

# FROM THE NUTRITIONIST

Andrea Hart, RDN, CDN



---

## Choose Balance

Eating right can help you be healthier now and in the future. However, many people don't know what it really means to eat right. Popular diets grab people's attention, but many are not healthful in the long run. In general, choosing a balance of foods from all the food groups is the foundation of eating right. The USDA's MyPlate can show you a simple way to make healthy choices each day. Everyone has slightly different nutrition needs, and resources at [ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov) can help each person discover an eating plan that's right for them.

Here are some tips to help you get started.

For most meals, balance your plate with foods from all five food groups:

- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables — most Americans don't eat enough of these foods loaded with vitamins, minerals and fiber. Aim for lots of different colors of fruits and veggies for the best nutrition.
- Fill one quarter of your plate with grains — and aim to make at least half of your grains whole grains. Whole grains like brown rice, whole wheat pasta, oatmeal, quinoa, and 100% whole wheat bread are more nutritious than refined grains like white bread, white rice, and white pasta, which have much of the fiber, vitamins, and minerals removed during processing.
- Fill one quarter of your plate with food high in protein — such as meat, poultry, fish, and eggs if you choose to eat them, and whether you are vegetarian or not, be sure at least some of your protein comes from plant sources like beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, and tofu. These foods contain nutrients important for long-term good health.
- Add a serving of dairy 3 times a day — such as low fat or fat free milk, yogurt or cheese, or an alternative such as soy milk. Many Americans are low in this food group which is an important source of nutrients such as calcium and vitamin D.

If you can't get all five food groups in at each meal, try to get as many of them on your plate as possible. If you have veggies, dairy, and protein at one meal, balance them out with fruit and grains in the next to cover all the food groups. All the dining halls have options for adding more food groups to your meal. At both Neubig and The Bistro you can find plenty of options from each of the food groups. Don't just check the hot food lines — you can find great options at the deli, cereal, and salad bars as well. Throughout campus, check the grab-and-go coolers for items such as salads, veggie bowls, fruit cups, milk, yogurt, and soy milk. Mix it up so you eat a variety of foods from each food group, which will help you get all the nutrients your body needs. With so many choices, it's easy to build healthy meals each day.

*Andrea Hart, registered dietitian nutritionist and New York state-certified dietitian/nutritionist, is available for free, confidential, one-on-one counseling and as a speaker or facilitator for campus groups, panels or classes.*