MyPlate Community Toolkit

USDA United States Department of Agriculture

LET'S MOVE
AMERICA'S MOVE TO RAISE A HEALTHIER GENERATION OF KIDS

MyPlate Community Toolkit

Introduction

First Lady Michelle Obama's ***Let's Move!*** initiative has an ambitious national goal of addressing the challenge of childhood obesity within a generation. ***Let's Move!*** mobilizes every sector of society to provide families, schools, and communities with simple tools to give children the opportunity to reach a healthy adulthood. Faith-based and community organizations have a unique and critical role to play in making America's communities places of wellness, where families live actively, have access to nutritious foods, and can make healthy choices.

MyPlate is an important tool that helps individuals, families, and communities make healthy eating a part of everyday life. It is an icon that is supported by simple nutrition messages, and it can be used by any family or food culture to remind us of how to build a healthy plate. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) developed this toolkit to help you bring MyPlate's messages to your community in practical ways to achieve community wellness. Your leadership role gives you the opportunity to champion healthy eating in every setting, from Sunday dinner to after-school snacks. Families, congregations, schools, and communities have an opportunity to lead the way in getting nutritious meals to America's children.

"When we come together, and when we focus all the strength that we have in our hearts and in our communities, there is nothing that we cannot accomplish on behalf of our kids—nothing."

–Michelle Obama
First Lady of the United States

This toolkit is intended to provide guidance for you, your family, and your community to eat healthfully and be active to maintain a healthy weight, and to help you share that guidance with those around you. We encourage you to take a leadership role and be a wellness ambassador to your community—whether that's your neighborhood or family dinner table. Make healthy eating a priority and explain the importance of nutritious meals to your community. Organize others to join you and commit to bringing healthy meals to your local organizations, congregations, and community centers.

There are many ways to help your community implement the guidance in this toolkit. For example, open up your congregation's kitchen and host kids for cooking lessons or serve them healthy meals over the summer when school is out.

Here are some stories of how other ***Let's Move!*** communities are using **MyPlate**:

Young Leader Robert Hsu Plants Gardens and Works on Health Education in His Community

After living through his grandmother's struggles with diabetes, Robert felt compelled to enable others to live healthier lives through education, awareness, and advocacy.

Texas Hunger Initiative Joins Let's Move Faith and Communities to Serve Summer Meals

The Texas Hunger Initiative (THI) joined Let's Move Faith and Communities to help folks serve meals to the one in four children in Texas who don't get enough to eat every summer.

Delaware Kid Chefs Learn To Prepare Tasty, Nutritious, and Budget-Friendly Meals

Barbara Jackey set up a curriculum to teach low-income children, ages 8-12, about healthy eating and how to prepare nutritious foods on their own.

The Challenge

As a leader in your faith community or neighborhood organization, you have a challenging role to play. While you often want to make a difference in the health and wellness of the people in your organization, you may feel the need to first reach your own health goals. We all have areas that we want to improve…eating healthier, being more active, or losing weight. To make a change in your eating and physical activity habits, you have to take a first step.

You can be a powerful source of encouragement by sharing your journey with others.

This **MyPlate Community Toolkit** provides health and wellness leaders with activities to help you:

- Choose a lifestyle that supports healthy eating and moving more.
- Identify practical tips and strategies to support your efforts.
- Motivate others in their efforts.

Healthy Eating

Individuals and families make food choices every day that often lead to eating too much and moving too little. The resources available through ChooseMyPlate.gov can help you create a lifestyle and environment that supports nutritious eating. **MyPlate** reminds Americans to think about healthier choices. Foods like vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low-fat dairy, and lean protein foods contain the nutrients needed to build a better plate, meal, or snack. ChooseMyPlate.gov provides individuals involved with schools, workplaces, places of worship, retail establishments, and other organizations with the practical tips and tools to promote healthy lifestyles among children and families. Use this toolkit to support your personal and community wellness goals.

How Do I Maintain a Healthy Weight?

The first step in managing your weight is to find out what you eat and drink. Understanding your current habits will help you to make healthier choices later on. ChooseMyPlate.gov can start you on your journey by making it easier to:

1. Understand what you currently eat and drink.
2. Find the right amount for you.
3. Make better choices.

Reaching that healthier weight is a balancing act, but well worth the effort. It's a matter of keeping track of your "energy in," or the calories you consume from food and drink, with your "energy out," or the calories you use up or burn.

