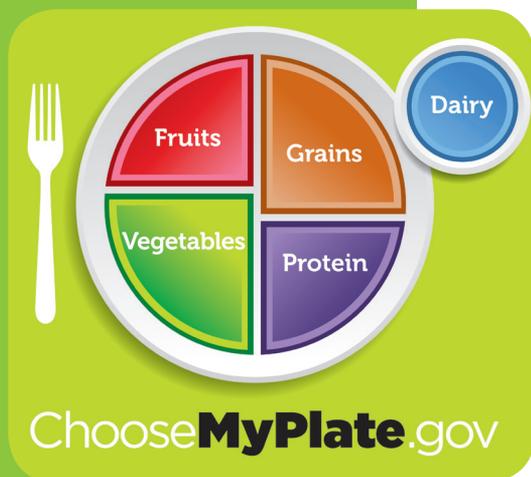


“MyPlate” Becomes the New “Food Pyramid”

by Holly F. Lofton, MD



Out with the old; in with the new. The USDA seems to have recently taken this old adage to heart. In June 2011, “MyPlate” was introduced as a simple, colorful alternative to the Food Pyramid. MyPlate (pictured left) uses a schematic of, you guessed it, a plate divided into four sections (two larger ones designated for vegetable and grains and two smaller sections for fruits and proteins). A “cup” to the side of the plate reminds you to include a dairy product with your meals.

This model is useful for you to educate your children about the components of a balanced meal. It also serves as a healthy reminder to adults about proper portion sizes. The food guide that accompanies MyPlate succinctly emphasizes bare-bones nutrition guidelines that we could all recite as a mantra for avoiding weight gain (see left).

Simply put, these guidelines remind us all to control portions, eat more nutrient-rich foods and to avoid salty, sugary foods.

Food Guide

Balancing Calories

- Enjoy your food, but eat less.
- Avoid oversized portions.

Foods to Increase

- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.
- Make at least half your grains whole grains.
- Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk.

Foods to Reduce

- Compare sodium in foods like soup, bread and frozen meals — and choose the foods with lower numbers.
- Drink water instead of sugary drinks.

MyPlate is a good tool to encourage your children and others to eat from all food groups at any given meal. The guidelines that accompany MyPlate provide a good base, especially for children who need direct rules to follow. I recommend visiting www.choosemyplate.gov and selecting a few of the available links to further broaden the knowledge provided by MyPlate. You must read a little deeper in order to distinguish which grains are whole grains versus simple carbohydrates. Also, it would be preferred if the guidelines stated “Switch to fat-free or 1 percent dairy” instead of just “milk.” Too many of us consider full-fat cheese as their dairy of choice, and a portion size of cheese is definitely less than “a cup.”

Always remember, all fruits are not created equal; therefore, we should be cautioned to choose fewer high glycemic load fruits, such as bananas, and to choose more super-foods, like blueberries. Finally, MyPlate portions are estimates. Therefore, it is wise to follow the food plate guidelines and limit calorie-dense foods, such as bacon, as portions of these should be smaller to avoid weight gain. Enjoy making “MyPlate” YOUR plate!

About the Author:

Holly F. Lofton, MD, is currently an Associate Physician at the Geisinger Center for Nutrition and Weight Management in Danville, PA. Her specialty is geared toward adapting life-long lifestyle changes that lead to successful weight-loss as well as caring for patients undergoing bariatric surgery. Dr. Lofton is a member of the OAC Advisory Board.



ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



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