



EXTENSION

Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## Balance, Moderation, and Variety<sup>1</sup>

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The Food Guide Pyramid is a guide that helps us meet the recommendations for healthful eating. The Food Guide Pyramid presents three messages: balance, moderation, and variety.

### Balance

- ▲ Eat a diet with plenty of foods from the base and second-lowest level of the Pyramid. These are the plant-based foods.

*In other words . . .*

When serving food on your plate, serve vegetables, beans, rice, or pasta first. If you get hungry between meals, reach for a fruit, vegetable, or whole grain food.

- ▲ Eat no more than the recommended number of servings from the third level. Most of these foods are animal products that are high in fat, even though they are nutrient-rich.

*In other words . . .*

Use meats in small amounts. Instead of eating an 8-ounce steak at one sitting, eat half and take the other half home for tomorrow's meal.

### Moderation

- ▲ Eat food portions in serving sizes recommended by the Food Guide Pyramid.

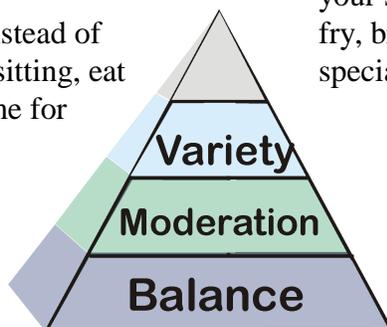
*In other words . . .*

Use measuring cups at home to see what a half cup of cooked pasta or rice looks like. After you have a visual guide of what a serving size looks like, use it when eating out or when serving food on your plate.

- ▲ Choose fats, oils, and sweets once in a while and use in small amounts.

*In other words . . .*

Ask for vinaigrette dressing *on the side* for your salad. Cook with little or no fat (stir-fry, broil, roast) and save fried chicken for a special occasion.



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## Variety

- ▲ Include foods from all food groups every day.

*In other words . . .*

Use a blank Food Guide Pyramid and make check marks in each food group based on what you eat for a few days. Make it a goal to have check marks in each food group most days.

- ▲ Select a variety of foods within each food group.

*In other words . . .*

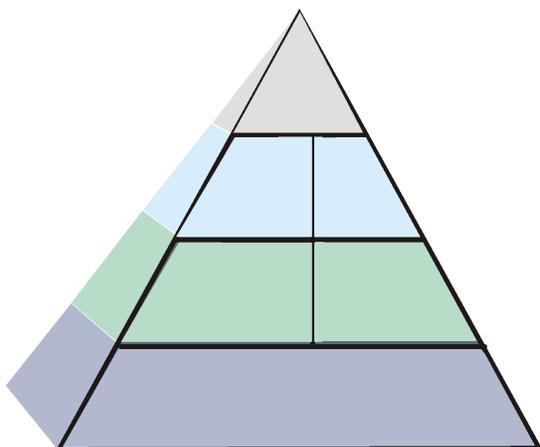
Even though vegetables in general are rich in vitamins, broccoli, and tomatoes have more vitamin C than others. Sweet potatoes and carrots are excellent sources of vitamin A. You get a variety of important nutrients by eating a variety of vegetables.

All foods are equally important and can fit in a healthful diet. Together, they provide nutrients needed for good health. Use the Food Guide Pyramid as a guide and choose foods that meet your family's preference.

### A little bit of practice

Use the blank Food Guide Pyramid to keep track of foods eaten in a couple of days.

- Do you have **balance**?
- Are you practicing **moderation**?
- Do you eat a **variety** of foods?



## What counts as one serving?

### Bread, Cereals, Rice, and Pasta

1 slice of bread  
 ½ cup of cooked rice or pasta  
 1 ounce of ready-to-eat cereal  
 ½ cup of cooked cereal, like oatmeal

### Vegetables

½ cup of chopped raw or cooked vegetables  
 1 cup of leafy raw vegetables

### Fruits

1 small whole fruit  
 ¾ cup of juice  
 ½ cup of canned fruit or sliced fresh fruit  
 ¼ cup of dried fruit, like raisins

### Milk, Yogurt, and Cheese

1 cup of milk or yogurt  
 1½ to 2 ounces of cheese

### Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs, and Nuts

2 to 3 ounces of cooked lean meat, poultry or fish  
 Count ½ cup of cooked beans, 1 egg or 2 tablespoons of peanut butter as 1 ounce of meat (about ⅓ serving)

### Fats, Oils, and Sweets

#### **Use Sparingly!**

This includes cooking oils, salad dressing, table sugar, butter, and margarine, among others.

## Resources

For more information on how to use the Food Guide Pyramid or to learn more about nutrition and health, contact your local Extension office.