

Planning Meals to Maximize Energy and Control Hunger

We are born with the skill to eat when we are hungry and stop when we have had enough. Somewhere along the way, many of us lose this ability. We learn to eat when we are bored, angry, or stressed. We learn to eat out of habit. We eat because we were taught to be members of the “clean plate club.” Whatever the reason, it is vital to get back to the basics and listen to our body.

Hunger is the physical need for food.

Hunger cues arise with an empty or growling stomach. Some people are cranky, have hunger pangs, fatigue, and a decrease in blood sugar levels. Wanting to eat for reasons other than hunger is called appetite.

Appetite involves the eating experience. It may involve seeing or smelling a tempting food after eating a full meal. There may be times when you are hungry but do not have an appetite, such as when you are sick. Both hunger and appetite affect what, when, why and how much we eat.

The opposite of hunger and appetite is **satiety**. This is the physical and mental feeling of “fullness” that comes after eating and drinking. Feeling full is a function of amount and how long you take to eat.

Hunger Scale

Use this scale as a guide to help you learn to listen to your hunger.

1—Starving: Focused on food. Willing to eat anything.

2—Very hungry: Stomach growling loudly. May have headache or poor focus.

3—Hungry: Senses heightened. Starting to think about food. Stomach is growling and feels empty.

4—Fleeting hunger: Feeling of hunger comes and goes. May plan when and what to eat.

5—Neutral: Not hungry and not full.

6—Slightly satisfied: Feeling food in stomach. Thinking about stopping.

7—Satisfied: Decreased sense of taste and smell. Feel full or satisfied for 2 or more hours.

8—Full: Some discomfort in belly, may seek comfort by loosening clothes. May feel tired.

9—Very full: Very uncomfortable and tired. Limited desire to move.

10—Stuffed: In pain, tired, wanting to nap. May feel sick with desire to vomit.

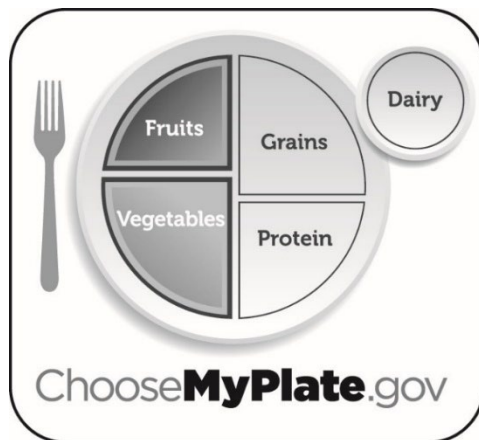
Helpful Hints

The type and timing of meals and snacks affect hunger and appetite. The helpful hints below are a guide to creating a well-balanced meal plan.

- **Breakfast is key** – It gives your metabolism, your body’s engine, a boost and provides needed energy.
- **Eat often** - Try to eat a balanced meal or snack every 3-4 hours. Avoid waiting longer than 4 hours so you don’t overeat later in the day.
- **Load up on non-starchy veggies** - Fill half of your plate with vegetables at mealtime for a heavy dose of vitamins, minerals and fiber.

- **Avoid sweetened drinks** - They provide calories **without** lasting energy.
- **Do not deprive yourself** - Enjoy the foods you love in moderation. For example, enjoy a single serving of a sweet treat or salty snack one time per week.
- **Practice proper portions** - Use smaller plates, bowls, and glasses to help keep serving sizes in check.
- **Avoid impulse eating** - Plan ahead to have healthy foods on hand.

Aim for this Plate



Grain - Starch –Carbohydrates

- Bread, buns, rolls
- Hot cereal (oatmeal, grits, cream of rice)
- Cold cereal
- Pancakes, waffles
- Tortillas, pita bread
- Muffins
- English muffins, bagels
- Rice, barley, quinoa
- Spaghetti, noodles
- Corn, peas
- Beans, lentils, baked beans
- Potato, sweet potato
- Crackers, chips, pretzels, popcorn

Fruit –Carbohydrates

- Fresh fruit
- Fruit canned in water
- Dried fruit
- Frozen fruit
- Fruit juice (4-ounce glass)

Vegetables –Carbohydrates

- Asparagus
- Beans (green, wax, Italian)
- Bean sprouts
- Beets
- Broccoli
- Brussels sprouts
- Cabbage
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Celery
- Cucumber
- Eggplant
- Greens (kale, mustard, turnip, chard)
- Kohlrabi
- Mushrooms
- Okra
- Onions
- Pea pods
- Peppers
- Radishes
- Salad greens (lettuce)
- Spinach
- Summer Squash
- Tomato
- Turnips
- Water chestnuts
- Zucchini

Protein

- Fish (salmon, cod, haddock, perch)
- Canned fish (herring, sardines, tuna)
- Chicken, turkey
- Lean pork, beef, ham
- Tofu, tempeh
- Cottage cheese
- Low-fat cheese (string, mozzarella)
- Low-sugar yogurt
- Low-fat (1%) or skim milk
- Egg (up to 4 yolks per week)
- Beans, peas, lentils
- Hummus
- Peanut butter
- Nuts (any type), soy nuts
- Sunflower, pumpkin or sesame seeds

Healthy Fats

- Avocado
- Olives, olive oil
- Canola oil

Now, use what you learned to build a meal plan that works for you!

Who to Call

If you are a UW Health patient and have more questions, please contact UW Health at one of the phone numbers listed below.

You can also visit our website at

www.uwhealth.org/nutrition

Nutrition clinics for UW Hospital and Clinics (UWHC) and American Family Children's Hospital (AFCH) can be reached at: **(608) 890-5500**.

Meal Planning Guide

Meal #1 Time:	Grain/Starch	
	Protein	
	Fruit and/or Vegetable	
	Other	
Snack Time:	Grain/Starch or Fruit	
	Vegetable	
	Protein	
Meal # 2 Time:	Grain/Starch	
	Protein	
	Fruit and/or Vegetable	
	Other	
Snack Time:	Grain/Starch, or Fruit	
	Vegetable	
	Protein	
Meal # 3 Time:	Grain/Starch	
	Protein	
	Fruit and/or vegetable	
	Other	
Snack Time:	Grain/Starch, or Fruit	
	Vegetable	
	Protein	

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 8/2023 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#509.