



My Healthy Plate



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What is My Healthy Plate?

My Healthy Plate is a friendly, easy-to-understand visual tool designed by the Health Promotion Board (HPB) specifically for Singaporeans. You can use My Healthy Plate to help remember and practise healthy habits that can aid with weight control and protect against chronic diseases such as diabetes.

The key healthy habits communicated by My Healthy Plate are:

- Fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables
- Fill a quarter of your plate with whole-grains
- Fill a quarter of your plate with meat and others
- Use healthier oils
- Choose water
- Be active!



Why was My Healthy Plate developed?

The increasing prevalence of obesity and chronic diseases such as diabetes is a major health-related issue facing Singapore. The 2010 National Health Survey showed that about one in every ten Singaporeans aged 18 - 69 years is obese (Body Mass Index ≥ 30 kg/m²), a 50% increase from the previous survey in 2004. As obesity increases, the likelihood of various diseases, particularly heart diseases, diabetes and certain types of cancer, also increase.



Findings from the 2010 National Nutrition Survey indicate that Singaporeans currently consume mostly refined carbohydrates and nine in ten Singaporeans do not eat enough fruit and vegetables. This survey also indicates that Singaporeans need to change to healthier types of fats and oils and reduce their overall calorie intake.

From a study carried out by HPB, we found that Singaporeans preferred a graphical message, such as a plate-based image, that could be easily associated with food and meals, provided clear and simple messages and that was easy to read and understand.

My Healthy Plate was then developed to better communicate to Singaporeans the latest science-based recommendations on healthy eating habits that can help with weight control and help protect against chronic diseases.

My Healthy Plate aims to provide an easy-to-understand visual representation of what a healthy meal may look like, with the emphasis on increasing fruit and vegetable intake and changing rice, noodles, bread and other carbohydrate-rich foods to whole-grain options.

My Healthy Plate reminds us to adopt healthy habits such as choosing water over sweetened beverages, choosing foods prepared with healthier oil and being physically active.

Who can use My Healthy Plate?

Anyone can use My Healthy Plate. Individuals with specific dietary requirements or existing medical conditions are advised to check with their health care providers on whether My Healthy Plate can meet their specific dietary requirements.

How do I apply My Healthy Plate to my diet?

My Healthy Plate shows you what to eat in the correct proportions to have a well-balanced and healthy diet. My Healthy Plate aims to simplify healthy eating advice by providing a visual representation of what a healthy meal might look like. It aims to serve as a reminder to build balanced meals and is not intended as a mandate to include all food groups at every meal, or eat in a compartmentalised manner.

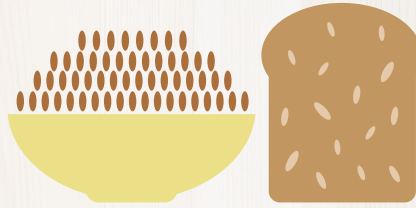


**Fill half of your plate with
fruit and vegetables**

The apple and green leafy vegetables serve as a reminder to eat fruit and vegetables. An apple and green leafy vegetables were chosen because they are commonly eaten by Singaporeans, are easily recognisable and are associated with fruit and vegetables respectively.

Fruit and vegetables are rich in dietary fibre, vitamins, minerals, and can lower the risk of developing heart disease, stroke and certain types of cancer. These pictures can also remind us to choose brightly-coloured fruit and vegetables. We should eat a balanced variety of many different types of fruit and vegetables as this can help us get the nutrients we need.

It matters how your fruit and vegetables are prepared. Eating vegetable dishes with lots of oil or fruit with sugar syrup makes it more likely to consume too many calories and gain weight.



Fill a quarter of your plate with whole-grains

Brown rice and wholemeal bread are chosen as these are commonly available types of whole-grain products found in Singapore. Brown rice and wholemeal bread are also more easily understood compared to the term “whole-grains”.

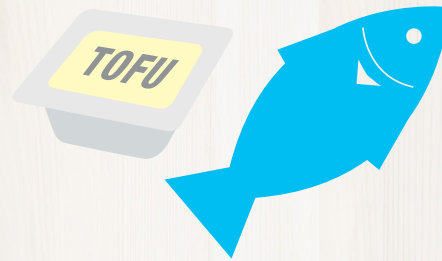
Whole-grain products also include whole-grain noodles, wholemeal pasta, wholemeal biscuits, wholemeal chapatti, and oats.

