

# How to Build a Healthy Plate

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This post goes hand in hand with my [\*\*\*Back to Basics Nutrition Ebook\*\*\*](#) {as you will see I refer to it a lot in this post} so be sure to check it out if you have not already. When planning out a meal it's important to include all macronutrients {carbohydrates, protein and fats} on your plate. This will ensure you are consuming a wide variety of essential nutrients. The information in this post is a general guideline and exactly how much food you should be consuming at each meal will depend on your dietary goals {eg. maintaining weight, losing weight, building muscle, etc.}. You can refer to [\*\*\*Canada's Food Guide\*\*\*](#) to help with general serving sizes or speak with your local dietitian to create an individualized meal plan.

**Overall it's important to know how to build a healthy meal!**

## Key Points when planning a healthy meal

### Be sure to include lots of vegetables {about half your plate!}

The more colorful your plate, the better! Vegetables are nutrient dense foods meaning they contain vitamins, minerals, fibre, antioxidants and more. Be sure to add those greens like spinach, romaine, kale, arugula, swiss chard, etc. to your plate. This doesn't mean you need to eat a salad with dinner every night {although you totally could if you love salads!}.

Here are some examples of entrees that could be loaded with veggies:

- Soup
- Tacos
- Pizza
- Or try steaming or roasting your veggies!

*Side note:* Frozen vegetables are great too! Just be sure to purchase brands that do not add salt to the vegetables.

I did a full blog post on how to incorporate more greens into your meals, read that [\*\*\*here\*\*\*](#).

### Always add Protein

Protein is needed in the body to maintain and repair cell tissue (muscles, hair, skin, etc.). Protein is made up of amino acids (the "building blocks" of protein). There are 20 different amino acids with 11 being non-essential and 9 essential. A "complete" protein will contain all essential amino acids so it's important to include these foods in your meal. There are many complete proteins that are from an animal source and plant-based sources {perfect for vegans and vegetarians!}.

Some examples of plant-based proteins are:

- Quinoa
- Hemp seeds
- Spirulina
- Chia seeds
- Tempeh and Tofu



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I actually published a page from my ebook and it's all about plant-based protein! So head on over [here](#) to see how many grams of protein are in these plant-based sources and more.

When it comes to animal protein sources it's important to choose lean meat when possible. Some examples of healthy animal/fish protein are:

- Chicken
- Turkey
- Beef *{although should be limited since it contains higher amounts of saturated fat than chicken and turkey}*
- Skim milk
- Eggs
- Salmon

For a complete list of protein sources and more, check out my ebook *{Nutrition Basics}* [here](#).

## Limit unhealthy fats

Add healthy fats to your meals like avocados, olive oil, nuts, seeds, coconut oil, etc. Limit the amount of processed foods since these can contain a lot of saturated and trans fats *{also a ton of salt and minimal nutrients}*.

## Choosing the right Whole Grains/Carbohydrates

When it comes to pastas and breads, make sure you are choosing whole grains. Gluten free options like quinoa pasta are great alternatives to 100% whole grain bread if you are unable to consume gluten. Other great carbohydrates that can be added to meals are sweet potatoes, beans, lentils and other legumes. *Vegetables are also a carbohydrate.*

## Other tips

- Use smaller plates to encourage smaller portions. If you are still hungry, go up for seconds.
- Savor your food. Slow down and chew your food. It's funny typing, *chew your food* but it's true! Chewing your food to a puree consistency will help with digestion and bloating. Did you know some digestive enzymes are released in the mouth? That means some nutrients actually start to break down in the mouth before hitting your stomach.
- Be mindful. I talk about this more in depth in my [ebook](#) but eating when your hungry and stopping when you're full is very important to avoid over eating.

## Dessert

If you have a sweet tooth here are some healthy dessert ideas:

- Fruit
- Homemade popsicles *{recipe here}*
- [Dark Chocolate Peanut Butter Cups](#)