It’s All About Making Healthy Choices
Providing healthy meals that your family will eat and finding time to be active can be a challenge. Your eating and activity choices are important to your overall health. Planning a healthful diet and getting the right amount of physical activity is ALL ABOUT YOU taking charge. This booklet can help you:

- **Be Realistic**
- **Be Active**
- **Be Balanced**
- **Be Adventurous**
- **Be Sensible**

MyPlate is a symbol to inspire us to follow the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* when we choose foods at mealtimes. The MyPlate symbol represents healthy eating from all the food groups: grains, vegetables, fruits, dairy, and protein foods. Each food group includes foods with different important nutrients. Eat a variety of foods from all five food groups every day for good health. Before you eat, think about what goes on your plate or in your cup or bowl! For more information, visit ChooseMyPlate.gov. To build and track your own healthy eating plan according to the Dietary Guidelines, use SuperTracker at www.SuperTracker.usda.gov.

Messages in this booklet are based upon the latest guidance—the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010* and the *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*.

The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* provides nutritional guidance for people 2 years and older to promote health, reduce the risk of chronic diseases, and reduce the prevalence of overweight and obesity by improving nutrition and physical activity.

The *Physical Activity Guidelines* are meant to help Americans improve their health through physical activity. The guidelines provide information on the types and amounts of physical activity for improved health for people age 6 and older.
Make small changes over time in what you eat and the amount of activity you do. After all, small changes can add up to giant leaps and are likely to become habits you can keep.

Life is busy, so when it comes to making changes to help improve your health, the best way to be successful is to make small changes that you are happy with and will continue doing. How do you set realistic small changes to meet your goals?

Start by being **SMART**:
- **Specific**: Is your goal clear?
- **Measurable**: How will you know when the change has been accomplished?
- **Achievable**: Can it be done?
- **Realistic**: Is it possible to reach this goal?
- **Timely**: Is there a deadline?

Here are some examples of small steps you can commit to in order to improve your health:
- I will park my car farther away when I am at work or the store. This will help me walk more and burn more calories.
- I will decrease saturated fat and calories in my meals by using cooking spray instead of oil or butter.
- I will walk for ten minutes every day after lunch at work.
- I will eat fat-free and low-fat yogurt instead of ice cream for a treat after dinner.
- I will include a piece of fruit, a glass of low-fat or fat-free milk and/or a whole grain food in my breakfast each morning.
- I will not sit for long periods of time; I will get up and move for 10 minutes at least every hour (for example, walk and climb stairs to deliver a message personally rather than send an email).

**Family-focused tips**
- Come up with a family goal, to help make your family healthier.
  - Once a month, each family member takes a turn planning a family meal (following MyPlate as a guide) and then everyone helps to prepare it.
  - Play outside as a family for 10 minutes after dinner each week night.
  - Discover fast ways to cook. Cook fresh or frozen vegetables in the microwave for a quick-and-easy side dish to add to any meal.
  - Eliminate watching TV or being on computers or phones during family dinners.
Be Active

Make physical activity part of your daily routine.

Measure how well you are doing by using the SuperTracker at [www.SuperTracker.usda.gov](http://www.SuperTracker.usda.gov). (NOTE: Children and adolescents should get 60 minutes or more of physical activity a day.) To find the right amount of physical activity for you and your family, visit: [www.health.gov/paguidelines](http://www.health.gov/paguidelines)

Physical activity helps improve your chances of avoiding health problems, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, osteoporosis, and some cancers. It also helps you manage your stress, sleep better and maintain your weight. If you have a chronic illness, please consult with your healthcare provider to make sure it is safe for you to begin an exercise routine.

