

Visualization: the Secret to a Healthy Diet

At this point in your journey towards better nutrition, you've probably realized how much there is to remember. Between getting the right kinds of fats and grains to making sure you're consuming all the nutrients you need, it can be easy to lose track of your nutrition.

Before you feel like you need to make a spreadsheet to keep track of your new eating habits, there's a nutrition hack worth considering: visualizing your plate.

Visualizing your plate is the idea that you should fill certain portions of your dinner plate with specific food groups. There are many different versions and opinions of what that dinner plate should consist of based on different diets, but the [Healthy Eating Plate](#) is most commonly used.

The Healthy Eating Plate

The Healthy Eating Plate is divided into four sections: Whole grains, healthy proteins, vegetables, and fruits. Whole grains and healthy proteins both take up about a quarter of your plate. Vegetables should take up a little more than a quarter, with fruits taking up the remainder. Additionally, healthy plant oils, such as olive or peanut oil, should also be consumed in moderation, usually in the form of cooking oil or salad dressings.

This new way of thinking about your nutrition is meant to complement a nutrition chart you may be more familiar with: [The Food Pyramid](#). In both models, vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and healthy proteins (specifically fish, poultry, nuts, beans, and eggs) are the foundation of a healthy meal. Meanwhile, healthy fats, oils, dairy products, and refined grains may be consumed in moderation.

Other Visualization Techniques

Dividing your plate into four categories can be a great baseline to get your nutrition back on track. There are also other methods you can use to ensure you're getting the right foods into your system.

Focus on adding color. [The typical American](#) diet consists of excessive processed sugars, refined grains, and fatty red meats. Coincidentally, those foods don't offer a lot of color to your dinner plate. So, the more color you can add to your plate, the better your nutrition will be.

Dinner salads with lettuce, tomatoes, onions, olives, and a variety of berries add a whole new dimension to the proverbial canvas that is your dinner plate. Aim to have more color on your plate than neutral tones, like tans and browns, that you would see from your grains and meat.

Use your hand to measure. [Dr. Eric Berg](#), a weight loss expert, recommends using your hands to visualize the correct portion of different foods, as it is often easier to estimate than volume or weight measurements.

For example, Dr. Berg recommends your meat portion should be about the size of your open palm, while your salad portion should be about seven handfuls of greens. Meanwhile, any cheese on your plate shouldn't be any bigger than the size of two thumbs.

At your next meal, take a picture of your plate. Consider: Do my portions seem to line up with the Healthy Eating Plate? How could I add more color to my plate? Take a picture of your next meal to compare it to your previous plate to see how you've progressed.