Whole-grain foods contain vitamins (vitamins B and E), minerals (iron, zinc and magnesium), phytochemicals (lignans, phytosterols) and inulin (a type of dietary fibre).

Consuming whole-grains over refined grains* can reduce the risk of developing heart disease and diabetes and helps you manage your weight as you get hungry less easily.

Refined grain products fill the same “quarter” of your plate as brown rice or wholemeal bread, but it is better to choose whole-grains when possible.

**Refined grains such as white rice or white bread have gone through processing which removes the valuable nutrients whole-grains have to offer.*



Fill a quarter of your plate with meat and others

The pictures of fish and tofu represent the category of meat and others. This category includes poultry such as chicken, duck and turkey, meat such as beef, mutton and pork, seafood, eggs and nuts as well as bean products and dairy products.

Fish and tofu were chosen as the latest scientific consensus shows that fish, especially oily fish and bean products such as tofu are healthier forms of protein. People who eat these foods in the right amounts are less likely to suffer from cardiovascular disease, one of the major causes of death in Singapore.

Lean meats such as chicken and fish give you more protein per calorie than fatty meats. Protein helps to build and repair tissues in the body. Oily fish such as tuna, mackerel, tenggiri batang and ikan tenggiri papan also contain omega-3 fatty acids, a beneficial fat that supports overall heart health.

Aim for 2 servings of fish a week.

Ensure you also **include calcium-rich foods in your diet** each day. Milk, yoghurt, cheese, tofu, sardines and calcium-fortified soy milk are rich in calcium. Choose low-fat or non-fat dairy products more often than full-fat dairy products to help maintain a healthy weight. However, low-fat or non-fat milk and other dairy products are not suitable for children below the age of 2 years, as they have higher energy needs for rapid growth.



Use Healthier Oils

Healthy fats should be included in the diet on a daily basis to achieve optimal health. While cooking at home, use healthier oils such as canola, olive, soy, sunflower and peanut.

These contain more of the healthier monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats that can decrease the risk of developing heart disease. When eating out, look out for hawkers and restaurants that use healthier cooking oil.

While healthier oils have heart benefits, they still contain the same amount of calories as regular oils and should be consumed in moderation.



Choose water

Make water your drink of choice. Drinking too many sugar-sweetened drinks may make you gain weight. Choosing water over sugar-sweetened drinks helps you maintain a healthy weight.

Adding white sugar, brown sugar, rock sugar, honey or other types of sugar to any drink (e.g. coffee or tea) makes it a "sugar-sweetened drink".



Be Active!

Being physically active is an essential part of a healthy lifestyle that prolongs good health. Activities like brisk walking, cycling and swimming, daily lifestyle activities (e.g. taking the stairs, doing household chores) and strength-training (e.g. using hand weights, doing qigong or yoga) all count as physical activity.

- For infants, physical activity should be encouraged from birth, particularly through floor-based play in safe environments.
- Children below 7 years who are able to walk on their own, should be physically active for at least 180 minutes spread throughout each day in safe environments.
- Children and youth aged 7 to 18 years should accumulate 60 minutes or more of moderate-to-vigorous-intensity physical activity every day.
- Adults should aim for 150 minutes of physical activity each week.

Q&As on My Healthy Plate

What if I don't follow My Healthy Plate at each meal?



My Healthy Plate is a guide to help you meet dietary recommendations more easily. It is good to try to follow the My Healthy Plate at each meal. However, if you are unable to do so, plan your meals such that you eat food from all four food groups throughout the day.

What about snacks?



Some individuals may need snacks between their meals depending on their calorie requirements. When choosing snacks, go for healthy options such as whole-grain foods, fruit and vegetables and dairy or calcium-rich food. Try to choose food low in salt, sugar and unhealthy fats. If a previous meal didn't contain enough of a particular food group, your snack can be used to make up for this.

For example, if your meal didn't contain fruit or vegetables, the subsequent snack may be a piece of fruit or some vegetable sticks.

Why is physical activity included in My Healthy Plate?



