



# How to Build a Healthy Eating Pattern

**There are many different ways to eat healthy. You can eat healthy in a way that works for you and your family. Healthy eating can fit all tastes and traditions — and can be affordable, too.**

The key is to build a healthy eating pattern, which means choosing a variety of nutritious foods in the right amounts for you — and making these choices part of your everyday routine.

Follow these tips — based on the *2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* — for making choices that can help you reach or keep a healthy body weight, get the nutrients you need, and lower your risk of health problems like heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and some types of cancers.

## Get a variety of nutritious foods and beverages.

Eating a variety of foods and beverages is important. It helps you get the range of nutrients you need to be healthy.

- **Eat a mix of foods across all food groups.**

Choose foods and beverages from all food groups — vegetables, fruits, grains, dairy, and proteins — not just 1 or 2 of them.



Vegetables



Fat-free and low-fat dairy, including milk, yogurt, cheese, and fortified soy beverages



Fruits, especially whole fruits



Protein foods, like seafood, lean meats and poultry, eggs, legumes (beans and peas), nuts, seeds, and soy products



Grains, especially whole grains

- **Eat a mix of foods within each food group.**

For example, each week try eating several types of vegetables, including dark green, red and orange, starchy ones, legumes, and others. Switch up the protein foods you eat, too — for example, consider fish, black beans, and peanut butter, not just lean meats and poultry.

## Try to eat and drink the right amounts for you.

How many calories you need to eat depends on your age, sex, height, weight, and how active you are. Use the MyPlate Daily Checklist at [www.choosemyplate.gov/calculator](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/calculator) to find a plan that is right for you.

## Limit foods and beverages higher in saturated fats, added sugars, and sodium.

Aim to get:

- **Less than 10% of calories each day from saturated fats**

Foods higher in saturated fats include butter, cheese, whole milk, meats higher in fat (like beef ribs, sausage, and some processed meats), poultry skin, and tropical oils like coconut and palm oil. Instead, go for foods with unsaturated fats — like seafood, avocados, most nuts, and canola or olive oil.

- **Less than 10% of calories each day from added sugars**

Added sugars are syrups or other sweeteners with calories that are added to foods and drinks when they're being made or prepared. Stick mostly to foods and drinks with naturally occurring sugars — like ones in unflavored milk and fruits — or no sugar at all. Choose water instead of sugary drinks and limit sweet treats like cake, cookies, brownies, and candy.

- **Less than 2,300 milligrams of sodium each day for adults and children ages 14 and up (less for younger children)**

Sodium comes from table salt — but most of the sodium we eat comes from foods that are packaged or served in restaurants. When buying foods in the store, check the Nutrition Facts label and choose the option with the lowest amount of sodium. To cut down on sodium, cook more at home or ask not to have salt added to your meal when eating out.

### Small changes = big benefits

Small *shifts* in your daily eating habits can improve your health over the long run. For example, try swapping out white bread for whole-wheat bread and reach for a handful of nuts instead of potato chips.



## Stick with it.

A lifetime of healthy eating can help prevent health problems like obesity, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and some types of cancer. Think of every day and meal as an opportunity to make a healthy choice.

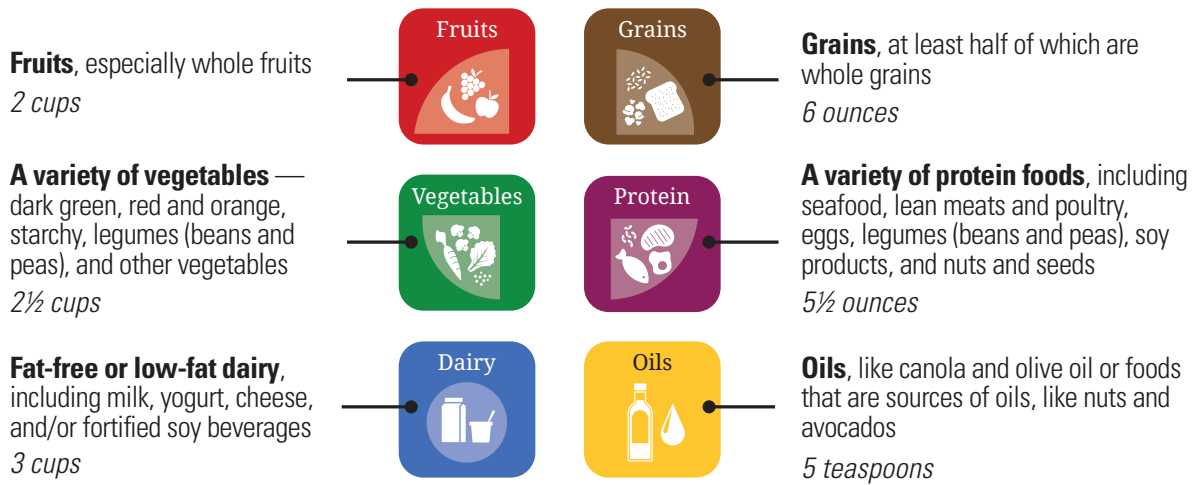
Want to learn more about how to find a healthy eating pattern that works for you?

Check out [DietaryGuidelines.gov](http://DietaryGuidelines.gov) for more information on the *Dietary Guidelines* and find recipes for healthy meals at [www.whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/](http://www.whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/).

# What's in a Healthy Eating Pattern?

The 2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines has recommendations for a healthy eating pattern.

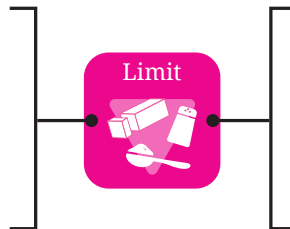
For someone who needs 2,000 calories a day, a healthy eating pattern includes:



And it has limits on:

**Saturated and trans fats** — limit saturated fats to less than 10% of daily calories and keep *trans* fat intake as low as possible

**Added sugars** — limit to less than 10% of daily calories



**Sodium** — limit to less than 2,300 mg a day for adults and children 14 years and up (less for younger children)

A variety of meals and snacks can fit within healthy eating patterns. Many meals have several food groups within one dish. Check out these examples.

## Taco salad



- ½ cup avocado   2 ounces tortilla chips
- 1 tsp lime juice
- 1 cup chopped lettuce   2 ounces cooked ground turkey
- 2 Tbsp salsa
- ½ ounce low-fat cheddar cheese   2 tsp corn oil for cooking turkey

## Tofu-vegetable stir-fry



- ¼ cup pineapple   1 cup cooked brown rice (2 ounces dry)
- ½ cup chopped Chinese cabbage   4 ounces firm tofu
- ¼ cup sliced bamboo shoots
- ¼ cup chopped sweet red and green peppers
- 1 cup fortified soy beverage   1 Tbsp canola oil for cooking stir-fry

## Tuna salad sandwich



- 1 medium peach   2 slices whole-wheat bread
- 1 Tbsp chopped celery   2 ounces canned tuna
- ½ cup shredded lettuce
- 1 cup fat-free milk   1 Tbsp mayonnaise

