



MASSACHUSETTS
GENERAL HOSPITAL



MassGeneral Hospital
for Children™

DOWN SYNDROME PROGRAM
www.massgeneral.org/downsyndrome

Living a Healthier Lifestyle





DOWN SYNDROME PROGRAM
www.massgeneral.org/downsyndrome

Living a **healthier lifestyle** has many benefits, which means it is has many good reasons for my health! Living a healthier lifestyle means making good choices with what I eat and how I exercise every week. This takes practice and with practice, I can learn how to live a healthier lifestyle.



There are two ways I can live a healthier lifestyle, which are to eat healthy foods and learn fun ways to exercise. This book can help me learn how to do these things. My doctor and my family can also help me learn how to live a healthier lifestyle.

To help see how I'm doing with my healthy food and exercise choices, I can use this page to write down where I am now and then write my goals for the future. My doctor and my family can help me figure out and meet my goals.

Right now:

I eat _____ meals every day. A typical meal includes _____

I eat _____ snacks every day. A typical snack includes _____

I exercise _____ times a week. When I exercise, I usually _____

My doctor thinks it's best for me to:

_____ Stay the same weight _____ Lose _____ pounds _____ Gain _____ pounds

My future goals:

To live a healthier lifestyle, I might need to make small changes to my food and exercise choices. Change can be hard sometimes, but I can get better little by little. Setting goals can help me make those small changes. A **goal** is something I work toward.

My goal is to eat _____ meals every day. A typical meal includes _____

My goal is to eat _____ snacks every day. A typical snack includes _____

My goal is to exercise _____ times a week. When I exercise, I usually _____

Eating Healthy Foods

Eating healthy foods is a good way to live a healthier lifestyle. Eating healthy foods can help make me feel really good on the inside and the outside. Healthy food gives me vitamins and energy. My body needs vitamins to stay healthy and energy to keep me going!



Changing what I eat can be hard at first, but I can get better with practice. I can also get better with help from my doctor and my family. If I have questions about how to eat healthier foods, I can read this story. I can also ask my doctor, my nutritionist, my teachers and my family.



There are many types of food. Food can be healthy or unhealthy, tasty or not tasty, and crunchy or soft.

Sometimes, it can be hard to tell which food is which. It can also be hard sometimes to choose healthy foods. My **nutritionist** is a food expert who can help me learn which foods are healthy choices.

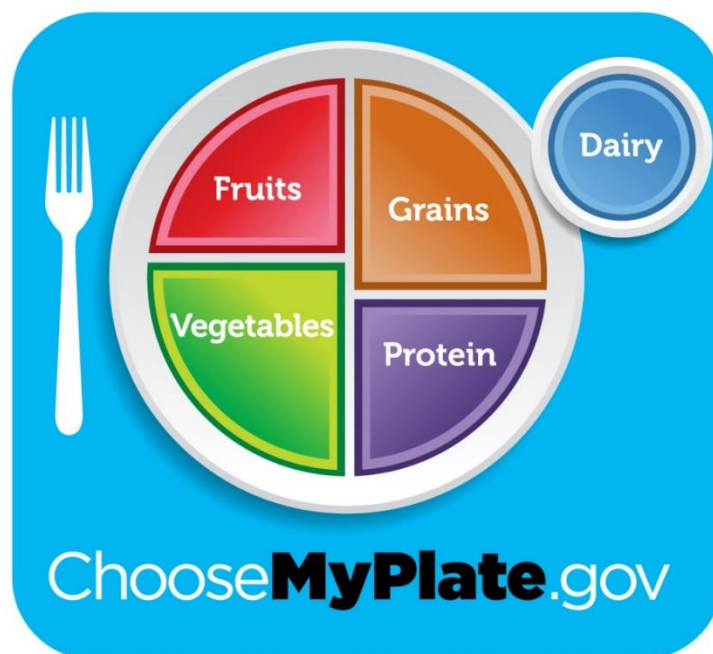
Power foods

Healthy foods with vitamins and energy are also called **power foods**. Power foods give me energy and vitamins. Power foods come from 5 different food groups.

