

## Lesson 1.2: Use MyPlate to plan family meals

**Background (Read before you teach):** What does a healthy meal look like? The answer varies across different cultures and individuals. In the United States the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) provide recommendations for healthy eating to prevent chronic diseases (USDA DHHS, 2016). [MyPlate](#)© is a tool that people can use to choose a healthy eating pattern that fits with their food preferences, traditions, culture, and budget (USDA, 2016a).

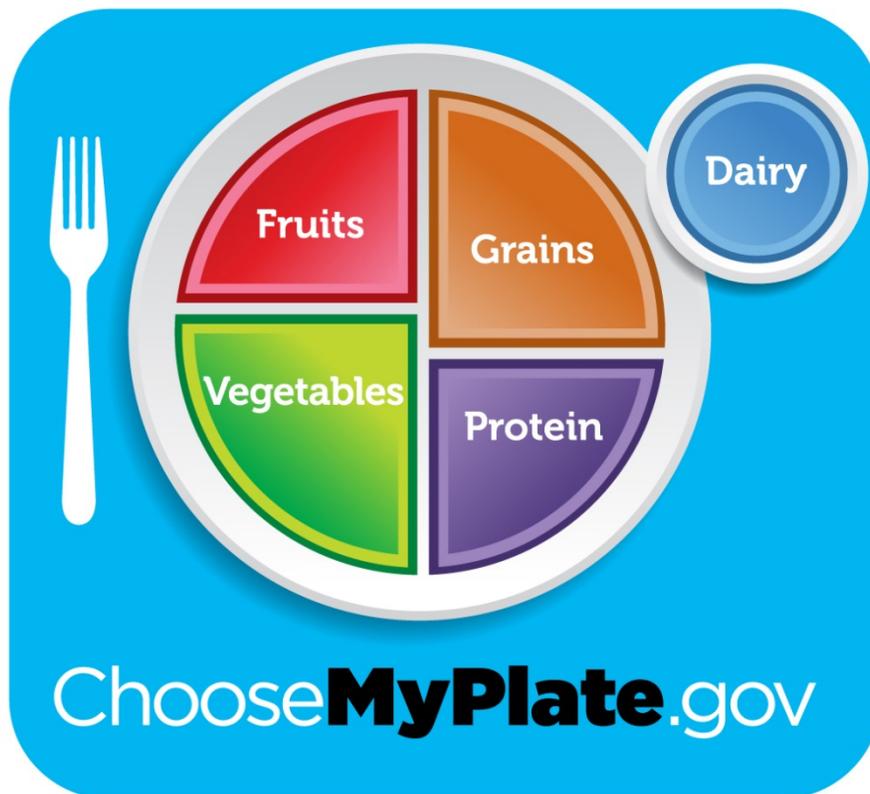


Figure 1. USDA MyPlate.

MyPlate includes five food groups--fruit, vegetables, grains, proteins, and dairy. Calorie (energy) and nutrient needs vary by age, gender, and level of physical activity. Pregnant or nursing mothers have additional calorie and nutrient needs. This means that family members may need different amounts of foods and beverages from the five MyPlate groups. To meet their family's needs, parents should prepare daily meals and snacks that include healthy choices from all five food groups. [Key tips](#) (USDA & DHHS, 2016) to make the healthiest choices include:

- Make half your plate fruit and vegetables;
- Focus on whole fruits;
- Vary your veggies;
- Make half your grains whole grains;
- Move to low-fat or fat-free milk or yogurt;
- Vary your protein routine; and
- Drink and eat less sodium, saturated fat, and added sugar

For people with more questions about individual needs, the Dietary Guidelines and MyPlate websites can provide the answers. For example, [MyPlate Daily Checklist](#) (USDA, 2017b) shows the amounts recommended in a healthy eating pattern by calorie and age group. [Supertracker](#) (USDA, 2017c) can be used to identify an individual's calories needs and plan a healthy eating pattern to meet those needs.