Each week you should do at least:

**Aerobic exercise**

**Moderate activity**
- Moderate activity is when your heart beats fast and you breathe hard (i.e., “I can talk while I do these activities, but I can’t sing”).
- 150 minutes per week (30 minutes five days per week)

**OR**

**Vigorous activity**
- Vigorous activity is when your heart beats really fast and you breathe hard (i.e., “I can only say a few words without stopping to catch my breath”).
- 75 minutes per week

**Strength training**
- Strength training involves activities that you do to build muscle and overall body strength. Examples include lifting heavy objects, doing chin-ups, push-ups and pull-ups.
- 2 days per week
**Fun stuff counts as exercise!**

Get active with your family or friends, whether it’s soccer in the backyard, dancing to music, marching in place while watching your favorite TV show, doing sit-ups or push-ups during commercials or taking a brisk walk in your neighborhood. You should complete your physical activity in at least 10-minute blocks to get the health benefits of the activity.

- Set your goal at 150 minutes per week (2 ½ hours per week) of moderate physical activity.
- Take a brisk 10-minute walk on your lunch break and make sure you do not sit for long periods of time by getting up and moving every hour. You’ll feel good and have more energy, too.
- Hop off the bus a few blocks early and walk briskly the rest of the way.
- Keep active around the house and yard: sweep the garage, wash the floors, vacuum the rugs or trim the shrubs. It all helps you stay fit—and the house will look great, too.
- Clip on a step counter and start moving! For good health, gradually build up to 10,000 steps a day—that’s about five miles.
- Too busy to get to the gym? Be active in small ways throughout the day. For instance, walk up and down the stairs at work several times a day.

**Family-focused tips**

- Family time is active time and fun time!
- Make physical activity fun for the whole family. Walk, run and play together.
- After dinner, spend at least 10 minutes going for a walk or playing tag.
- Be a role model. Instead of sitting on the bleachers during your child's athletic practice, go for a walk or jog.
- Start a physical activity challenge. With SuperTracker, set up a family challenge to see who is meeting their goals faster. Visit www.presidentschallenge.org for more information about individual and group exercise challenges.
- Kids learn from watching you. Be active every day and your kids will too.
- Encourage your children to try new activities like dancing, martial arts, swimming, or rollerblading. Find activities that you can all enjoy as a family.
- Make physical activity part of celebrations by including dancing and games.
Balance your eating with your physical activity.

You can do this over several days. For example, if you overeat one day and do not have time for physical activity, you can make it up by eating less for a few days or by doing more physical activity.

Take charge of your weight. Balancing the calories you eat and drink with the calories you burn through physical activity puts you in control.

Know your number. Learning how many calories you should consume in a day is a critical first step in managing your weight. SuperTracker.usda.gov

Calories count. Calories are like a budget – you should only eat so many in a day. Eat wisely by choosing lower-calorie, nutrient rich foods first to help manage your weight. To find your balance, visit SuperTracker to find calorie recommendations based on your height, weight, gender, age, and level of activity and ChooseMyPlate.gov to learn more “how-tos” about controlling calories and portion size. Remember, it’s alright to “Enjoy your food, but eat less”, and “Avoid oversized portions”.

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

- Small steps = big changes.
- Serve smaller portions to help curb calories and keep your weight on the right track.
- Use a smaller plate, bowl and cup at meals to help with portion control. That way you can finish your plate and feel satisfied without overeating.
- Beverage calories count, too. Choose a smaller glass for beverages with calories, and cut calories by drinking water and low- or no-calorie beverages.
- Don’t pack on extra pounds during vacation. Balance out extra portions at special vacation meals, holiday or other meal splurges by working in plenty of walking, biking, hiking, volleyball and other activities.
- Be sure to read the Nutrition Facts label to find out the serving size of foods and beverages. Take note of the calories and nutrients that are provided per serving. Remember, there are multiple servings in some packages. Calories and other nutrients are based on each serving, not the whole container.
Family-focused tips

- Reward kids with love and attention, not food.
- Allow no more than 2 hours of TV and recreational computer screen time each day, whether at home or outside the home.
- Show by example. Be a role model for your kids. Eat vegetables, fruits, low-fat/fat-free dairy, and whole grains with meals or as snacks.
- Go grocery shopping with your kids. Make it a teachable moment about food and nutrition. Cooking together can also be fun.

