

Personalize Your Plate During National Nutrition Month

Developing healthy eating patterns can be difficult. The key is to tailor your favorite foods to meet your individual nutrient needs.

For National Nutrition Month, the theme has been, *Personalize Your Plate*. You can do this by creating nutritious meals that meet individual cultural and personal food preferences.

America is a cultural melting pot, so everyone's food choices are not the same. When you go to the grocery store, we see an increasingly diverse choices of foods that meet the needs of a variety of customers. This makes it easier to create nutritious meals that align with cultural preferences.

To create your plate that is healthy start with small changes to make healthier choices you can enjoy.

Fruits and Vegetables: Make half your plate fruits and vegetables. Focus on whole fruits and choose a variety of fruits and vegetables. Choose whole, cut, dried, or canned 100 percent juice. Enjoy fruit with meals, as a snack or a dessert. Add fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables to salads, sides, and main dishes. Choose a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables prepared healthy ways.

Grains: Make half your grains whole grains. Look for whole grains listed first on the ingredients list. Try oatmeal, popcorn, teff, quinoa, millet, bulgur, brown rice, or breads, crackers and noodles made with whole-grain flours. Limit grain desserts and snacks such as cakes cookies and pastries.

Protein: Vary your protein. Mix up your protein foods to include seafood, beans, peas and lentils, unsalted nuts and seeds, soy products, eggs and lean meats and poultry. Try meatless meals, made with beans, and have fish or seafood twice a week.

Dairy: Choose low-fat or fat-free dairy milk or yogurt and calcium fortified soy milk to cut back on saturated fat. Replace sour cream, cream, and regular cheese with low-fat or fat-free yogurt, milk and cheese.

Limit: Choose foods and beverages with less added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium. Use the Nutrition Facts Label and ingredients list to limit items high in saturated fat, sodium and added sugars. Choose vegetable oils instead of butter and oil-based sauces and dips instead of ones with butter, cream, or cheese. Drink water instead of sugary drinks.

You can find more healthy eating tips at www.eatright.org or www.myplate.gov.