



Better healthcare,
realized.

Healthy Insights

INFORMED • ENGAGED • EMPOWERED

February 2026

Know Your Plate

Did you know that avocados are fruit? Or that raspberries are a member of the rose family? Whether or not you know these facts, being mindful of the food you eat could help to reduce the risk of developing and/or help you manage diseases like high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart disease. Read on to explore the different food groups so you can focus on eating nutrient-dense foods every day.

Take Care of Your Gut with Veggies

Vegetables are an important source of fiber, and they contain vitamins, minerals, and carbohydrates. Fiber is a type of carbohydrate that can help lower your cholesterol and prevent stomach and intestinal problems. There are a few types of nutrient-rich vegetables:

- Dark green vegetables (broccoli and spinach).
- Red and orange vegetables (carrots and pumpkins).
- Starchy vegetables (corn and white potatoes).
- Legumes (beans and tofu).

There are also other vegetables that don't fit into these groups, like eggplant, beets, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, celery, artichokes, green beans, and onions.



Eat the Rainbow with Fruits

Like vegetables, fruits are full of fiber that helps you digest food. Quick tip: to get even more fiber, eat your fruit with the skin on (be sure to wash the fruit first). One hundred percent fruit juice (including pulp) is in the fruit group, but be sure that at least half of the fruits that you eat are whole. Since there are so many different types of fruits, there is an option for everyone's tastes. Some examples include:

- Citrus fruits (oranges and grapefruits)
- Berries (strawberries and blueberries)
- Fruits that grow on trees (apricots and mangoes)

Figs, grapes, pineapples, grapes, and dried fruit are all in the fruit group as well.

Stay Energized with Grains

Grains, like the two food groups mentioned above, contain carbohydrates, which are the body's main source of energy. Grains can be split into two subgroups: whole grains and refined grains. While whole grains have the entire grain kernel, refined grains are milled (the process of grinding kernels) to remove parts of the kernel. When picking out grains to eat, choose whole grains at least half of the time to get all of the essential nutrients (iron, vitamin B, and fiber) they provide. The following are grain products:



- Bread
- Popcorn
- Cereal
- Pasta
- Rice

Get Strong with Protein

Protein can build and repair tissue and help your body fight off infection. Any extra protein that you eat will convert to energy in your body. When picking a protein to eat, try to choose lean (low-fat) meats and poultry (chicken, turkey, duck). Keep in mind that you can also get protein from plant sources. Plant-based proteins are lower in saturated fat, contain no cholesterol, and provide fiber.

Here are some options for protein-rich foods:

- Nuts (almonds, pistachios, walnuts) and nut butters
- Split pea, lentil, or other bean soup
- Tofu
- Eggs
- Hummus
- Seafood (salmon, anchovies, trout)

Promote Bone Health with Dairy

To maintain your bone strength, be sure you're consuming enough dairy to get necessary nutrients like calcium, potassium, and vitamin D. Picking from low-fat or fat-free dairy choices will keep your heart healthy. Here are some examples of dairy:

- Yogurt
- Shredded and hard (cheddar, mozzarella, Swiss, Parmesan) cheese
- Milk or calcium-fortified soy beverages
- Cottage cheese

How Much is Enough?

There isn't a set amount of food in each group that you should eat each day since your weight, sex, age, metabolism, and activity level all determine your personal needs. The average person needs 2,000 calories per day, but this number can be different for everyone. Talk to your doctor to figure out how much of each food group is healthy for you. You can also use the MyPlate Plan calculator (myplate.gov/myplate-plan) to find out what a well-balanced meal looks like for you.

Sources

Healthy Eating As You Age: Know Your Food Groups | NIH NIA

<https://bit.ly/4q7mqyM>



How Much Should I Eat? Quantity and Quality | NIH NIA

<https://bit.ly/49g3Pe8>

Health Tips for Older Adults | NIH NIDDK

<https://bit.ly/48QPIMx>

MyPlate | U.S. Department of Agriculture

<https://bit.ly/4s1KPYg>

IPRO Healthy Insights comes from Dr. Clare Bradley, IPRO's Senior Vice President/Chief Medical Officer, a nationally recognized public health advocate.

IPRO is a non-profit organization that works with government agencies, providers and patients to measure and improve healthcare for all. For over 35 years we've made creative use of clinical expertise, emerging technology and data solutions to make the healthcare system work better.



IPRO Healthy Insights
300 Jericho Quadrangle
Jericho, NY 11753
(516) 209-5403
<https://ipro.org>