Nutrition Facts Labels

You can gain useful information by reading labels on the foods you buy. The Nutrition Facts label provides information about many of the nutrients in foods. Foods containing 5% of a nutrient are considered low in that nutrient, while 20% or more is considered high. Nutrition Facts label information can be used to help you make healthy food choices.

Limit saturated fats, cholesterol, \textit{trans} fat and sodium when making food choices.

Choose foods that are high in dietary fiber, calcium, vitamin D and potassium. The ingredients statement is also helpful to check for ingredients like whole grains and to limit added sugars. For a complete list of added sugars, please see page 75 of the \textit{DGA 2010}: \url{http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/Publications/DietaryGuidelines/2010/PolicyDoc/PolicyDoc.pdf}. 
Be Adventurous

If you are eating the same thing every day, you may be missing out on some important nutrients. Base your plate on a variety of nutrient-rich foods and beverages that offer beneficial nutrients and fewer calories. Choose fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, poultry, seafood, eggs, beans, nuts, and low-fat (1%) and fat-free dairy foods or fortified soy beverages (often marketed as soy milk) more often. It’s easier to stick to your calorie budget when you “Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.”

Expand your tastes to enjoy a variety of foods. Enjoy a variety of physical activities.

If walking around the neighborhood doesn’t excite you consider checking out your local park and recreation department for a new physical activity adventure. Many classes are low-cost or free. Consider meeting friends or family at a local park with a walking path or the mall. Try a different class at the gym or add in some weight training movements to jump start muscles you may not be using in your regular routine.

Make half your plate fruits and vegetables. Make at least half your grains whole grains. Go lean with protein.

- Think about variety. Buy fruits that are dried, frozen, or canned (in water or 100% juice) as well as fresh, so that you can always have some on hand.
- Choose vegetables rich in color. Brighten up your plate with vegetables that are red, orange or dark green by including them with your favorite white vegetables. They are full of vitamins and minerals. Try acorn squash, cherry tomatoes, sweet potatoes, or kale. They not only taste great but also are good for you. Prepare one new recipe each week from a favorite magazine, blog, website or newspaper article.
- Dig into a different grain: couscous, bulgur, or quinoa, for instance.
- For an easy meal at home, stop at the supermarket for a precooked rotisserie chicken. Add a microwaved-baked potato and a salad made with bagged lettuce.
- Pick-up recipe-ready meats such as lean beef strips for stir-fry or cubes for stew.
- Get creative with seafood. Think beyond the fish fillet. Try salmon patties, a shrimp stir-fry, grilled fish tacos, or clams with whole-wheat pasta. Add variety by trying a new fish such as grilled Atlantic or Pacific mackerel, herring on a salad, or oven-baked Pollock, or any white fish.
• Meals can be built around veggies, whole grains, and vegetarian protein sources. Try veggie pizza with low-fat cheese, whole wheat pasta, tacos, chili, or stuffed peppers.
• Prepare a crockpot stew or casserole over the weekend or bake a chicken or turkey and plan on using the leftovers during the week for quick dinner salads, skillet casseroles, sandwiches, and soups.
• Bagged romaine hearts and cut-up raw veggies and fruit with low-fat salad dressing or hummus can do the trick.
• Microwaveable bags of plain frozen veggies are quick fix alternatives to keep on hand.
• Whole-grain cereals can be enjoyed with low-fat dairy.
• Lean ground beef may be browned ahead of time and frozen for quick and convenient use in spaghetti sauce, chili, sloppy joes, etc.

