

Choose Wisely: For Health and Wealth

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Choices . . . Choices . . . Choices. Everyone makes choices every day. Some of those choices include deciding what to eat, how much to eat, and whether to include physical activity in the day. The news is full of information — some of it conflicting — about nutrition and health. When all is said and done, do nutrition and health choices really make any difference?

Consider this:

- » Did you know that chronic disease, including obesity, is responsible for more than 70 percent of health care costs in Kansas?
- » Did you know that making healthy lifestyle choices can help protect against chronic diseases?
- » According to the Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease: If Americans were to stop smoking, exercise regularly, and eat well, they could prevent up to 80 percent of heart disease and stroke, 80 percent of type 2 diabetes, and 40 percent of cancers.

Think about those statements. What effect could this have on your health and your healthcare costs?

Research indicates a definite link between food and physical activity habits, and the quality of a person's health. So, yes, the choices you make are very important and can make a significant difference in quality of life. Since health is influenced by the choices you make each day, let's examine tools you can use to make wise choices that can help improve health and potentially save money from reduced healthcare costs.

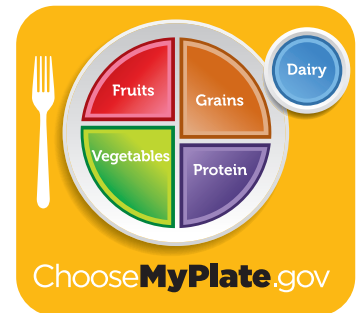
Tools We Can Use: MyPlate

Based on the 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, MyPlate is a reminder to find your healthy eating style and build it throughout your lifetime. It illustrates the five food groups using a familiar mealtime visual, a plate. MyPlate can help consumers visualize what foods to eat and how much to eat at each meal. In addition, the interactive "ChooseMyPlate.gov" website is a source of lots of great information to assist you in making healthful choices.

Key MyPlate Messages:

Everything you eat and drink matters – focus on variety, amount, and nutrition.

- » Focus on making healthy food and beverage choices from all five food groups including fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods, and dairy to get the nutrients you need.
- » Eat the right amount of calories for you based on your age, sex, height, weight, and physical activity level.
- » Building a healthier eating style can help you avoid overweight and obesity and reduce your risk of diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.



Choose an eating style low in saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars.

- » Use Nutrition Facts labels and ingredient lists to find amounts of saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars in the foods and beverages you choose.

Look for food and drink choices that are lower in saturated fat, sodium, and added sugar.

- » Eating fewer calories from foods high in saturated fat and added sugars can help you manage your calories and prevent overweight and obesity.
- » Eating foods with less sodium can reduce your risk of high blood pressure.

Make small changes to create a healthier eating style.

- » Think of each change as a personal "win" on your path to living healthier.
- » Start with a few of these small changes.
 - » Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.
 - » Focus on whole fruits.
 - » Vary your veggies.
 - » Make half your grains whole grains.
 - » Move to low-fat and fat-free dairy.

- » Vary your protein routine.
- » Eat and drink the right amount for you.

Tools You Can Use: Nutrition Facts Label and Ingredient List

The Nutrition Facts Label is a standardized label required on packaged foods. This tool contains a wealth of information you can use to make food choices that contribute to healthy eating habits. The Ingredient List shows the ingredients in the food listed in order by weight of the ingredients.

Most packaged foods have a Nutrition Facts Label and an Ingredient List designed to help consumers make smart food choices quickly and easily.

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size 2/3 cup (55g)	
Amount per serving	
Calories 230	
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 8g	10%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

- » Check for calories. Be sure to look at the serving size and how many servings you are actually consuming. If you double the servings you eat, you double the calories.
- » Choose foods with lower calories, saturated fat, trans fat, added sugars, and sodium.
- » Choose foods higher in protein, fiber, and vitamins.
- » Check the Ingredient List to see names of added sugars, to determine if a product is whole grain or contains potential allergens, and for other information.

Important Concept to Consider

Foods such as fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, whole grains, and low-fat dairy contain a wide variety of nutrients your body needs without a lot of extra calories. These foods are referred to as nutrient dense.

Foods such as french fries, chips, pastries, and soda are high in solid fats and or added sugars. Therefore, these foods are high in calories but are much lower in nutrients per calorie. These foods are referred to as calorie dense or as containing “empty calories.” It doesn’t take much of these foods on a plate to put you over your recommended calories for the day. In addition, persons eating a diet high

in calorie-dense foods may not be giving their bodies the variety of nutrients needed to function at their best.

Eating mostly nutrient-dense foods allows you the opportunity to eat a larger quantity of food while still staying within calorie limits because the calories in these foods tend to be less. Think of these foods as “nutrient bargains.” When you can eat more food and a greater variety of foods, you feel less deprived, and it is easier to follow a healthful eating plan.

Take Time to Compare

Consider the sample breakfast choices in Table 1 on page 3 to see how big a difference choosing nutrient-dense foods can make.