The 5 food groups are:

- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Protein
- Dairy
- Grains or starch

This special plate called **MyPlate®** can help me remember my food groups. I can also use MyPlate® to plan what I eat for breakfast, lunch and dinner. MyPlate® can help me learn which vegetables, proteins, dairy and grains I can choose to eat at each meal.



I also know that sometimes, it's okay to have food that isn't as healthy as power foods. It's important to choose power foods on most days.

Food portions

I can remember the amount of food I should eat at each meal by looking at my palm or by making fists with my hands. The amount of food I should eat is called the **portion**.



My doctor, my nutritionist and my family can help me if I have questions about my food portions.

Veggies

Healthy veggies can be fresh or frozen. **Veggies** should take up half of my plate during meals. I can remember this portion because I should eat 2 fists worth of veggies with each meal.



It's important to try different types of veggies to see which ones I like. There are lots of different veggies that I can eat with my meals. Veggies are all different colors and fun shapes!

My favorite green veggie is _____

My favorite veggie to put in salad is _____

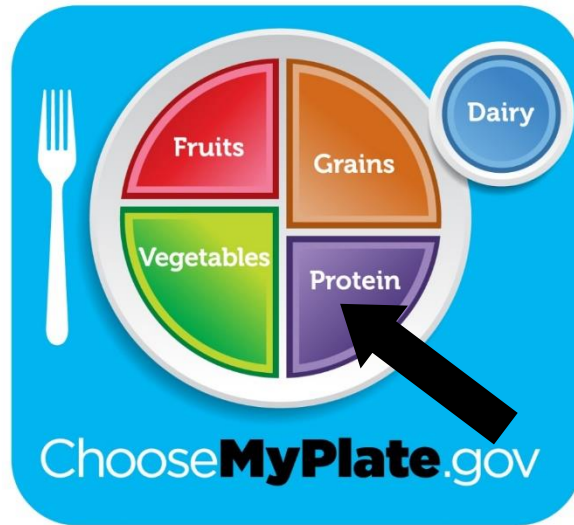
My favorite colorful veggie is _____

My favorite dip to eat with veggies is _____

Protein foods

Protein foods should have little or no fat in them to keep me strong. Protein foods should take up $\frac{1}{4}$ (a quarter) of my plate. With each meal, my serving of protein food should be the size of my palm.

Some examples of protein foods are meat, fish, eggs, tofu, beans and nuts.



My favorite type of meat is _____

My favorite type of fish is _____

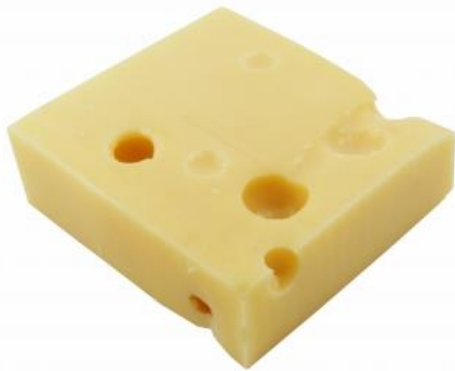
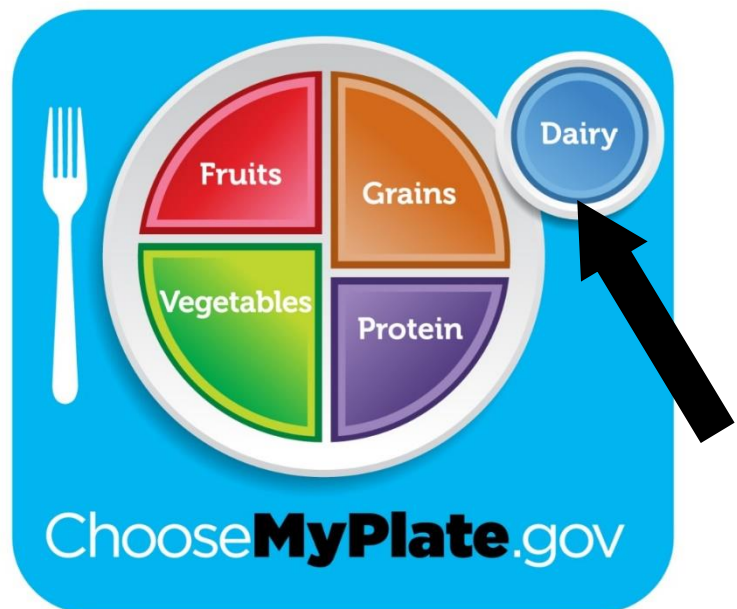
My favorite bean dish is _____