Family-focused tips
• Enjoy an afternoon bike ride or hike as a family.
• Play with your kids – kick the can, tag, basketball, or dance to your favorite music.
• Plan your weekly meals based on what is in season and what you can get from your garden or a farmers’ market. Use the USDA Farmers Markets search to find a farmers’ market near you: http://search.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/ or http://www.nutrition.gov/farmers-markets
• Spice up leftovers and use them in new ways. For example, add extra veggies to stir-fry or make ground beef chili.
• Fire up the grill to cook vegetables and fruits. Brush them with vegetable oil to prevent them from drying out. Try peaches, pineapples, peppers, and mushrooms.
• Be creative with baked goods by adding apples or pears to your favorite muffin or pancake recipe for a treat.
• Try marching in place while watching TV, do sit-ups or push-ups during commercials.
• Enjoy a variety of lean-protein foods throughout the day to keep from feeling hungry.
• Add fat-free or low-fat dairy foods like yogurt, cheese or milk to soups and dips for delicious and nutritious snacks.
Be Sensible

By reading the Nutrition Facts Label, you can increase your knowledge of the nutritional content of foods and take control of your food choices. When eating at home you know exactly what you are eating. When you eat out, check and compare the nutrition information either in the restaurant or on the Web. Choose healthier options such as baked, broiled or grilled, and steamed or simmered in broth instead of fried. Choose options that focus on fruits, vegetables, or whole grains. When buying lean cuts of meat, look for the word “loin” or “round” in the cut name.

**Sodium:** Compare sodium in foods like soup, bread, and frozen meals – and choose the foods with lower numbers. To monitor your sodium intake, look for “reduced sodium,” “low sodium,” and “no added salt” on labels.

**Sugars:** Cut back on extra calories by consuming treats in moderation. Manage your beverage calories by choosing smaller serving sizes. Choose low-fat or fat-free milk and 100% juice. Cut calories by drinking water and low- or no-calorie beverages.

**Fat:** Choose unsaturated oils more often over animal fats like lard for cooking and baking, such as canola, corn or sunflower oils. Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk.

**Family-focused tips**
- Slow down! It takes 20 minutes for your brain to send the signal that you’ve had enough to eat.
- Have only one portion-controlled serving and enjoy every bit.
- Put your fork or spoon down between bites.
Eating at home
• Smaller plates lead to small portions. Eat meals on a smaller plate.
• Before going back for seconds, wait 10 to 15 minutes. You may not want seconds after all.
• Buy or portion out treats and snacks in small bags or packages, so that you are aware of how much you are eating.
• Flavor meat, poultry, and seafood with herbs and spices instead of sauces or gravies.

Eating away from home
• When dining out, ask if they have a lighter version or lunch-size portion of your entrée. If you order an entrée, take the leftovers home, refrigerate and enjoy it as another meal or snack the next day. Or, split an entrée with a family member or friend and order an extra side salad.
• Eat slowly and enjoy the experience. Be mindful of the flavor combinations and savor the food.
• Skip dessert or order what you want and just take a few bites. You could also share the dessert with the rest of the table.
• You may also choose healthier choices such as fresh fruit, sorbets, treats with whole grains or lighter versions of your favorite treats. Paying attention to serving size will help you curb your calories while still enjoying the treats you love.
• Start your meal with a broth-based soup or green salad. Ask for salad dressing on the side. To avoid being influenced by others, be the first to order a healthful meal.

Family-focused tips
• Be a role model for your children. Show your family how to savor their favorite higher-calorie foods and beverages by enjoying smaller portions together.
• Offer healthful foods to kids at meals and let them choose how much they want to eat.
• Downsize. Choose smaller sizes of foods and beverages, especially those that are higher in calories.
• Order a small or medium-sized portion instead of large.
• Offer plain water when kids are thirsty.
• Get the best price. Check newspapers, online, and at the store for sales and coupons.
• Avoid second portions. Make just enough for one meal or put away leftovers when you serve the meal.
Thank you from The Dietary Guidelines Alliance and University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension:

**Eat Healthy. Be Active Community Workshop**
www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/workshops

**Dietary Guidelines for Americans**
www.dietaryguidelines.gov

**ChooseMyPlate.gov**
www.choosemyplate.gov

**SuperTracker**
www.supertracker.usda.gov

**Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans**
www.health.gov/paguidelines

**Understanding and Using the Nutrition Facts Label**
http://www.fda.gov/Food/IngredientsPackagingLabeling/LabelingNutrition/ucm20026097.htm

**Dietary Guidelines Alliance Members**
International Food Information Council Foundation
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
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