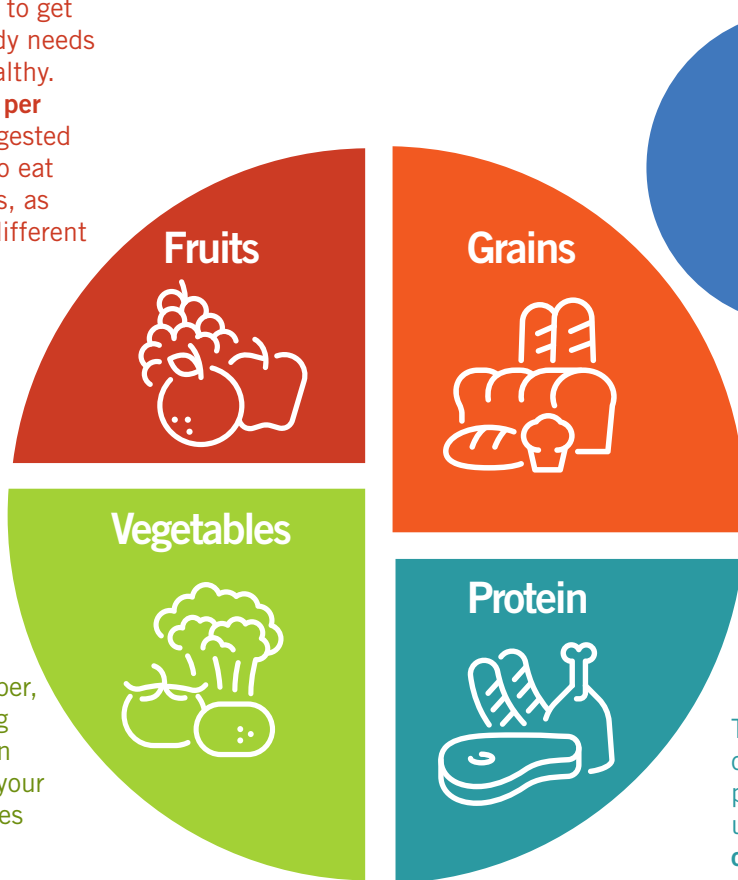


Cook up a healthy life with the *My Plate* guidelines.

A balanced diet is essential for a happy and healthy life. My Plate, a U.S. Department of Agriculture initiative, notes the five key elements of a balanced meal:

Dairy products are full of calcium, which is an essential vitamin for strengthening your bones and teeth. Milk or foods made from milk that retain their calcium content—like yogurt or cheeses—fall into this category. **Aim to have 3 cups of dairy every day.**

Fruits are a great way to get the nutrients your body needs to stay strong and healthy. **1.5 to 2 cups of fruit per day** is the typical suggested amount. Remember to eat a wide variety of fruits, as different fruits have different health benefits.



Vegetables are an excellent source of vitamins, minerals, fiber, and protein. Including plenty of vegetables in your diet can reduce your risk of chronic illnesses like heart disease or diabetes. Experts recommend **2.5 to 3 cups of vegetables per day.**

Grains—particularly whole grains—contain essential nutrients that support bone health, your immune system, digestion, and weight management. **A healthy diet includes at least 5 to 8 ounces daily, with at least half being whole grains.**

The amount of protein someone should consume varies by the amount of physical activity they do, but experts usually recommend eating **5 to 6.5 ounces of protein each day.** While most people associate protein with meat, beans and nuts are also great sources of protein.

Learn more at DignityHealth.org/Bakersfield and ChooseMyPlate.gov.