

NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH 2012

GET YOUR PLATE IN SHAPE

If you are looking to improve your health, it might be time to rethink the way you plan your meals. Most of us traditionally start our plates with protein and then fill in the sides as afterthoughts. To Get Your Plate in Shape, you will need to reverse this thinking.

Every March, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (formerly the American Dietetic Association) celebrates National Nutrition Month[®]. This year's theme is Get Your Plate in Shape. Following the recommendations of the new MyPlate icon, Get Your Plate in Shape can be simplified by thinking of it in these three steps:

- Start with fruits and vegetables
- Add some grains
- Finish with lean protein and low fat dairy



Fruits and vegetables should make up about half of your plate. They are nutrient rich and with filling fiber are more satisfying for fewer calories than other foods. To make sure you are getting a variety of nutrients, pick fruits and vegetables of different colors throughout the week.



Protein should fill the remaining quarter of your plate. There are a lot of options in this group, so variety here is a good thing too. More than just meats, you can choose fish, beans, nuts and eggs for protein. When choosing meats, remember leaner cuts will save you some calories.

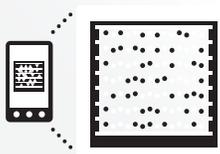


Grains should make up about a quarter of your plate. To maximize this group, remember the rule to make half of your grains whole. This can be approached in two different ways. For example, you can mix your grains at each meal – half white rice, half brown. Or you can alternate whole grains and refined grains from meal to meal – whole grain cereal at breakfast, refined pasta at lunch and quinoa at dinner.



Low fat dairy offers many key nutrients including calcium and vitamin D and can be included as a beverage, a dessert or right on the plate in the form of cheese or yogurt. Remember that the lower fat versions have the same amount of calcium and other nutrients, just with fewer calories. If you aren't ready for the full jump to low fat, try transitioning slowly with the reduced fat versions first.

Snap this Tag to download this month's featured Superfood recipe!



For more information on "Get Your Plate in Shape" visit <http://www.eatright.org/hnm/>.



REFERENCES:

1. USDA MyPlate. June 2, 2011. Retrieved from <http://choosemyplate.gov>.
2. U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010. 7th Edition, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, December 2010. Published March 2012. Written by Jennifer M. Ignacio, MS, RD Compass Group, North America