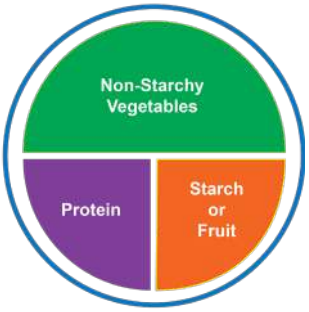
The Plate Method

Balance Matters

Why use the Plate Method?

The Plate Method is a strategy that helps you plan meals that are

- high in plant foods and fiber.
- lower in carb portions.
- sufficient in protein.
- calorie controlled.
- balanced for optimal nutrition.
- flexible, allowing for a variety of foods in each food group.



9-inch plate

- **Non-starchy vegetables** include many salad vegetables, green beans, carrots, cauliflower, broccoli, peppers, onions, mushrooms, tomato, cucumber, zucchini, okra, and more!
- **Lean proteins** include skinless chicken or turkey, some fish and seafood like cod, tilapia, or shrimp, or **plant proteins** like beans, lentils, and soy foods.
- **Carbohydrates** include beans, lentils, fruit, whole grains, and starchy vegetables. Yogurt and milk are also carbohydrates.

Healthy Choices and Meal Prep Tips

- **Carbohydrates** with more fiber and/or protein have a lower effect on blood glucose.
- Keep **edible skins** on starchy vegetables and fruit.
- **Fruits like berries, citrus, apples, pears, nectarines, peaches and plums** have a lower effect on blood glucose.
- **Refrigerating starches** like rice or potato lowers their impact on blood glucose.
- **Including protein with carbs** further reduces the impact on blood glucose.
- **If you can tolerate a little fat** from cooking oil, salad dressing, or toppings like nuts, seeds, or avocado, fats also slow the rise in blood glucose after a meal.
- **Eat protein and vegetables before the carbs** for a lower rise in blood glucose after eating
- **Choose lean proteins** like skinless chicken, turkey, lean fish or shrimp. Plant proteins like beans, lentils, and soy foods are also lower in fat.
- **Limit red meat and processed meats** like bacon, sausage, salami, and hot dogs.
- **Limit full fat cheese.** Choose lowfat or fat free if available.
- **Limit sweets.**
- **Avoid deep fried foods.**
- **Avoid low fiber, "refined" carbs, or simple sugars** like white rice, white bread, and sugary drinks.

See a registered dietitian nutritionist for more guidance on food choices and meal prep.

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Choose High Quality Carbs

Carbs provide the necessary nutrients for brain function and physical activity. High quality carbohydrates are those rich in fiber and/or protein, which slow the rise in blood glucose. The effect of carbs on blood glucose also depends on how they are prepared and other foods in the meal.

Carbs high in fiber and/or protein include

- legumes like black beans, pinto beans, kidney beans, black-eyed peas, green peas, soybeans, and lentils.
- pasta made from beans or lentils.
- grains like quinoa, brown rice, and farro.
- low fat or fat free milk or yogurt, no added sugar.

High fiber choices are

- whole grain pasta or breads.
- sweet potato with skin, roasted or baked.
- squash, especially acorn squash.
- berries like blueberries, raspberries, and blackberries.
- fruit like oranges, apples, pears, and peaches.

Other plant foods can be included in moderation such as

- roasted potatoes with skin (avoid mashed potatoes).
- corn.
- other fruits like grapes and melons. Use minimal amounts of dried fruit.

Different carbs affect people differently depending on their level of insulin resistance, digestive health, medications, and other factors. Start with the Plate Method for proper portions and balance. Choose high quality carbs as often as you can. If your doctor has instructed you to use a blood glucose monitor, consider keeping a **food and blood glucose log** to find out how different carbs, food combinations, and meal preparations affect you.

Choose Lean Protein

Protein provides the building blocks for proper growth, repair, immune health, and hormonal production. When added to carbs, it can help lower the rise in blood glucose after the meal.

Plant proteins have many benefits. Many provide fiber, which is good for the heart, blood glucose, and digestive health. They are also gentle on the kidneys compared to meat. Plant proteins include

- legumes like black beans, pinto beans, kidney beans, black-eyed peas, green peas, and lentils.
- tofu, tempeh, edamame, and other soy foods.
- seitan (made from wheat gluten).

Lean proteins also include

- shrimp and scallops.
- light fish like cod and tilapia.
- light tuna canned in water.
- skinless chicken or turkey breast
- very lean or lean ground turkey or chicken.
- egg whites (use whole eggs in moderation)
- low fat or fat free cottage cheese.
- low fat or fat free yogurt.

Consume lean red meat in moderation, such as

- loin cuts of beef or pork (sirloin, tenderloin).
- ground beef with less than 10% fat.
- venison or other lean game meats.

Use Fats With Caution

If you have severely high triglycerides or have pancreatitis, you may need to follow a very low fat diet under the supervision of your doctor and dietitian.

Some people with lipodystrophy can include a small or moderate amount of fat. Healthy fats are in salmon and other oily fish, nuts and seeds, and cooking oils like olive oil or avocado oil. See a registered dietitian nutritionist to determine the right amounts for you.