



START NOW

# Structured flexibility



# Structured flexibility

Who is structured flexibility for? For the recovering perfectionists.

- You are used to following a plan and without it you feel unsure whether you are making the right choices. This makes you frustrated and you feel like you would rather go back to a meal plan even though they never worked for the long term.
- Tuning into your feelings for every meal makes you overwhelmed. There are just too many decisions to make during the day, you don't want to add to the list.
- If this describes you, I show you a flexible way to build a balanced meal every time no matter what and where you eat. This will give you a starting point that you can fine tune to your own metabolism and circumstances.



# Benefits of having a balanced meal

- When you eat a well-balanced meal, you feel satisfied, and you won't be preoccupied with hunger during the day. Instead of obsessing about what to eat for lunch right after breakfast and waiting for the time you are allowed to eat again you will have time to do the things that you are really interested in or important to you.
- Your body will get the nutrients it needs and you will have much less cravings and will feel full for longer.
- This is again only a guideline, not rules that you need to obsess about.
- Try to eat **roughly balanced** meals made from **mostly whole foods** most of the time. You don't need to do this perfectly. Leave room for occasional treats too.

01



# Eat Well Plate

- I like the Eat Well Plate that is promoted by the Public Health England.
- It's a visual representation based on five food groups and shows the proportion that each food group should contribute to a healthy, balanced diet.



Source: Public Health England in association with the Welsh government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

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# How to build your Eat Well Plate

- You can start building your balanced plate by filling one third of it with vegetables and/or fruits. These will provide most of the micronutrients: vitamins, minerals, phytochemical that your body needs to work properly and be healthy.
- Fill the other third or less (depending on your activity level) with preferably wholegrain or high-fiber carbohydrates. As usual you don't have to be perfect and never eat white rice or bread again. Add more wholegrains as gradually as you feel comfortable with. These carbs will give you energy.
- Fill the last third with proteins and a small amount of fat. For health reasons choose unsaturated fats, nuts and seed more often than animal fats. Proteins are the building blocks of our muscles, and we need healthy fats for hormonal and mental health.
- Pay attention to your body when it feels the best and adjust your plate accordingly. Some people feel best when they eat a bit less carbs and more fat, others need a lot of carbs and less fat. Listen to your body.



# Protein for satiety

- It is easier to feel satisfied and lose weight if you include some protein in most of your meals.
- Proteins increase your sense of satiety and you won't get hungry as quickly after eating.
- When you feel fuller, you are less likely to overeat or snack later on.
- Proteins are broken down more slowly than carbohydrates, which means your blood sugar will not fluctuate as much, and you won't get cravings for sweets and other high-calorie foods.
- When you eat carbs on their own, they are digested very quickly, and it will spike your blood sugar and you will be hungry soon after eating. If you eat it together with slowly digested proteins and healthy fat, they slow down the digestion of the carbohydrates too. That's why a balanced meal will keep you full for longer and you won't have cravings between mealtimes.
- Protein also helps you build muscle, which can enhance your metabolism.

04

100g CH: 400 kcal quickly digested  
100g P: 400 kcal slower digested  
100g F: 900 kcal slowest digested



# Be careful with too much protein

According to statistics, most individuals in the US take in 3-5 times more protein than they need. While eating enough protein helps you lose weight, excessive amounts of protein can be damaging to your health.

## Too much protein can lead to these health issues:

- Increased blood sugar
- Weight gain
- Too much body fat
- Stress on your kidneys, which must get rid of excess protein
- Loss of minerals from your bones
- Dehydration
- Cancer cell stimulation

The consumption of meat has risen to a great degree in the last century. Most of this meat is not high-quality meat and comes from animal farms where animals are fed grains that have been genetically altered instead of grass in a pasture.

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# How much protein?

- It can be calculated as taking in 0.5 g of protein per pound of lean body mass. If you are excessively exercising or are pregnant, you need about 25 percent more.
- A serving of protein is about the size of your palm.
- Protein is found in eggs, dairy products, meat, fish, legumes, tofu, meat alternatives, seeds, and nuts.
- Again, don't obsess about this, some days you eat more, other days less, it's ok. Balance and moderation are the key factors.

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# You can make any meal balanced

Practice building an imperfect plate: you can eat the same meal as everyone around you, don't need to cook separate meals for you.

You can make a balanced plate from almost anything.

Choose a meal that you would normally view as "bad" when you are on a diet (but you really enjoy). The trick is to eat a smaller portion and fill the rest of your plate (1/3 or half of it) with vegetables.

For example: Pizza + salad, burger + salad, pasta + steamed veggies + protein (beans, cheese, meat), bagel + veggie sticks + protein (hummus, yoghurt, cheese), etc. Of course, if your main meal contains a lot of fat, use it sparingly on your vegetables.

When you can do this easily, you can work on making your main meal healthier too. It's good for other family members too.

You can find many healthy recipes in my Pinterest boards and my Instagram feed.

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# Don't try to be perfect

If you've been stuck in all-or-nothing habits for years, it's going to take some time to change your patterns. That's normal!

- If you followed a low-carb or low-fat diet add carbs or fat gradually.
- Incorporate fun foods in small quantities during the week. This works well if you are really used to doing "perfectly" or not at all.
- Add something to your "perfect" meal that would normally be off-limits. Pick one of your "perfect" meals and try adding a little extra something that you love but would usually omit because it isn't "clean" enough.
- Notice when your brain kicks in, telling you to overindulge now and start over tomorrow, or that you need to do it perfectly to reach your goal.
- Be patient. It's a practice. It will take time to fully shift your mindset.

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# Homework

- Try to eat **roughly balanced** meals made from **mostly whole foods** most of the time. Leave room for occasional treats too.
- You may start with the Eat Well Plate and adjust it to your own preferences and weight loss results.
- It is easier to lose weight if you include some protein in most of your meals.
- You can make any meal roughly balanced.
- Don't try to be perfect. Be patient. It's a practice. It will take time to fully shift your mindset.