SuperTracker is a great way to balance your daily food intake and physical activity. It is a free, online resource available at ChooseMyPlate.gov, designed to help individuals who want to make lifestyle changes to help reduce their risk for chronic diseases and to maintain a healthy weight. The tool will give you a personalized plan for what you need to eat and drink and guide you to make better choices.

You can also make simple changes as you go throughout your day. Choose any of the key messages below to help you get started and keep a list of all the "how-tos" that help you put them into action.

KEY MESSAGES

- ***Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.***
- ***Enjoy your food, but eat less.***
- ***Avoid oversized portions.***
- ***Make at least half your grains whole.***
- ***Drink water instead of sugary drinks.***
- ***Compare the sodium in your foods.***
- ***Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk.***

TIPS TO KEEP YOU GOING

- **Use a Smaller Plate.** Use smaller plates to help with portion control. A healthy meal starts with more vegetables and fruits and smaller portions of protein and grains. Adjust the portions on your plate to get more of what you need without too many calories.
- **Eat Some Foods Less Often.** Cut back on foods high in solid fats, added sugars, and salt. They include cakes, cookies, ice cream, candies, sweetened drinks, pizza, and fatty meats like ribs, sausages, bacon, and hot dogs. Use these foods as occasional treats, not everyday foods.
- **Eat the Right Amount of Food for You.** People who are successful at managing their weight track how much they eat every day, even if they don't count every calorie. Make more meals at home, where you can control the amount and what goes in your food.

- **Use the Nutrition Facts Label.** To compare the sodium, calories, fats, and sugars in your foods, read the Nutrition Facts label.
- **Drink Water.** Soda, energy drinks, and sports drinks are a major source of added sugar, and calories in American diets.
- **Don't Forget the Dairy.** Add a cup of fat-free or low-fat milk or yogurt to your meal. They provide the same amount of calcium and other essential nutrients as whole milk and yogurt, but less fat and calories. If you don't drink milk, try soymilk (soy beverage) with your meal.

TIPS FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

- **Invite Others to Participate.** Offer opportunities for individuals and families to participate in nutrition education classes, gardening, or cooking events to promote healthy eating.
- **Promote Access to Affordable Food.** Help families buy more groceries and purchase healthy foods for their meals by telling people about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other nutrition assistance programs.
- **Use the SuperTracker.** You can help individuals identify their calorie needs and track food intake by using SuperTracker as part of your health and wellness efforts.
- **Empower Others.** Provide access to ChooseMyPlate.gov through your organization's website.
- **Start Motivational Groups in Your Community.** Participants can help each other track their behavior, change food buying patterns, and switch to healthier eating habits.

Moving More

Physical activity is simply moving your body to use the energy from food. Walking, climbing the stairs, biking to work, and playing soccer are all examples of physical activity. To maximize the health benefits of physical activity, choose activities that you enjoy and are appropriate for your fitness level. The more intense the exercise, the harder you will breathe and the faster your heart will beat. Moderate physical activities include golf, water aerobics, bicycling, and walking briskly. Vigorous physical activities include running/jogging, swimming, and basketball.

Why do I need to be more active?

Physical activity recommendations are different as we age, but physical activity is important for everyone. Regular physical activity can produce long-term health benefits. People of all ages, shapes, sizes, and abilities can see results, and the more you do, the greater the health benefits. Being physically active can help you:

- Increase your chances of living longer.
- Feel better about yourself.
- Sleep well at night.
- Maintain or reach a healthy weight.

Balancing what you eat with physical activity is key to weight management. Figure out how much physical activity you are participating in on a weekly basis and add a little bit at a time to improve your fitness level. Do this by writing down how many minutes per day you are physically active or use SuperTracker to check your physical activity levels.

It's all about the balance. Being active is just as important as eating healthy!

