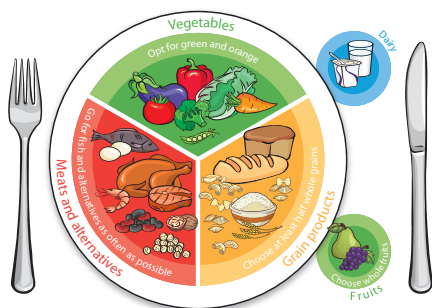


# Balanced meal

No need to count, measure or solve a puzzle to figure out what to eat. Let's make life easier and aim for a balanced meal.

## Why divide a plate into three parts?

We divide a plate into three equal parts to make room for different food groups, each of which has a role to play. To make it a complete meal, just add a piece of fruit and a glass of milk alongside the plate. This is also a good way to keep meals balanced and ensure variety. We can use Canada's Food Guide as a practical, visual tool. Variety and balance go hand in hand.



## Everyone has a role to play

**Satisfy:** Meats and alternatives, whole grain products, milk and milk alternatives keep us satisfied longer.

**Add colour:** Fruits and vegetables add a lot of nutrients and turn our meals into a feast for the eyes.

**Hydrate:** Provide a glass of water along with milk, enriched plant milk, fruits and vegetables to keep kids hydrated (see the sheet "What to Drink").

**Energize:** Everything contributes to this!

All foods, with their unique blend of vitamins and minerals work together for a healthy, delicious diet.

What is a  
balanced meal?  
Is it this?

No, it's much  
easier than that!



## Mixed up when it's mixed

A sandwich or a hot dish in a thermos doesn't give us the same visual reference as a plate divided into three compartments, but the food groups are still there. A wrap made with a tortilla, chicken and peppers? It's all there! Tofu, vegetables and rice in a delicious stir fry? Bingo! It's actually pretty simple.

## Don't worry!

Plain macaroni with no meat? Sheppard's pie with no grain products? A missing food group in an otherwise balanced meal? Don't worry, they can make it up later! We can add a dessert or a snack, or just catch up the next day. There are many ways to eat a balanced diet! Parents should look at what their kids are eating over the course of several weeks and not in a single meal.



### The deal with potatoes

We can't seem to get enough of potatoes! Some people see them as a vegetable while others think they are a starch, like cereal products. What should we think? Potatoes are a vegetable, so that's how we should think of them! That does not mean we need to eat bread in addition to potatoes. Grain products can be part of a dessert (oatmeal cookies, rice pudding, or banana bread). We should also make sure to include two colourful vegetables in the meal.

### The deal with dessert

Dessert is delicious, but it doesn't always have to be candy! Instead, we should regularly opt for a nourishing food that helps meet children's nutritional needs, just like the main dish. And, on occasion, it's OK to have a chocolate cookie or a small piece of cake. Children are allowed to eat dessert if it is included in their lunch box or school lunch. Don't try to negotiate with children to get them to eat a few more bites! If we force them to eat, they will feel full before they have even gotten to their dessert. Isn't it nicer to encourage them to listen to their hunger and save a little room for dessert? Eating when we aren't hungry makes food an indulgence (see the sheet "Satiety").