

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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What's on YOUR Plate?

March is National Nutrition Month, but it all comes down to YOU! What you eat is up to you! Your health is up to you! National standards and recommendations mean nothing if you choose to follow the advertisers' advice on what to eat. Now's the time to take a look at what you put on your plate and decide if it's what will keep you healthy.

Along with the new ChooseMyPlate logo to remind us of what's a healthy balance came a whole set of different short tips and hints for healthy eating. Check them all out at www.ChooseMyPlate.gov. The month the national focus is short and sweet: Enjoy your food but eat less. There's no recommendation that we have to force ourselves to eat what we don't like. The friend who hates dark chocolate but is forcing herself to eat it is missing the point. The family member who loves potatoes but hasn't had one in 3 months is off on the wrong foot. We should, we need to, enjoy what we're eating. But part of the problem is that we're eating more than we're able to use. The difference is accumulating around our middles!

So please, eat what you enjoy! Smile when you sit down at the table. Just take a smaller portion of what you're eating. Of course, a statement like that brings up the question of just how much should we be eating. Meals are fine. Snacks are wonderful. But what size is your plate, and how big are the snacks? To get what we need, most adults should be using a dinner plate that is about 9 inches across. A standard piece of paper is 8 ½ inches wide. If your dinner plate is more than an inch wider than a sheet of paper, it's just going to be a big temptation to fill it. Find a smaller plate, and make life

easier on yourself. If you can't afford new plates in the house, invest in a package of 9" paper plates! It'll be a great investment in your future health.

Next, consider what you're putting on your new plates. Every time you fill your plate, aim to load at least half of it with fruits or vegetables. It doesn't matter if they're cooked or raw, canned or frozen. Unless they've been smothered with greasy gravy or doused in salt or sugar, you're still getting plenty of nutrition from them. So if it's easier to open a can of veggies, or zap a pack in the microwave, go for it!

If all the cupboard contains are veggies canned with salt, or piles of canned soup and ramen noodles, then you need a few more steps. Put the vegetables in a colander and rinse them well to remove some of the salt. There will still be plenty of flavor. When the usual lunch or dinner menu is a can of soup, add a second can of rinsed vegetables to the soup, and fortify it with some leftover meat from dinner. You'll stretch the can of soup into enough for 3 meals, and lower your blood pressure too. Do the same for those packaged noodles, but throw away half the seasoning packet.

What will you do with the other half of the plate? Go ahead, fill half (of the half) with protein. Americans love meat, and that will be meat, chicken or fish. But beans, eggs and nuts are great protein too. Choose proteins and cooking methods with less fat. So bake, grill, broil or boil instead of frying. Oven 'fry' instead of using the bacon or butter. Explore the world of spices and herbs for seasoning instead of salting.

The final quarter of your plate is where the starchy grains go. That space is for the rice, bread or potatoes. If it's a breakfast plate, that's the space for grits or cereal. One last section to consider is beverages. Put a glass of milk beside the plate a couple times a day, and limit the sugar-loaded sodas to once or twice a week. A single glass of

fruit juice is plenty for a day, for children as well as adults. Limit the amount of sugar that goes into the tea or coffee, or switch to a non-calorie sweetener. Think about your drink and don't let it be a cupful of empty calories.

Here's an interesting and different salad. This only serves 2 people, so if you're cooking for more, get out the slicer to make it easy. Otherwise, it's a snap to prepare. If you want less fat, use fat-free regular or Greek yogurt in place of the salad dressing. And if you want to make it a little special, top with a tablespoon of raisins or dried cranberries for color.

Celery Salad

1 cup thinly sliced celery	1/3 cup shredded carrot
1 Tbsp minced onion	1/2 tsp prepared mustard
1 Tbsp low fat salad dressing or mayonnaise	1 tsp vinegar or lemon juice
Dash of pepper (red or black)	

Mix celery, carrot and onion in serving bowl. Combine other ingredients in small bowl and stir well. Stir into celery mixture. Cover and chill until ready to serve. Serves 2.