KEY MESSAGE

- ***Be Active Your Way***

TIPS TO KEEP YOU GOING

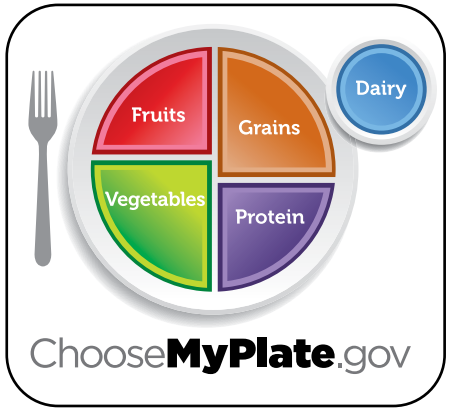
- **Set a weekly goal**. You can use SuperTracker to track your daily physical activity levels and to check if you are reaching the recommended levels for your age group.
- **Get the whole family involved!** Take your family along for exercise and spend quality time together as you catch up on each other's day.
- **Have fun**. To keep yourself interested, choose something that you enjoy.
  - At home
    - Try to do **stretches, exercises, or pedal** a stationary bike while watching television.
    - Go on an afternoon **bike ride** with your kids.
  - At work
    - Replace a coffee break at work with a brisk **10-minute walk** with a coworker.
    - Join the office **softball team or walking group**.
  - At play
    - **Play softball** with friends on the weekend.
    - **Start a garden** at your place of worship.
- **Take the President's Challenge**
  - Get moving with the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award Challenge.
  - You pick your challenge and strive to reach your goal.

TIPS FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

- **Make Physical Activity Accessible.** Offer regular programs and scheduled activities at your organization that include physical activity for adults and children.
- **Promote Recreational Facilities.** Partner with local community centers and schools to promote the use of recreation facilities, gymnasiums, playing fields, and playgrounds.
- **Support Community Sports.** Start a community sports league, intramural sport, or physical activity club that is accessible to everyone in your community.
- **Try Walking or Riding for Routine Trips.** Walk or bike with kids to school, places of worship, and other activities.

Supplement Your Efforts With MyPlate Resources

Strengthen existing efforts in your community or organization with ***Let's Move!*** and MyPlate resources. ***Let's Move!*** and ChooseMyPlate.gov have an extensive range of materials for audiences at various stages in life. Order or download materials directly from ChooseMyPlate.gov to assist in your wellness efforts.



- *Let's Move!* Resources
- Getting Started with MyPlate
- Dietary Guidelines Brochure
- 10 Tips Nutrition Education Series
- Selected Messages for Consumers
- Audience-Specific Resources
  - Daily Food Plans
  - Daily Food Plan for Pregnancy
  - Daily Food Plan for Kids and Preschoolers
  - Health and Nutrition Information for Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women
  - Healthy Eating for Vegetarians
- Sample Menus and Recipes
- Partnership Information
- Coloring Sheets
- Graphics
- Order Materials Online
- USDA Nutrition Assistance Resources
  - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
  - Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC)
  - School Meals Programs
  - Healthy Eating on a Budget

Take Action in Your Community

Now that you've experienced the building blocks of a healthy lifestyle, share these messages with others! Take action in your organization or congregation to make your community a place of wellness. People in your neighborhood, schools, and places of worship are common partners in health and wellness efforts. Establish a group of people willing to work together such as a *Let's Move Wellness Council*. Assess your organization's needs, develop a community action plan, and commit to activities that are appropriate for your community or congregation and that can improve health and wellness.

Here are some ideas for activities:

- Use MyPlate resources for your community and congregational meals.
- Launch a healthy food drive and encourage donations of healthy food items.
- Grow healthy food for your community by starting a garden.
- Feed kids over the summer with USDA's Summer Food Service Program.
- Host a weekly exercise activity for your community or congregation.

Ready to broaden your commitment to wellness and reach a larger community in your neighborhood, city, or State? Build an action plan for a larger initiative that represents the goals, activities, and intended outcomes for your organization. To learn more about creating an action plan for your community, read about effective community health plans that work.

Share Your Success

Celebrate your success by sharing what you've done and the impact of your effort. Use social networking resources to communicate about the classes conducted for seniors, place articles in your organization's newsletter about the volunteers who touched the lives of moms, and keep track of the donations collected to continue funding for your community kitchen program. Inspire others by sharing the stories about families that benefit from your community garden, young children who make half their plate fruits and vegetables, or local restaurants that offer healthy menu options as a result of your local health and wellness campaign.

As your efforts grow and expand, stay connected through:

- USDA Nutrition Communicators Network
- USDA Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships
- ***Let's Move!***
- *Let's Move Faith and Communities*

Read the success stories below about how others have made MyPlate work in their community.

A Catholic School in Harlem Turns MyPlate into a School Musical

Elementary students at Mt. Carmel Holy Rosary turn healthy eating lessons into a school musical about MyPlate.

MOGO: A Wisconsin County on the Move!

A Monroe County elementary school student displays nothing but smiles after participating in a vegetable taste test.

Notes

www.ChooseMyPlate.gov
www.LetsMove.gov

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