My favorite type of nut is _____

Dairy foods

If I don't want to eat a protein food with my meal, I can choose **foods with dairy**. Dairy foods should have little or no fat to keep me strong and healthy. I should eat 1 cup of a dairy food with each meal. One cup equals 1 fist.

Some examples of foods with dairy are milk, yogurt and cheese.

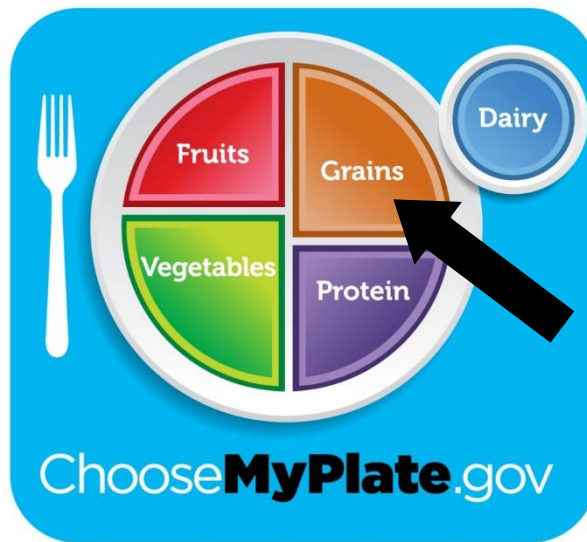


My favorite dairy food is _____

Grains and starch

With my protein or dairy food, it's important to have **whole grains or starch**. I should have 1 fist worth of whole grains or starch with my meals. Whole grains and starch give me vitamins and energy that will keep me healthy.

Some examples of whole grains or starch are bread, pasta, rice, potatoes, sweet potatoes and cereal.



My favorite type of bread is _____

My favorite pasta shape is _____

My favorite type of cereal is _____

My favorite type of potato or sweet potato is _____

Drinks

If I get thirsty during meals, it's good to know which healthy drinks I can choose. **Water** is the healthiest drink, but other healthy choices are low-fat milk, flavored water, water with fruit or tea.

I should have 1 small glass of my favorite healthy drink with my meals.

My favorite healthy drink is _____



It's important not to have too many unhealthy drinks like soda. Soda doesn't have vitamins and energy to keep me healthy. Soda has lots of sugar, which isn't the healthiest choice.

