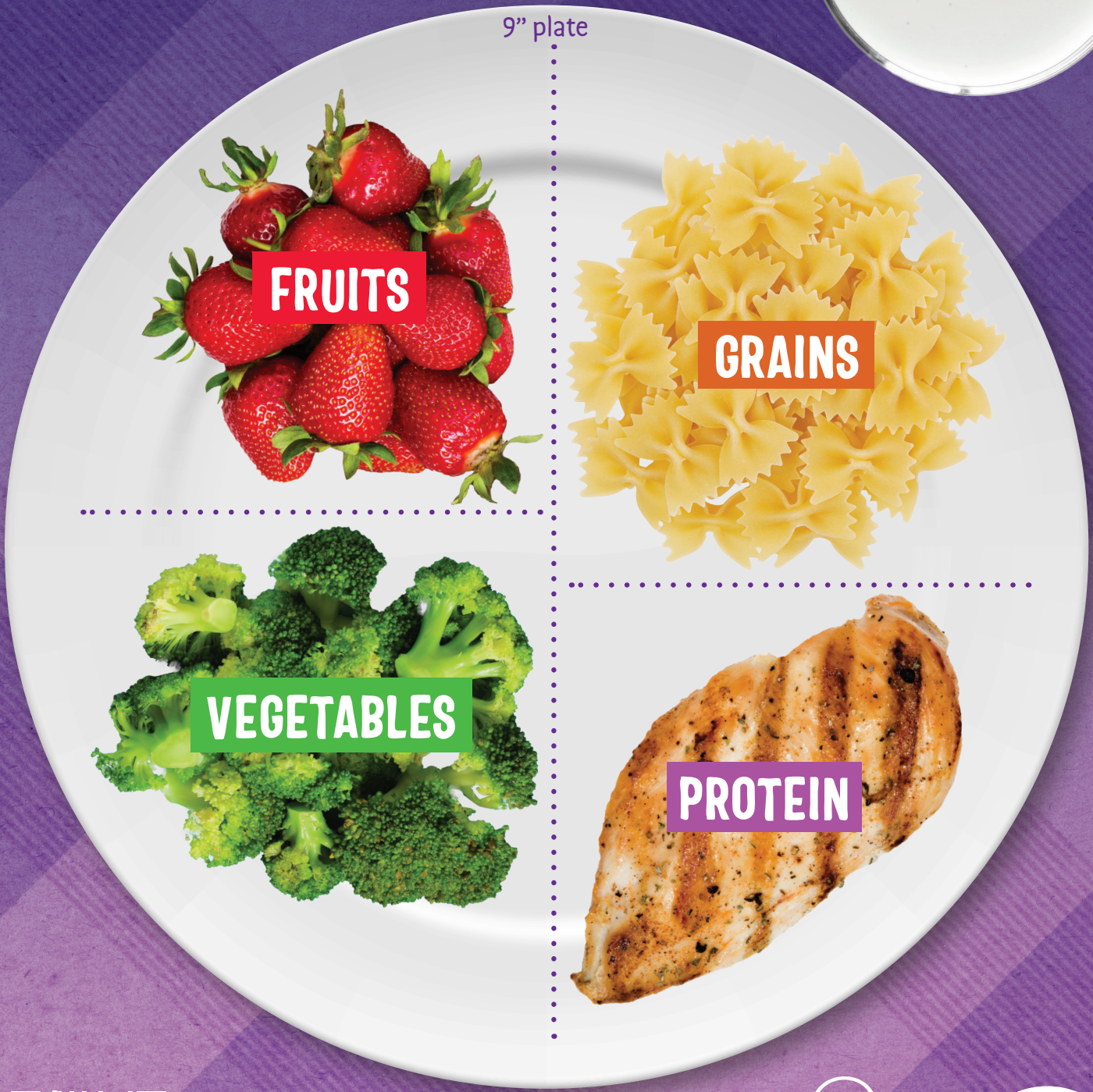
PLAN YOUR PLATE



9" plate



This handout and other resources and materials can be found at **alabamapublichealth.gov/npa.**

