

MyPyramid Message: Variety¹

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Variety is represented by the six colors (bands) in MyPyramid. These six colors represent the five food groups plus oils. Variety means eating different foods from each food group and their subgroups. It is important to eat food from each food group every day to get the nutrients our bodies need to stay healthy. You should choose different kinds of foods from each food group.



Why is it Vital to Eat a Wide Variety of Foods?

The **grain**, **vegetable**, and **fruit** groups offer fiber, vitamins, and minerals. The **grain** group provides energy in the form of carbohydrates. Whole grains supply both carbohydrates and fiber. The **fruit** and **vegetable** groups are good sources of vitamin C, vitamin A, potassium, and antioxidants.

Both **the milk** and **meat and beans** groups provide protein. The **milk** group also provides calcium, vitamin D, and vitamin A. The **meat and beans** group is well known for providing iron, zinc, magnesium, vitamin B12, and vitamin E.

The last color, yellow, does not represent a food group; it is oils. Although oils are not a food group, small amounts are still needed. Oils contain unsaturated fatty acids, which are considered heart healthy because they help lower cholesterol. Monounsaturated fats in particular lower the LDL (bad) cholesterol. A small amount of oil consumed with food is beneficial.

Tips for Eating a Variety of Foods

It is easier than you think to eat a variety of foods. Just remember the word “variety” and apply the concept.

- ✓ Each time you prepare breakfast, lunch, and dinner include as many foods as possible from all the food groups.
- ✓ Try different kinds of snacks.
- ✓ Avoid snacks that are high in saturated fats and added sugars.
- ✓ Buy veggies and fruits with different colors, textures, and forms, like fresh, frozen, canned, and dried.
- ✓ Try fruits and veggies that are new to you. Bok choy, kale, and tamarind are delicious and versatile.
- ✓ Try brown rice and whole wheat pasta,
- ✓ and don't forget about other grains, like quinoa, barley, and kasha.
- ✓ Vary the ways you get your calcium; yogurt can be used as a salad dressing.



1. This document is FCS8927, one of a series of the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. First published October 2010.
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Cheese can be used as a topping for salads, casseroles, and soups.

- ✓ If you have a problem drinking milk, you can try soy products with calcium, calcium-fortified orange juice, and sardines or salmon with bones.
- ✓ Vary your choices from the meat and beans group. Eat more fish, beans, peas, nuts, and seeds.

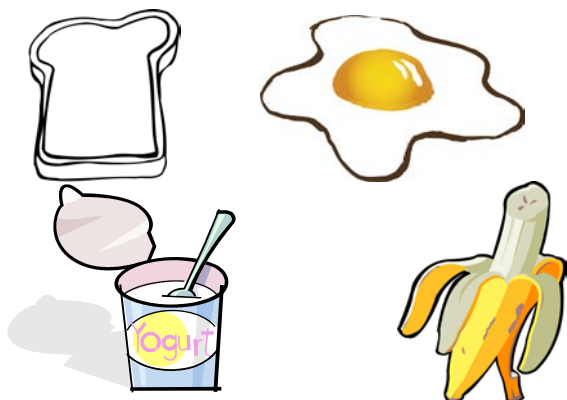
Congratulations! You added variety to your plate with foods from all food groups plus oils.

References

United States Department of Agriculture, MyPyramid.gov. *MyPyramid Basics* [Online]. Available at <http://www.mypyramid.gov/>

Let's try an exercise

A healthy breakfast can be prepared with 1 slice of bread, 1 egg, 1 banana, and 1 cup of yogurt.



What food groups do these foods belong to? The slice of bread belongs to **the grain group**, the egg belongs to **the meat and beans** group, the oil that you use to prepare the egg belongs to the oils, the banana belongs to **the fruit group**, and the yogurt to **the milk group**.

Now, try this lunch/dinner example. Next to each food, write the food group it belongs to.

1 small breast chicken _____

1 cup of cooked rice _____

12 mini carrots _____

½ cup of raw broccoli _____

1 large orange _____

1 cup of low-fat milk _____