Diet and physical activity are both important in helping with weight control and protecting against chronic diseases. As My Healthy Plate is intended to go beyond a focus on diet to highlighting the importance of energy balance (i.e. calories consumed need to be balanced with calories expended for weight management), the reminder to "Be Active!" was included.

What other dietary recommendations should Singaporeans take note of?

Other dietary recommendations include limiting salt and sugar intake and moderating alcohol intake.

Limit intake of salt

Singaporeans should limit their daily intake of salt to 1 teaspoonful (about 5 grams of salt or 2000 mg of sodium). Younger children may require less than 1 teaspoon of salt (Table 1). This applies to salt from sauces, table salt, and processed foods.

Table 1: Recommended salt limits

Age	Recommended limit (grams)
6 months (181 days) - 12 months	1
1 – 6 years	2.5
7 – 18 years	5
Above 18 years	5

Limit intake of sugar

Singaporeans should also limit their daily intake of added sugar to 11 teaspoons. Younger children may require less (Table 2). Added sugar can be found in sweetened drinks, fruit juice, honey, jam, processed food such as sweets.

Table 2: Recommended sugar limits

Age	Recommended limit (teaspoons)
6 months (181 days) – 12 months	5
1 – 2 years	7
3 – 6 years	9
7 – 18 years	11
Above 18 years	11

Limit intake of alcohol



For alcohol, there isn't any level of drinking which can be guaranteed as completely safe or without risks. There are also some groups of people who should avoid drinking completely – such as children/adolescents*, those who are driving or engaged in activities which require attention, skills or coordination, pregnant mothers or those trying to conceive, or those who have medical conditions such as asthma, alcohol allergy, or liver disease.

For healthy adult Singaporeans, men should not drink more than 2 standard drinks a day and women no more than 1 standard drink a day.

A standard alcoholic drink contains 10 grams of alcohol.
This roughly equates to:

- A can (330 ml) of regular beer with 5% alcohol content
- Half glass (175 ml) of wine with 15% alcohol content
- A shot (35 ml) of spirits with 40% alcohol content

It is not enough to just note the volume of alcohol consumed, but the percentage of alcohol in the drinks as well.

*Do note that in Singapore, it is illegal for anyone under the age of 18 years to purchase alcohol.

Are the relative sizes of My Healthy Plate sections based on calories or number of servings?

My Healthy Plate provides a visual representation of what a healthy meal might look like and illustrates the approximate relative proportions of each food group that should be included in a healthy meal.

My Healthy Plate does not define a certain number of calories or servings per day from each food group as the actual portion size or amount of different foods needed varies between individuals (please refer to the recommended number of servings and serving size chart to identify the right amount of food for you).

		Recommended number of servings per day							
		6 months (181 days) - 12 months	1 – 2 years	3 – 6 years	7 – 12 years	13 – 18 years	19 – 50 years	51 years and above	Pregnant & lactating women
Food Groups	Brown Rice & Wholemeal Bread	1 – 2	2 – 3	3 – 4	5 – 6	6 – 7	5 – 7	4 – 6	6 – 7
	Fruit	½	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	Vegetables	½	2	2	2	2	2	2	3
	Meat & Others <i>of which</i> Dairy Foods or Calcium-Rich Foods	2 1½	2 1½	2 1	3 1	3 1	3 ½	3 1	3½ 1

What is an example of 1 serving of Brown rice and Wholemeal Bread?



2 slices of wholemeal bread (60g)



½ bowl* whole-grain noodles, beehoon or spaghetti (100g)



4 plain wholemeal crackers (40g)



½ bowl* of rice/brown rice (100g)



2 wholemeal chapatis (60g)



1½ cups** whole-grain breakfast cereal (40g)



2/3 bowl* of uncooked oatmeal (50g)

All weights listed are for edible portions only.

* 1 rice bowl

** 250ml cup

What is an example of 1 serving of Fruit?



1 small apple, orange, pear or mango (130g)



1 wedge of papaya, pineapple or watermelon (130g)



10 grapes/longans (50g)



1 medium banana



$\frac{1}{4}$ cup** of dried fruit (40g)



1 glass* pure fruit juice (250ml)

What is an example of 1 serving of Vegetables?