The carbohydrate grams are close. But, even with a cup of fruit added, there are 130 less calories and 15 less grams of fat in Choice 2. Breakfast Choice 2 provides more of the nutrients essential for health and resistance to disease. Choices 1 and 2 are similar in the amount of carbohydrates but the type of carbohydrates we put into our bodies does make a difference in calories, fat, and nutrients. Consuming the 130 additional calories of Choice 1 daily over a year’s time could cause more than 10 pounds of weight gain. Which choice will you make most often?

Another example showing the benefit of nutrient-dense food choices is in Table 2 on page 3. For about the same number of calories and carbohydrates, you can eat Choice 1 or all of the foods in Choice 2.

Does that mean pecan pie is a “bad” food and you should “never” eat it? Not necessarily.

However, this chart is a good visual to help understand how food choices make a big difference in fat and sugar versus the nutrients you put in your body. Pecan pie is probably not going to be found on the “nutrient bargain rack.” As you learn to make more informed and thoughtful choices, you know that pecan pie is a choice you make less often. Or, perhaps you choose a smaller piece. Or, as nutrient bargain hunters . . . sometimes you can find ways to revise recipes to create alternative foods that are more healthful yet offer similar flavors.

It is wise to choose a variety of nutrient-dense foods first, while only occasionally enjoying calorie-dense foods that are often lacking in important nutrients.

Review Table 3 on page 3 to see the impact that simply choosing a different product or another brand can make when it comes to calories, fat, and carbohydrates. Let the Nutrition Facts Label help you choose.

Table 1

Sample Breakfast Choice 1				Sample Breakfast Choice 2			
Food	Calories	Fat Grams	Carb Grams	Food	Calories	Fat Grams	Carb Grams
1 glazed doughnut	235	13	27	1¼ cups whole grain oat cereal	110	2	20
1 cup whole milk	150	8	11	1 cup 1% milk	100	3	12
				1 cup strawberries	45	1	10
Totals	385	21	31	Totals	255	6	42

Source: Iowa State University Extension – Nutritive Value of Foods

*Carb = Carbohydrates

Table 2

Choice 1				Choice 2			
Food	Calories	Fat Grams	Carb Grams	Food	Calories	Fat Grams	Carb Grams
1 piece of pecan pie (1/8 of 9-inch pie)	431	24	53	3 ounces turkey	145	4.0	0
				½ cup mashed potatoes	113	4.5	17.5
				¼ cup brown gravy	20	.5	3.5
				½ cup green beans	13	–	3.0
				1 cup leaf lettuce	10	–	3.0
				2 tablespoons low calorie Italian dressing	10	–	4.0
				1 slice whole wheat bread	70	1.0	13.0
				½ cup sliced peaches	35	–	9.0
Totals	431	24	53	Totals	416	10	52

Source: Iowa State University Extension – Nutritive Value of Foods

*Carb = Carbohydrates

Table 3

Comparison of Vanilla Ice Cream Products

Food	Calories per 1/2 cup	Fat Grams	Total Carb* Grams
Haagen-Dazs Ice Cream	250	17	21
Haagen-Dazs Light Ice Cream	125	4	20
Haagen-Dazs Frozen Yogurt	107	1.5	19.5
Braums Premium Ice Cream	130	7	16
Braums Light Ice Cream	110	3	18
Braums Frozen Yogurt	120	4	17

Source: Websites of Haagen-Dazs and Braums

*Carb = Carbohydrates

By comparing and choosing a different product within the same brand, you can save 70 calories and over half the fat grams. By moving to a different brand, you can save 125 to 143 calories and consume 13 to 15.5 less grams of fat. Consuming 125 to 143 less calories each day for a year could help you lose more than 10 pounds.

Notice that the “light” ice creams in each brand have almost as much or more carbohydrates than the regular selection even though fat is cut quite a bit. The difference in total calories is not as much as you might hope. Just because the package says “light” doesn’t mean it is a great choice.

Tools You Can Use: Physical Activity

Physical activity is another important part of leading a healthy lifestyle. It is important in helping maintain a healthy weight. Physical activity helps balance energy in with energy out as well as helping reduce your risk of developing chronic diseases.

- » For health benefits, physical activity should be of moderate or vigorous intensity, and adults should get at least 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise on most days. It's OK to start with 10-minute increments throughout the day to build up to 30 minutes.
- » Be sure to include activities from each of these categories: aerobic, muscle and bone strengthening, and balance and stretching.
- » Choose a variety of activities you like to do such as walking, dancing, or swimming.
- » Include muscle strengthening activities that are moderate to high intensity on two or more days a week.

Conclusion

Sometimes it can help to think of health as something you earn each day, just like you work to bring home a paycheck. By practicing healthy lifestyle behaviors, you can delay and even prevent chronic disease. If you have an illness, symptoms can be managed better by making choices that support a healthy lifestyle.

You have learned that lifestyle choices are vitally important. You have been shown some tools to help you make wiser choices. Now it is up to you! What choices will you make for your health?

Rather than at your medical care facility, your actual health-care choices are often made wherever you make your food and physical activity choices. The healthy choices you make every day can provide a pay off with fewer doctor visits and improved quality of life. So choose wisely ... for your health and wealth.

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Resources:

USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2015; ChooseMyPlate.gov; Iowa State University Extension – Nutritive Value of Foods; Websites of Haagen-Dazs and Braums; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease.

Publications from Kansas State University are available at:
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