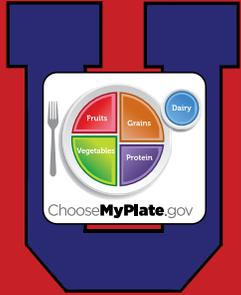




United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

## MYPLATE On Campus



Center for Nutrition  
Policy and Promotion

March 2013

# MYPLATE On Campus Toolkit

# MYPLATE On Campus Toolkit



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March 2013



# MYPLATE On Campus Toolkit

## INTRODUCTION

Students on campuses around the country have an opportunity to champion healthy eating and lead the way in improving the health of young adults at their school. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion has created the **MyPlate On Campus Toolkit** especially for young adults attending universities and colleges. This toolkit will help you as a message champion communicate the Dietary Guidelines messages supporting the MyPlate symbol to your student body in practical ways that promote wellness at your school.

The college and university years are some of the most formative years. Many college students are living on their own for the first time, learning to prepare their own meals, and developing exercise routines that fit their busy schedules. We encourage you to become a **MyPlate On Campus Ambassador** to promote healthy lifestyles that students can maintain beyond their academic years. The habits you promote through this effort can influence the larger community as students go on to join the workforce, raise families, and make food decisions that affect the health and well-being of others.





## PURPOSE

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide guidance to professional and peer educators who are interested in becoming a **MyPlate On Campus Ambassador**. This toolkit will highlight a variety of resources available at [ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov) to help you promote healthier behaviors on your campus that are drawn from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. We encourage you to take a leadership role and champion healthier eating in the classroom, at sporting events, at student health fairs, or anyplace you feel you can make a difference. As a role model and a peer educator, you can help others make healthy eating a priority and explain the importance of nutritious meals balanced with adequate physical activity to your campus community.

## THE BENEFITS

College provides an opportunity to build leadership skills. Being a **MyPlate On Campus Ambassador** can provide an important role for helping others build healthier habits.

Many students take their health for granted and think “I don’t have to worry about that stuff until I get older.” Students are often faced with all-you-can-eat dining halls, vending machines, food on the go, and late-night pizza parties, not to mention financial constraints that limit their food budget and limited kitchen space and appliances to prepare their own meals. A demanding course load can quickly disrupt a physical activity routine when students choose an extra hour of studying over a game of basketball. While you want to make a difference in the health and wellness of the students, faculty, and staff, 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 and, in turn, inspire others, you have to take a first step.

*This MyPlate On Campus Toolkit provides the tips and resources you'll need to help you champion the MyPlate On Campus Ambassador role.*

### ***What do you gain from being a MyPlate On Campus Ambassador?***

- Demonstrate leadership.
- Learn effective ways to educate.
- Gain public speaking experience and enhanced communications skills.
- Expand knowledge about health and nutrition.
- Learn effective teamwork.
- Develop writing skills.
- Discover and exercise your passions and strengths.
- Contribute to your community.
- Develop your creativity.
- Include your work on resumes.

***Get started today and sign up to be a MyPlate On Campus Ambassador at [ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov).***

#### **Be a role model**

- *Choose a lifestyle that supports healthy eating and physical activity.*
- *Motivate others in their efforts.*

#### **Be an educator**

- *Provide practical tips and strategies to support healthy choices.*
- *Strengthen the health and wellness environment across your campus.*



## HEALTHY EATING

Individuals and families make choices every day that often lead to eating too much of the unhealthy things and moving too little. The resources available at [ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov) can help you create a lifestyle and environment that supports nutritious eating. **MyPlate is a powerful reminder** for Americans to think about making healthier food 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](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov) provides students, faculty, and staff with practical tips and tools to promote healthy lifestyles on campus. Use this toolkit to support your personal and campus wellness goals.



### *How can I improve my eating habits?*

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

**SuperTracker can help you learn to balance your daily food intake and physical activity.** It is a state-of-the-art, free, online resource available at [SuperTracker.usda.gov](http://SuperTracker.usda.gov), designed to help individuals who want to make lifestyle changes. The tool will give you a personalized plan to meet your food and beverage needs and guide you to make better choices. Get started with the tips in *Use SuperTracker Your Way*. 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. These messages are great to share in your Ambassador role.

