

MEAL PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

Use the plate method to build meals that support your health journey.

The plate method is a simple way to plan meals that support healthy blood sugar levels and weight management. It helps you visualize balanced portions and make smart food choices.



Non-starchy vegetables

Lean protein

Healthy carbohydrates

This approach also works for mixed dishes such as soups, casseroles or stir-fries. There's no need to separate foods on your plate.

In addition, include a small serving — about one teaspoon — of healthy fats such as nuts, seeds, avocado or olive oil. Then, round out your meal with water or another low-calorie drink to stay hydrated without added sugars.

If you're more active or find that the standard plate method doesn't meet your energy needs, you can adjust it to include more carbohydrates — like adding fruit or whole grains — while keeping portions balanced.



1. Half the plate:

Fill with non-starchy vegetables like leafy greens, broccoli, carrots and bell peppers. These are low in calories and high in fiber, which helps you feel full and supports blood sugar control.



2. One-quarter of the plate:

Add lean protein such as chicken, fish, tofu or beans. Protein helps maintain muscle and slows the absorption of carbohydrates.



3. One-quarter of the plate:

Include healthy carbohydrates such as whole grains (like brown rice or quinoa), fruit, starchy vegetables or beans. These are fiber-rich sources that provide energy and essential nutrients.

USING THE PLATE METHOD

This sample menu shows how the plate method can be used to support a full day of balanced eating:

Breakfast

- + ½ plate non-starchy veggies:
Sautéed spinach, tomatoes and mushrooms or other vegetables of choice
- + ¼ plate lean protein:
2–3 scrambled eggs or tofu scramble with a sprinkle of cheese (optional)
- + ¼ plate healthy carb:
1 slice whole grain toast or ½ cup cooked steel-cut oats or ½ cup fruit

Lunch

- + ½ plate non-starchy veggies:
Mixed green salad with assorted vegetables of choice (dressing of choice)
- + ¼ plate lean protein:
Chicken breast or chickpeas
- + ¼ plate healthy carb:
½ cup cooked quinoa or brown rice or ½ cup fruit or 1 small baked potato

Dinner

- + ½ plate non-starchy veggies:
Roasted broccoli, zucchini and cauliflower or other vegetables of choice
- + ¼ plate lean protein:
Baked salmon (or chicken, pork, lean beef or meat substitute)
- + ¼ plate healthy carb:
½ small sweet potato or ½ cup lentils or ½ cup fruit

Optional snacks (if needed):

- + Greek yogurt with a few berries
- + One small apple with one tablespoon peanut butter
- + Raw veggies with hummus

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Sources:

cdc.gov Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

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