**Teaching Tips:** This lesson focuses on *what* foods and beverages to serve the family. During this lesson, our Mexican-origin participants frequently asked how the vitamins and minerals, provided by the food groups, help the body. Though the Dietary Guidelines emphasize the relationship of healthy eating patterns to disease prevention, this audience seemed to respond to more specific examples to heighten their motivation and attention. For that reason, we have added a few nutrient-health messages to promote each food group. Spanish-speaking audiences may interpret *granos* (grains) as referring to the form of the food (small pieces, as in salt grains) rather than the source (cereals). Be sure to explain that dried beans and legumes are not in the grain group but rather count as vegetables or protein foods.

**Target Audience:** Mexican-origin families with young children, ages 3 to 8 years

**Key Message:** Use MyPlate to plan what to serve so that your children get the foods they need to grow and stay healthy.

**Objectives:** By the end of the lesson, participants will be able to:

- Identify why children need foods from the five MyPlate groups;

- Plan a meal including four or more MyPlate groups; and
- Discuss some ways that parents can avoid serving two different meals.

**Materials:**

- MyPlate© poster;
- White paper plates (2 per person) and markers;
- Optional: a variety food models or containers to show examples of different food groups;
- Supplies and recipes for food demonstration (suggested Spanish Salad).

**Handouts:** Spanish salad recipe, MyPlate mini-poster

**Set-up:** Post the MyPlate© posters on wall or where visible by all participants. Place plates, markers, food models in middle of table where participants have access to supplies.

**Opening (Anchor):** (10 min) Welcome! Review what was covered last time and ask if families have made changes, based on their goals. Congratulate and encourage them to keep on trying. Today we will be talking about how to use MyPlate to plan what to serve your family.

- Hand out the paper plates and markers. Ask participants to draw what their children ate at a meal yesterday. **Ask:** Do you think that the meal was healthy? How Did your children eat the same or different foods as the adults did?

**Lesson (Add):** (15 min) Discuss the following points:

- (Show MyPlate): MyPlate is a guide to help people choose the types and amounts of foods they need to stay healthy. Children also need foods and beverages from the five food groups to grow and develop normally, as well as, to stay healthy. Let's find out more about each food group and why it is important for you and your child.
- [Grains](#) Group:
  - Grains are a good source of energy, B vitamins, fiber, and minerals, like iron and magnesium.
  - Foods made from wheat, oats, rice and other cereal grain are grain products. For example, tortillas, breakfast cereals, breads, crackers and pasta are all grain products. Grains can be enriched or whole. *Note: grains do not include dried beans, other legumes, nuts and seeds.*

- *Make half your grains whole.* Whole grains, like oatmeal, whole wheat bread, and corn tortillas (compared to white flour tortillas) are higher in fiber. Eating foods high in fiber relieves constipation. Fiber also helps lower blood cholesterol, which is healthier for the heart and can reduce the risk of some cancers. High fiber foods can be more filling, so children may be less hungry.
- **Ask:** What foods does your family like from this group?
- [Vegetable](#) Group
  - Vegetables provide many nutrients, such as vitamin A, vitamin C, folate, vitamin E, magnesium, potassium, fiber and others.
  - Most are naturally low in fat and sodium. Vegetables can be fresh, frozen, canned or dried. 100% vegetable juice is also in this group but beware that sodium can be high. Vegetables include dark-green, starchy, red or orange, peas and beans, and other vegetables. *Note: dried beans and other legumes can be counted either as a vegetable or protein group food.*
  - *Vary your veggies.* Diets rich in vegetables protect against chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease (stroke, heart problems) and some types of cancer. To get these benefits, choose a wide variety of different colored vegetables.
  - **Ask:** What foods does your family like from this group?
- [Fruits](#) Group
  - Fruit provides many of the same nutrients as vegetables, especially vitamin C, potassium, and fiber. Just like vegetables, eating a variety of different colored fruits is the best way to get the health benefits.
  - *Focus on whole fruit.* Fruit may be fresh, frozen, canned, or dried. 100% fruit juice is also in this group but whole fruit has more fiber than fruit juice.
  - Many fruits, like berries, oranges, and melon, are high in vitamin C. Eating foods rich in vitamin C, along with iron-rich foods, also helps prevent anemia,
  - **Ask:** What foods does your family like from this group?
- [Dairy](#) Group
  - Milk and foods made from milk provide calcium, vitamin D, potassium, and protein. Milk, yogurt, and cheese are in this group.
  - *Switch to low-fat and fat-free milk.* Low-fat milk is made by removing some of the saturated fat and is healthier for the heart than whole milk and cheese. Low-fat milk is a good source of calcium and vitamin D.