## 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. By avoiding oversized bowls, glasses, plates, and mugs, you're better able to avoid oversized portions and therefore avoid excess calories. This is a great trick for the all-you-can-eat dining hall! Remember, you can always go back if you are still hungry.
- **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; and when you do eat them, be mindful of your portions.
- **Eat Some Foods More Often.** Choose foods that have more nutrients for the calories they provide more often, like vegetables and fruits. You can't go wrong if you make half your plate fruits and vegetables. Try some no-salt seasonings to add zest to veggies and enjoy the natural sweetness of fruits.
- **Head to Class Prepared.** Remember to pack healthy snacks when you head to class. This will help you avoid vending machine pitfalls.
- **Use the Nutrition Facts Label.** To compare the sodium, calories, fats, and sugars in your foods, read the Nutrition Facts label. Check with your dining services to see if they post nutritional facts in the dining hall or online.
- **Drink Water.** Soda, energy drinks, and sugar-sweetened coffee drinks and sports drinks are a major source of added sugar and calories in American diets. Have a water bottle with you throughout the day as a reminder and don't wait until you're thirsty to have water. Utilize the water fountains across campus for free refills.
- **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 (fortified soy beverage) with your meal.

## TIPS FOR YOUR CAMPUS

- **Invite Others to Participate.** Offer opportunities for students to participate in nutrition education classes, gardening, or cooking events to promote healthy eating. Invite the campus chefs to hold weekly healthy cooking demonstrations that teach students the basic culinary skills needed to prepare healthy meals at home. Invite your school dining services dietitian to give demonstrations of healthy food choices and ways to prepare foods in a more healthy way.
- **Promote the Dietary Guidelines Message Calendar.** The message calendar includes key nutrition messages that support the MyPlate icon that will help students apply selected themes from the Dietary Guidelines. MyPlate On Campus Ambassadors can use the calendar to promote the same messages that are being shared by thousands of MyPlate National and Community Partners around the country. Using one nutrition voice is critical!
- **Promote Access to Healthy Food.** Bring a farmers market to campus or collaborate with campus chefs to promote healthier menu items. Check out where farmers markets are located in your area by clicking on the following link: <http://search.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/>.



- **Use the SuperTracker.** You can help individuals identify their calorie needs and track their food intake by using SuperTracker as part of their health and wellness efforts.
- **Spread the Word!** Provide access to ChooseMyPlate.gov through your campus's website, fitness center, club newsletters, and bulletin boards.
- **Start Motivational Groups On Campus.** Participants can give moral support and help each other track their behavior, change food-buying habits, and switch to healthier choices.
- **Motivate Healthy Behavior.** Be conscious of your own food choices and exercise habits and influence those around you. Be a role model for healthy eating and lifestyle choices for your peers.



## MOVING MORE

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:

### KEY MESSAGE

- *Be active your way.*

- Reduce stress.
- Feel better about yourself.
- Sleep well at night.
- Maintain or reach a healthy weight.
- Improve focus for better studying.

Balancing what you eat with adequate physical activity is key to health. Figure out how physically active you are on a weekly basis and find ways to improve or maintain your fitness levels. For adults, recommended exercise is 150 minutes each week. Start tracking how many minutes per day you are physically active or use SuperTracker to check your physical activity levels.





## 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.
- **Grab a Friend!** Take friends along for exercise and spend quality time together after class being active.
- **Have Fun.** To keep yourself interested, choose something that you enjoy.

### At Home/Dorms/Apartment

*Do stretches or exercises such as yoga or jumping jacks while watching television.*

*Use household items, such as soup cans, to do bicep curls during your study breaks.*

### On Campus

*In between classes, take a brisk 10-minute walk or bike ride around campus.*

*Join an intramural team, club team, or gardening group.*

### During Free Time

*Sign up for a class at your campus fitness center or gym.*

*Play games like basketball, soccer, or kickball with your friends on the weekend.*

## TIPS FOR YOUR CAMPUS

- **Make Physical Activity Accessible.** Help create awareness about the opportunities to be active on campus. Promote the use of recreation facilities, gyms, trails, pools, tennis courts, tracks, and playing fields.
- **Support Campus Sports.** Organize an intramural team or join a physical activity club such as a hiking club or yoga club.
- **Encourage People to Commute to Class in an Active Way:** skateboard, long board, bicycle, walk, scooter, or roller blade.



