps in this brochure will help you follow the Guidelines.

**For more information, go to:**

- [www.DietaryGuidelines.gov](http://www.DietaryGuidelines.gov)
- [www.ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov)
- [www.Health.gov/paguidelines](http://www.Health.gov/paguidelines)
- [www.HealthFinder.gov](http://www.HealthFinder.gov)

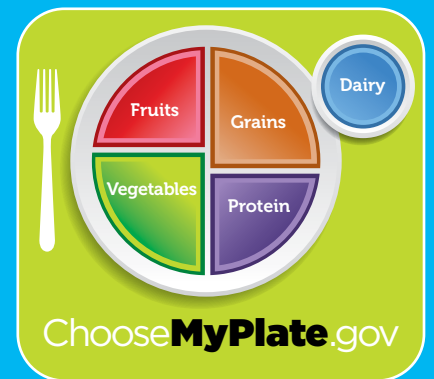


USDA Publication number: Home and Garden Bulletin No. 232-CP  
HHS Publication number: HHS-ODPHP-2010-01-DGA-B

June 2011



# Let's eat for the health of it



Start by choosing one or more tips to help you...



**Build a  
healthy plate**



**Cut back on  
foods high in solid  
fats, added sugars,  
and salt**



**Eat the right  
amount of  
calories for you**



**Be physically  
active your way**

## ► Build a healthy plate

Before you eat, think about what goes on your plate or in your cup or bowl. Foods like vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, and lean protein foods contain the nutrients you need without too many calories. Try some of these options.

### Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.

- Eat red, orange, and dark-green vegetables, such as tomatoes, sweet potatoes, and broccoli, in main and side dishes.
- Eat fruit, vegetables, or unsalted nuts as snacks—they are nature's original fast foods.

### Switch to skim or 1% milk.

- They have the same amount of calcium and other essential nutrients as whole milk, but less fat and calories.
- Try calcium-fortified soy products as an alternative to dairy foods.



### Make at least half your grains whole.

- Choose 100% whole-grain cereals, breads, crackers, rice, and pasta.
- Check the ingredients list on food packages to find whole-grain foods.



### Vary your protein food choices.

- Twice a week, make seafood the protein on your plate.
- Eat beans, which are a **natural** source of fiber and protein.
- Keep meat and poultry portions small and lean.



Keep your food safe to eat—learn more at [www.FoodSafety.gov](http://www.FoodSafety.gov).

## ► Cut back on foods high in solid fats, added sugars, and salt

Many people eat foods with too much solid fats, added sugars, and salt (sodium). Added sugars and fats load foods with extra calories you don't need. Too much sodium may increase your blood pressure.

### Choose foods and drinks with little or no added sugars.

- Drink water instead of sugary drinks. There are about 10 packets of sugar in a 12-ounce can of soda.
- Select fruit for dessert. Eat sugary desserts less often.
- Choose 100% fruit juice instead of fruit-flavored drinks.

### Look out for salt (sodium) in foods you buy—it all adds up.

- Compare sodium in foods like soup, bread, and frozen meals—and choose the foods with lower numbers.
- Add spices or herbs to season food without adding salt.



### Eat fewer foods that are high in solid fats.

- Make major sources of saturated fats—such as cakes, cookies, ice cream, pizza, cheese, sausages, and hot dogs—occasional choices, not everyday foods.
- Select lean cuts of meats or poultry and fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt, and cheese.
- Switch from solid fats to oils when preparing food.\*

#### \*Examples of solid fats and oils

| Solid Fats                          | Oils                 |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Beef, pork, and chicken fat         | Canola oil           |
| Butter, cream, and milk fat         | Corn oil             |
| Coconut, palm, and palm kernel oils | Cottonseed oil       |
| Hydrogenated oil                    | Olive oil            |
| Partially hydrogenated oil          | Peanut oil           |
| Shortening                          | Safflower oil        |
| Stick margarine                     | Sunflower oil        |
|                                     | Tub (soft) margarine |
|                                     | Vegetable oil        |



## ► Eat the right amount of calories for you



Everyone has a personal calorie limit. Staying within yours can help you get to or maintain a healthy weight. People who are successful at managing their weight have found ways to keep track of how much they eat in a day, even if they don't count every calorie.

### Enjoy your food, but eat less.

- Get your personal daily calorie limit at [www.ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov) and keep that number in mind when deciding what to eat.
- Think before you eat...is it worth the calories?
- Avoid oversized portions.
- Use a smaller plate, bowl, and glass.
- Stop eating when you are satisfied, not full.

Cook more often at home, where *you* are in control of what's in your food.

### When eating out, choose lower calorie menu options.

- Check posted calorie amounts.
- Choose dishes that include vegetables, fruits, and/or whole grains.
- Order a smaller portion or share when eating out.



Write down what you eat to keep track of how much you eat.

If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so sensibly—limit to 1 drink a day for women or to 2 drinks a day for men.

## ► Be physically active your way

Pick activities that you like and start by doing what you can, at least 10 minutes at a time. Every bit adds up, and the health benefits increase as you spend more time being active.



### Note to parents

What you eat and drink and your level of physical activity are important for your own health, and also for your children's health.



You are your children's most important role model. Your children pay attention to what you **do** more than what you **say**.

You can do a lot to help your children develop healthy habits for life by providing and eating healthy meals and snacks. For example, don't just **tell** your children to eat their vegetables—**show** them that you eat and enjoy vegetables every day.