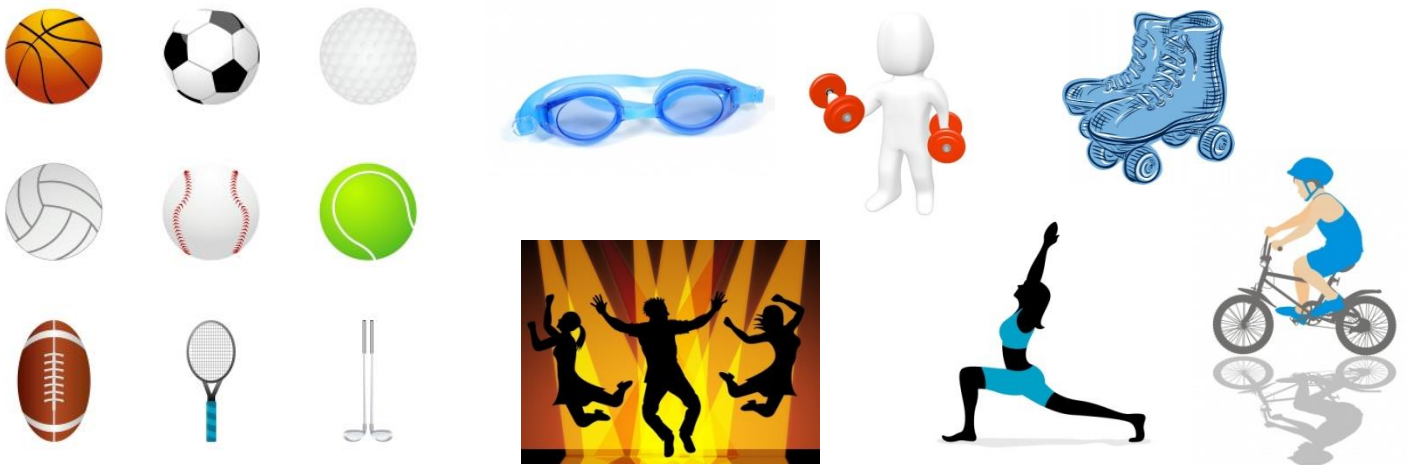
Learning Fun Ways to Exercise

Exercising is another way to live a healthier lifestyle. There are lots of fun ways to exercise! My doctor and my family can help me learn which exercises are fun for me and how much exercise I need.

There are many fun ways I can exercise. Some examples are:

- Going to the gym
- Playing sports, like soccer, basketball, baseball or kickball
- Swimming
- Riding a bike
- Dancing or Zumba®
- Walking, jogging or running outside or on a treadmill
- Jumping jacks
- Playing fitness games, like Wii Fit®
- Roller skating or ice skating
- Yoga or gentle stretches

Some of my favorite ways to exercise are _____



To help see how I'm doing with my exercise, I can use this page to write down where I am now and then write my goals for the future. My doctor and my family can help me figure out and meet my goals.

Right now:

Every day, I use the escalator or elevator _____ times a day. Instead of using the elevator or escalator, I can use the stairs!

Every day, I sit down for _____ hours. Instead of sitting down, I can get up and walk around for 10 minutes every hour.

Every day, I spend _____ hours in front a computer screen, T.V. screen or other electronic device. While I spend time in front of a screen, I can spend that time stretching or walking around instead of sitting still.

Every week, I drive to the local store _____ times. If it is safe, I can walk or ride my bike to the local store with a friend or my family instead of driving.

In the future:

My goal is to use the stairs _____ times a week instead of taking the escalator or elevator.

My goal is to get up and walk around or stretch _____ times every hour instead of sitting down.

My goal is to spend _____ hours stretching while I spend time in front of a screen.

My goal is to walk or ride my bike to the local store _____ times a week instead of driving.

I am a busy person and sometimes it can be hard to make time to exercise every day. I can make time to exercise by making exercise part of my **weekly routine**. My weekly routine is what I do every week!



Making exercise part of my weekly routine can be hard at first, but I can get better at it with practice. It's important to get used to my new routine and take my time. I can start by making exercise part of my weekly routine by:

- Pick 3 or 4 days a week when I can plan to exercise 30 minutes (half an hour)
- Spending no more than 2 hours in front of a screen
- Making a calendar and writing down the types of exercise I will do on certain days

As I get more comfortable, I can add more time to exercise into my weekly routine. My doctor and my family can also help me if I have questions or need help making exercise part of my weekly routine.



It's also okay to rest 1 or 2 days a week. On days I don't exercise, I can focus on simple activities that keep me moving, like taking the stairs instead of the elevator.

I don't have to do the same exercise every day if I don't want to. I might like to do different types of exercise on different days.

It's important to remember that I might not see changes in my body right away. This might be frustrating at first, but I will see small changes over time if I practice.



If I have questions or need help, I can ask my doctor or my family. They will be there along the way to help me with my weekly routine. They might even want to join me when I eat healthy foods and exercise!

Written by Sierra Weiss

Rev. 1/2023 *Images courtesy of www.freedigitalphotos.net and www.choosemyplate.gov*

Down Syndrome Program

For more information please call

MassGeneral Hospital for Children
55 Fruit Street, Suite 6C
Boston, MA 02116

617-643-8912

www.massgeneral.org/downsyndrome