- Children need plenty of calcium and vitamin D to make strong bones and grow normally. Calcium is important for healthy teeth and helps maintain normal blood pressure.
- **Ask:** What foods does your family like from this group?
- Protein foods
  - *Vary your protein.* Seafood (fish, shrimp), beef, pork, poultry, eggs, nuts, seeds and legumes are in this group. Protein foods provide protein, iron, zinc, magnesium, and B vitamins. Because protein foods differ in the amount of nutrients, vary your proteins. Legumes (dried beans and peas) are also a good source of fiber. Fish is a good source of heart-healthy oils.
  - Protein foods help your child to build muscles, skin, and blood. They can also be good sources of iron, which is needed to make blood cells and prevent anemia. Anemia can make it hard for your child to pay attention and learn in school.
  - Grill, bake or boil meats and poultry. Eating too many fatty or fried meats is not healthy for the heart.
  - **Ask:** What foods does your family like from this group?

**Lesson (Apply):** (25 min) While the assistant sets-up the food demonstration, the educator leads the activity, handing out another plate.

Let's think again about the meal you drew earlier. **Ask:** How healthy was the meal? Did it have all the five food groups? If not, what was missing? What could you add to make that meal healthier? Using the blank plate, plan another meal (could be breakfast, lunch, or dinner). Try to include a food from four or more food groups.

Share your meal plan with your partner and discuss the following questions: How many food groups are included? Is there at least one food you are sure your child will eat? How can you avoid making two separate meals for your family?

Food demonstration, tasting and sharing. Pass around the containers, showing the participants any foods that might be new or unfamiliar (for example, low-fat products, whole grain alternatives). Explain step-by-step how the food is prepared. Serve samples for tasting. **Ask:** What are some ways that your children can help prepare this recipe? How can you use it at home? What do you like about the recipe? What would you change?

**Closing (Away):** (10 min) **Ask:** What did you learn from this class? Why is following a guide like MyPlate important to you? Choose a goal to work on this month (or week). Try to choose small changes that you can make within a week

For example:

- Serve at least one family meal with 4 or more food groups
- Plan with your child a snack that includes at least 2 different food groups
- Plan with your child a meal that includes at least 3 different food groups

Write your goal on the recipe handout. Ask a friend or family member to help support you in reaching your goal. Invite families to share their goals.

### References and Resources:

United States Department of Agriculture & US Dept of Human Health and Services. (2016) Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015-2020, Eighth Edition Home Page. 2016. Accessed April 12, 2017 <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/DietaryGuidelines>

United States Department of Agriculture. (2016a). MyPlate, MyWins: Make it Yours. Updated April 6, 2017. Accessed April 12, 2017

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/MyPlate>. Updated Jan 25, 2017. Accessed April 12, 2017

Spanish:

[https://choosemyplate-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/printablematerials/Mini-Poster\\_Spanish\\_508.pdf](https://choosemyplate-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/printablematerials/Mini-Poster_Spanish_508.pdf)

English:

[http://www.choosemyplate.gov/sites/default/files/audiences/mini\\_poster\\_English\\_final.pdf](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/sites/default/files/audiences/mini_poster_English_final.pdf)

United States Department of Agriculture. (2016b). Find Your Healthy Eating Style & Maintain it for a Lifetime. Accessed April 13, 2017

[http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/sites/default/files/dietary\\_guidelines\\_for\\_americans/MyPlate\\_MyWinsTips.pdf](http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/sites/default/files/dietary_guidelines_for_americans/MyPlate_MyWinsTips.pdf)

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/MyPlate-Daily-Checklist>

DRAFT LESSON: DO NOT REPLICATE April 28, 2017

United States Department of Agriculture. (2017c) Supertracker. Updated February 17, 2017 Accessed April 12, 2017

<https://www.choosemyplate.gov/tools-supertracker>.

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