

MYPLATE RESOLUTION CALENDAR

Here is a way to stay healthy all year. All of these activities are easy and if you learn a new habit each month you will finish way ahead by the end of the year. These lessons are based on MyPlate and the new Dietary Guidelines:

1. January begins a new year and fresh start. Learn to make a healthy plate. Half your plate should be fruits and veggies. The other half is 1/4 lean protein and 1/4 whole grain. To learn more, visit ChooseMyPlate.gov. It is very easy to make a healthy plate everywhere you go.

2. February is heart month. Switch your grains to be more whole grains instead of refined grains. For example, use brown rice in place of white rice, whole wheat instead of white for bread and pasta. Go for whole grains that are low in sodium and sugar for breakfast.

3. March is National Nutrition Month. Concentrate on portion sizes this month. Avoid ordering super large portions. Beware of big baked goods, super sized drinks and fast food value meals. If you are eating out, bring your food home and make a healthy plate.

4. April is Cancer Awareness Month. Eat vegetarian at least once a week. Make a wonderful dinner with lentils, pinto beans, black beans or tofu. The best easy vegetarian meal is the bean burrito. More ideas include lentil soup or beans and rice.

5. May is blood pressure awareness month. Compare the sodium in all of the foods you buy and choose the foods that have lower numbers. 5% or less of the daily value for sodium is just right. There are many no-added-salt choices in the canned good section now!

6. June is Fruits and Vegetables Month. Are you eating 4.5 cups of fruits and vegetables each day? Stock your kitchen so it offers more fruits and vegetables. Visit a farmer's market to make new choices and get some activity outside!

7. July is time for fun in the sun. Try to enjoy time outside early or late when the sun is not in its peak so you get enough vitamin D. Of course you want to slather on sunscreen for prolonged exposure or any time during the hottest hours. Pick a more active vacation this year so you rejuvenate health and strength.

8. August is back to school and it is time to think about beverages. Drink water instead of sugary drinks. Make sure you are choosing skim milk and fat-free half-half instead of whole milk and full fat cream. Are you getting 3 servings of milk or yogurt per day?

9. September is cholesterol month. Are you reading the label to choose foods that are low in saturated fat and zero in trans fat? Beware of many frozen and packaged foods that claim zero trans fat since they may contain a lot of saturated fat. Saturated fat should be 5% or less of the Daily Value and trans fat should be 0.

10. October is time for the fall season. Fall into better protein choices. Are you eating plenty of beans/legumes along with fish and nuts? Remember to make your protein lean and keep the serving size to a quarter of the plate or about the size of a deck of cards.

11. November is holiday time. Don't let your exercise habits go on holiday! Make a resolution to work out at least 2.5 hours per week as called for by the Physical Activity Guide for Americans. Every little bit counts you don't have to do it all at once.

12. December is great for family time. Make a better effort for family meals this month. Make foods that everyone enjoys. Provide plenty of healthy choices. Set the table in a festive manner and enjoy family time.