ALABAMA PUBLIC HEALTH

Tips for planning a healthy plate:

- Fill your plate with colorful foods for a diet rich in vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and fiber (which keeps you full longer and supports digestion).
- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables- aim for 5-9 servings of these each day.
- Limit sugar sweetened beverages such as soft drinks, fruit drinks, sports/energy drinks, and sweet tea, which offer no nutritional value. Drink water instead.
- Opt for whole fruit instead of juice. Eating an apple instead of drinking apple juice can satisfy hunger and thirst.
- Replace whole milk with 1% low fat or skim milk.
- Use herbs and spices in place of salt when cooking and eat fewer salty foods like bacon and potato chips. Rinse canned vegetables before cooking to reduce the amount of sodium.
- Replace refined grains like white rice and white bread with nutritious whole grains such as brown rice and whole wheat bread.
- Reduce calories by baking, grilling, boiling, steaming, or roasting foods instead of frying them.
- Incorporate veggies into every meal. Get creative at breakfast and try an egg sandwich with sauteed spinach, a veggie omelet, or avocado toast.
- Try fresh, frozen, or canned fruit in a yogurt parfait or topped with a dollop of whipped cream to help satisfy your sweet tooth!

Combination foods: Combination foods combine different components together. When choosing these, identify the different foods in the dish and think about where they would fit on the plate. For example, in a slice of pizza, the crust would be the carbohydrate, the tomato sauce, and any vegetable toppings would be the non-starchy vegetables, and the cheese and meat toppings would be the protein. Try to prepare portions the same way you normally would if the components were not combined. Examples include casserole type meals, stews, burrito, pizza, pot pie, pasta salad, soup, and chicken/tuna salad.

Beverages: Water is the best choice of drink because it has no calories. Other sugar free drink options include carbonated or mineral water, club soda, diet soft drinks, powder or liquid sugar free drink mixes, tea or coffee (unsweetened or with sugar substitute), sugar free tonic water, and sugar free flavored water.

Get active! Start by doing what you can and work your way up to 30 minutes of physical activity daily, with strength training twice a week.

Vegetables: Any vegetable or 100% vegetable juice counts. Vegetables may be raw or cooked; fresh, frozen, canned, or dried; and may be whole, cut-up, or mashed.

Examples: asparagus, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cucumber, leafy greens (kale and collards), okra, onions, peppers. Starchy vegetables- squash, plantain, potato, pumpkin, yams. Beans and Legumes- black beans, kidney beans, pinto beans.

Fruits: Any fruit or 100% fruit juice counts. Fruits may be fresh, frozen, canned, or dried, and may be cut-up, pureed, or cooked. At least half of the recommended amount of fruit should come from whole fruit, rather than 100% fruit juice.

Examples: apple, apricot, banana, blueberries, cherries, grapes, fruit cocktail, oranges, strawberries, pear, satsuma, watermelon.

Dairy: Dairy products provide health benefits, especially building and maintaining strong bones. Foods in the dairy group provide calcium, potassium, vitamin D, and protein. Choose low-fat or fat-free options when available.

Examples: milk, yogurt, cheese, milk-based desserts (pudding, frozen yogurt, and ice cream). Plant-based Dairy Substitutes- non-dairy milk alternatives (soy, rice, oat, almond, coconut), non-dairy yogurt, non-dairy ice cream.

Grains: Any food made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, or barley is a grain product. Choose 100% whole-grain cereals, breads, crackers, rice, and pasta when possible. Make at least half your grains whole grains.

Examples: whole grains- brown rice, oats/oatmeal, popcorn, quinoa, whole wheat bread, whole wheat pasta. Refined grains- grits, pancake, pasta, pizza crust, tortilla, white bread.

Protein: Lean proteins are lower in fat and saturated fat, making them a heart healthy choice.

Examples: low-fat cheese and low-fat cottage cheese, chicken, eggs, fish, shellfish, lean beef, lean pork, lean deli meats, turkey. Plant Based Sources of Protein- beans, lentils, field peas, hummus, falafel, nuts and nut butters, edamame, tofu and tempeh, plant based meat substitutes.

