

Be Well: Student Success and Wellness

Healthy Eating Guide

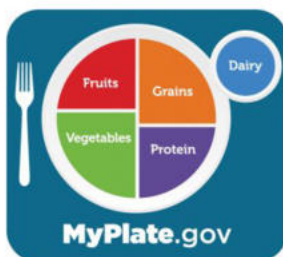
Based on US Government Nutrition Guidelines

Bottom Line: Your Health Matters Now

Good grades are important but so is giving your body the proper nutrition it needs to help you be successful. You may not realize it now, but the eating habits you develop in college set the foundation for your entire adult life. Making smart food choices now can boost your academic performance, energy levels, and long-term health, and it's easier than you think!

MyPlate: Your Guide to Balanced Eating

The USDA MyPlate shows the five food groups and proportions from each that you should eat every day. Picture the food you eat placed on a plate, divided into these sections of Fruits, Vegetables, Grains, Protein Foods, and Dairy.



Make Half Your Plate Fruits and Vegetables

Vegetables (Green section - largest): Vegetables provide many of the vitamins and minerals we need for good health. Veggies are naturally low in calories, and the fiber in them helps us feel full.

Fruits (Red section): Like veggies, fruits have vitamins, minerals, and fiber.

Fill the Other Half with Grains and Protein

Grains (Orange section): At least one-half of grain servings should be whole grains

Protein (Purple section): Include variety like lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts

Don't Forget Dairy

Dairy (Blue circle): Dairy products are rich in calcium, like milk, yogurt, and cheese

Key Recommendations from the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025 provides advice on what to eat and drink to meet nutrient needs, promote health, and help prevent chronic disease.

What TO Eat More Of:

- Fruits and vegetables: Aim for variety and color
- Whole grains: Choose brown rice, whole wheat bread, oatmeal
- Lean proteins: Fish, poultry, beans, nuts, seeds
- Low-fat or fat-free dairy: Milk, yogurt, cheese
- Water: Your best beverage choice

What TO Limit:

- Minimize alcohol use and consumption of foods with added sugar, saturated fat, and sodium
- Sugary drinks (soda, energy drinks, sweetened coffee drinks)
- Processed and fast foods high in sodium
- Foods high in saturated fats

Daily Food Amounts for College Students:

For a typical 2,000-calorie diet (adjust based on your activity level):

Food Group	Daily Amount	Examples
Vegetables	2 ½ cups	1 cup of raw or cooked vegetables or vegetable juice. 2 cups of raw leafy greens is considered as 1 cup from the vegetables group.
Fruits	2 cups	1 large apple, 1 cup berries, ½ cup dried fruit
Grains	6 ounces	In general, 1 ounce from the grains group is 1 slice bread, ½ cup cooked rice/pasta.
Protein	5 ½ ounces	1 ounce = 1 oz meat/fish, 1 egg, ¼ cup beans, ½ oz nuts.
Dairy	3 cups	1 cup milk, 1 cup yogurt, 1½ oz cheese.

Source: The USDA MyPlate Plan (<https://www.myplate.gov/>)

Everyday Tips:

Smart Strategies for College Life:

- Stock healthy staples: Fresh and frozen fruits & veggies, nuts, whole grain crackers, Greek yogurt, eggs
- Maximize your full-size fridge: Pre-cut vegetables, hummus, lean proteins, milk, leftovers in clear containers
- Keep quick options ready: Oatmeal, whole grain cereal, nut butter, canned beans, pasta

Grocery Shopping Strategy:

- Shop the perimeter first: Fresh produce, dairy, and lean meats before processed foods
- Buy versatile ingredients: Items that work in multiple meals like eggs, rice, frozen vegetables
- Consider batch cooking: Prepare large portions on weekends to reheat throughout the week
- Stock your pantry: Olive oil, spices, canned tomatoes, and whole grains for easy meal assembly

Meal Planning Tips:

- Start with vegetables: Fill half your plate with colorful produce
- Include lean proteins: Chicken, fish, beans, tofu, or eggs
- Add whole grains: Brown rice, quinoa, whole wheat pasta
- Control portions: Use smaller plates and bowls to naturally manage serving sizes

4. Meal Planning Tips:

- Start with vegetables: Fill half your plate with colorful produce
- Include lean proteins: Chicken, fish, beans, tofu, or eggs
- Add whole grains: Brown rice, quinoa, whole wheat pasta
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5. On-the-Go Options:

- Bring snacks from home: Bringing food from home was associated with healthier dietary patterns
- Stay hydrated: Carry a water bottle and limit sugary drinks

Why Breakfast Matters for Students

Eating a healthy breakfast is associated with improved cognitive function (especially memory), reduced absenteeism, and improved mood. Quick healthy breakfast ideas:

- Oatmeal with fruit and nuts
- Greek yogurt with berries
- Whole grain toast with peanut butter and banana
- Hard-boiled egg with whole grain toast

Hydration Guidelines

Drinking enough water may improve cognitive function in children and adolescents, which is important for learning.

Daily fluid needs: About 8-10 cups of fluids daily, with water being the best choice. Limit sugary drinks, which still accounts for 10% of total calories among young people.

Special Considerations

Budget-Friendly Eating

- Buy seasonal produce
- Choose canned/frozen fruits and vegetables (watch for added sugars/sodium)
- Buy whole grains in bulk

Food Safety

- Wash hands before eating
- Store perishables properly in your fridge
- Check expiration dates
- Use clean utensils and surfaces

Academic Performance Connection

Good nutrition directly impacts your success in college. Schools provide students with opportunities to consume an array of foods and beverages throughout the school day and enable students to learn about and practice healthy eating behaviors.

Proper nutrition supports:

- Better concentration and memory
- Stable energy levels throughout the day
- Improved mood and stress management
- Better sleep quality

Warning Signs You Need Better Nutrition

Watch for these signs that your diet needs improvement:

- Frequent fatigue or energy crashes
- Difficulty concentrating in class
- Getting sick frequently
- Mood swings or irritability
- Poor sleep patterns

Resources for More Information

Official Government Sources

- MyPlate.gov: Personalized eating plans and tool and comprehensive nutrition education
- Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025: Complete guidelines document

Campus Resources

- Student Health Center: Seton Bld., Room 307 · 504-568-1800
- Hunger Free Campus: <https://tinyurl.com/hunger-free-campus>
- Dining Services: MEB, 3rd floor · 504-568-2241
- Campus Assistance Program (Can aid with SNAP Benefits): HDC, Suite 233 · 504-568-8888

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3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Childhood Nutrition Facts." School Nutrition, December 11, 2024. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/school-nutrition/facts/index.html>
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