$\frac{1}{4}$ round plate+ of cooked vegetables



150g raw leafy vegetables



100g raw non-leafy vegetables



$\frac{3}{4}$ mug*** of cooked leafy (100g)



$\frac{3}{4}$ mug*** non-leafy vegetables (100g)

All weights listed are for edible portions only.

- * 250ml glass
- ** 250ml cup
- *** 250ml mug
- + 10 inch plate

What is an example of 1 serving of Meat and Others?



1 palm-sized piece of meat, fish or poultry (90g)



2 glasses* of reduced-fat milk (500ml)



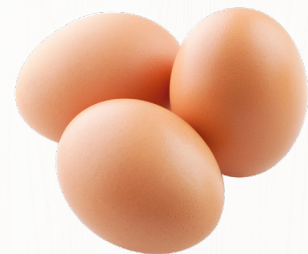
2 small blocks of soft beancurd (170g)



5 medium prawns (90g)



$\frac{3}{4}$ cup** of cooked pulses (peas, beans, lentils) (120g)



3 eggs (150g)

All weights listed are for edible portions only.

* 250ml glass

** 250ml cup

Healthy Diet Pyramid and My Healthy Plate

With My Healthy Plate, does it mean that we no longer use the Healthy Diet Pyramid?

Both my Healthy Plate and the Healthy Diet Pyramid are tools used to convey healthy eating messages to Singaporeans. The information about what and how much to eat has essentially remain unchanged. Both the Healthy Diet Pyramid and My Healthy Plate are illustrations based on the same food groups and recommendations about what and how much to eat. Moving forward, My Healthy Plate will be used as an easy-to-understand visual guide to communicate HPB's healthy eating messages and to help Singaporeans remember and practise healthy habits.

What are the differences between My Healthy Plate and the Healthy Diet Pyramid?

My Healthy Plate and the latest version of the Healthy Diet Pyramid (2009) share some commonalities; much of the scientific information used to develop both is substantially the same.

My Healthy Plate presents important information on diet in a simpler, easier-to-understand manner and places greater emphasis on important habits to help with weight control and to protect against chronic diseases.

Healthy Diet Pyramid	My Healthy Plate
Rice and Alternatives The Healthy Diet Pyramid shows both whole-grain foods and refined grain foods	Brown Rice & Wholemeal Bread My Healthy Plate emphasises the recommendation to choose whole-grain products where possible by showing only whole-grain versions of commonly consumed grain products rather than refined grain products.
Fruits	Fruit & Vegetables Fruit and Vegetables are still two separate food groups. Both Fruit and Vegetables are placed together in one section of My Healthy Plate to emphasise to Singaporeans the importance of eating fruit and vegetables.
Vegetables	

Healthy Diet Pyramid	My Healthy Plate
<p>Meat and Alternatives</p> <p>States the need for calcium-rich foods, but not clearly. Graphics show examples of foods in this food group, but don't focus on good choices.</p>	<p>Meat & Others</p> <p>My Healthy Plate graphics emphasises healthier choices within the Meat & Others food group, namely fish (especially oily fish), bean products and calcium-rich foods such as tofu.</p>
<p>Fats, Oils, Sugar and Salt</p> <p>The Healthy Diet Pyramid recommends that these should be used in small amounts, but doesn't provide positive messaging on what Singaporeans should do.</p>	<p>Use Healthier Oil</p> <p>My Healthy Plate encourages Singaporeans to choose foods made with healthier types of oil rather than to simply use all types of oil and fat in small amounts. Reducing oil and fat intake usually means increasing carbohydrate intake, which in Singapore, means eating proportionately more highly refined carbohydrate foods. Emerging evidence shows that a moderate amount of fat in the diet is beneficial for health, especially if fat consumed is the healthier unsaturated fat. However, 7 in 10 Singaporeans consume too much saturated fat, hence the need to emphasise the quality of fat consumed rather than to consume less fat in general.</p> <p>Choose Water</p> <p>My Healthy Plate encourages Singaporeans to Choose Water over sugar-sweetened drinks. Water, or other drinks like coffee and tea with no sugar, contains no calories.</p>
<p>(Not included in the Healthy Diet Pyramid)</p>	<p>Be Active!</p> <p>My Healthy Plate reminds Singaporeans that physical activity is also an important part of weight management.</p>