## TAKE ACTION ON CAMPUS

Now that you've experienced the building blocks of a healthy lifestyle, become a **MyPlate On Campus Ambassador** and share these messages and healthy actions with others! Take action on your campus to improve the health and wellness environment. Assess your campus's needs, develop a campus action plan, and commit to activities that are appropriate for your campus.

### *What does it mean to be a MyPlate On Campus Ambassador?*

**You can make a difference** and improve the overall health of your campus by becoming a **MyPlate On Campus Ambassador**. The MyPlate On Campus Ambassador partnership provides guidance for motivated college students who want to promote positive diet and physical activity behaviors among students.

To get started, take the following steps:

- **Visit [ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov) to complete the MyPlate On Campus Ambassador training module and registration form.**
- **Practice positive eating and physical activity behaviors on your campus.**
- **Partner with faculty, staff, and other students to promote MyPlate and the Dietary Guidelines Message Calendar on your campus.**



## SHARE YOUR SUCCESS

Celebrate your success by sharing what you've done and the impact of your efforts. Use social networking resources to communicate about the classes conducted for students and submit articles to your campus newsletter about the success of your events. Inspire others by sharing stories about students that benefit from your campus garden, staff who make half their plate fruits and vegetables, or dining outlets that offer healthy menu options as a result of your campus health and wellness campaign.

- **Share your story with us on Twitter, @MyPlate, or by using the hashtag #MyPlate.**
- **Share your experiences on the MyPlate Facebook page.**

***Here are some activity ideas for MyPlate On Campus Ambassadors:\****

- Display MyPlate posters in your campus dining halls, food courts, and markets. They are inspiring pointers to the wealth of actionable advice at ChooseMyPlate.gov.
- Host a weekly exercise activity for your sorority or other campus club.
- Create a SuperTracker personalized profile and track your own foods and physical activity to see how they stack up. Then, teach others how to use SuperTracker.
- Motivate a friend, colleague, or group to practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors.
- Start up a campus farmers' market or promote an existing one.
- Organize a healthy recipe exchange or a healthy MyPlate-inspired recipe makeover.
- Host a MyPlate video challenge among students on your campus.
- Create a dinner club with weekly recipe swaps and nutrition tips.
- Use Social Media to communicate your role as a MyPlate On Campus Ambassador—promote MyPlate messages, share testimonies, or use social media as a tool to organize with other MyPlate Ambassadors.

\*Be sure to partner with campus groups and authorities to conduct your promotion activities. For example, you may wish to partner with campus recreation, club sports, student health, or dining and catering services.

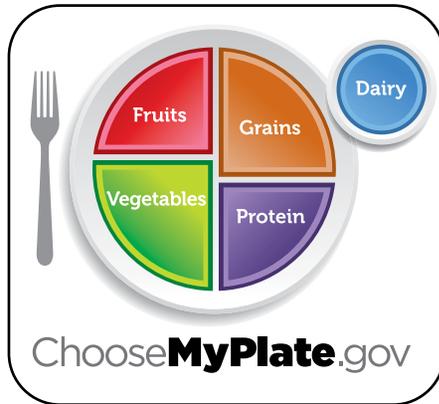
**SuperTracker**





## SUPPLEMENT YOUR EFFORTS WITH MYPLATE RESOURCES

Let MyPlate resources assist you in your campus wellness efforts. ChooseMyPlate.gov has an extensive range of materials and the **MyPlate On Campus** materials are created specifically for college and university students. Download these free materials directly from ChooseMyPlate.gov.



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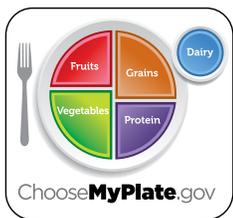
### ChooseMyPlate.gov Resources

- Getting Started With MyPlate*
- Dietary Guidelines Brochure*
- 10 Tips Nutrition Education Series*
- Sample Menus and Recipes*
- Healthy Eating for Vegetarians*
- Eating Better on a Budget*

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### MyPlate On Campus Resources

- MyPlate On Campus Toolkit*
  - Stay Fit on Campus*
  - Mini-Fridge Makeover*
  - Be Choosy in the Dining Hall*
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This publication may be viewed and downloaded from [ChooseMyPlate.gov](https://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov).

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion  
3101 Park Center Drive, Suite 1034  
Alexandria, VA 22302