



**WORKING** FOR A  
**HEALTHIER TN**



# Create a Healthier Plate

## **Focus Area: Healthy Eating**

**Objective:** To improve overall eating habits by making more balanced meals with proportions that closely reflect the [USDA's ChooseMyPlate](#) guidelines.

**Length of Challenge:** Four-weeks (length of time is flexible; contact your Regional Wellness Coordinator for assistance with editing)

## **Materials Needed:**

- Sign-Up Sheet/Form (optional, but recommended)
- Create a Healthier Plate Food Journal
- Prizes (optional)

## **Directions:**

- Strive to enjoy overall well-balanced meals/plates throughout the challenge.
- Use Food Journal to track foods eaten throughout the challenge and log any food-related emotions.

**Regional/Satellite Offices & AWS Employees:** This challenge can be hosted across regional/satellite offices and/or with AWS employees.



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## Getting Started:

1. Decide the dates your "Create a Healthier Plate Challenge" will run.
2. Establish a sign-up period (for example, one week) before the challenge start date. [*Sign-up period is optional.*]
3. Determine how participants will submit their Food Journals and how winners will be rewarded.
  - *Remember: Challenge rewards do not have to be tangible. Announcing the winner(s) in an email, e-newsletter and/or flier are all great ways to give recognition!*
4. Announce the challenge to employees! (This can be done via email, e-newsletter, department intranet, and/or fliers.)
5. At the close of the sign-up period (if you established one), contact all participants to share the following:
  - A welcome, congrats and/or thank you for participating in the challenge.
  - Dates of when the challenge will begin and end.
  - Instructions for how to participate in the "Create a Healthier Plate Challenge".
  - Details about how to submit their Food Journals and how winner(s) will be rewarded.  
*NOTE: Don't forget to BCC participants if contacting them via email.*
6. Print or attach via email the "Create a Healthier Plate Challenge Food Journal" and distribute to all participants.
7. Remember to send participants a friendly email reminding them to engage in the challenge and have fun with it. Your communication might include additional info related to the challenge, such as fun food facts, healthy recipes, tips and tricks, inspirational quotes and/or participant photos. (See 'Sample Emails' below.)
8. As the challenge comes to an end, send out a reminder to participants to submit their "Create a Healthier Plate Challenge Food Journal" and announce the winner(s)!

## Sample Emails:

**Welcome Email** [*Send the week prior to starting so participants have time to grocery shop.*]

Subject: Welcome to the Create a Healthier Plate Challenge

Body:

Welcome to the **Create a Healthier Plate Challenge** with the < insert dept > Wellness Council!

We're excited that you're joining us and trying to improve your overall eating habits!

In this challenge, you will use the [Create a Healthier Plate Food Journal](#) (attached). This challenge is about striving to make meals more well-balanced.

For example, it is recommended you fill ½ of your meals with non-starchy vegetables. In Week 1 your goal will be to find ways to increase [non-starchy vegetables](#) in your meals. In your food journal, you will write about how you were able to meet that goal and how you felt about it overall.

Here is a picture example from [eatingwell.com](http://eatingwell.com) of a well-balanced plate!



Check out this [guide to healthier grocery shopping](#) for help with gathering food for this challenge!

<OPTIONAL> There will be a random drawing at the end for a prize(s). <OPTIONAL>

Please submit your [Create a Healthier Plate Food Journal](#) to < insert email > by \_\_\_\_\_.)

Have fun!

## Week 1 Email

[Type here]

Subject: The Create a Healthier Plate Challenge Begins TODAY!

Body:

Today is the first day of the **Create a Healthier Plate Challenge!** This week the challenge is to try to make meals/plates that are ½ filled with non-starchy vegetables.

What are non-starchy vegetables, anyway? The good news is there's a wide variety! Green beans, yellow squash, red bell peppers, purple cabbage – the list goes on! The American Diabetes Association has an [extensive list of non-starchy vegetables](#).

Think about a meal you have often. Is there a way you could bulk it up with non-starchy vegetables? Take spaghetti, for example. There are MANY ways to fill spaghetti with non-starchy vegetables. One way would be to fill the sauce with mushrooms, peppers, onions, spinach, etc. Another way could be to substitute some of your noodles with zucchini/squash noodles (can be [homemade](#) - don't sauté, just heat in microwave before serving- or purchased). Your plate (or bowl) of spaghetti could look like this:

**½ plate zucchini/squash noodles**  
+  
**¼ plate spaghetti noodles (ideally whole grain)**  
+  
**¼ plate protein of choice (lean ground beef, ground turkey, chickpeas, etc.)**  
+  
**Sauce of choice**

This week fill out your [food journal](#) with examples of non-starchy vegetables you used to fill your meals. Also, make note of how you felt about how you did during the first week of the challenge. Some days you may feel more positive than others about your meals and that's okay! Being **mindful** of *what we eat* and *how we feel* about the food being eaten is beneficial to an overall healthier life!

[Type here]

## Week 2 Email

Subject: Week 2 of the Create a Healthier Plate Challenge

Body:

It is Week 2 of the **Create a Healthier Plate Challenge!** Hopefully you enjoyed finding ways to increase the non-starchy vegetables in your meals. This week we will continue to try to make meals that are  $\frac{1}{2}$  non-starchy vegetables, but we will consider another  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the plate.

Ideally,  $\frac{1}{2}$  of our plate/meal is non-starchy vegetables but what about the rest of the plate/meal? Another  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the meal should be the starchy vegetable/grain section. Starchy vegetables include potatoes, peas, and corn. [Grains](#) include foods like bread, pasta, crackers, cereal, rice and more. With grains it is a good idea to strive to choose more whole grain options (versus refined grains).

Let's think about a popular Mexican dish such as cheesy chicken and rice. If you want to re-create this at home, consider how this could be made into a more well-balanced meal.

**$\frac{1}{2}$  plate non-starchy vegetables such as bell peppers, onions, mushrooms**  
+  
 **$\frac{1}{4}$  plate rice (ideally brown)**  
+  
 **$\frac{1}{4}$  plate chicken (or black beans)**  
+  
**Cheese sauce (or shredded cheese or avocado)**

Getting creative with your meals? Please share your recent recipes and/or pictures to [<insert email>](#) so that they can help inspire others!

Remember to fill out your [food journal](#) this week with some examples of meals you've been enjoying and how you've felt about the meals.

[Type here]

## Week 3 Email

Subject: Week 3 of the Create a Healthier Plate Challenge

Body:

You are halfway through the **Create a Healthier Plate Challenge!** So far, you've been trying to create meals that are  $\frac{1}{2}$  non-starchy vegetables and  $\frac{1}{4}$  starchy vegetables/grains. This week also focus on making the rest of the plate  $\frac{1}{4}$  protein. Ideally you will be choosing [healthier protein sources](#) such as beans, seafood, turkey, soy products, chicken, etc.

Many meals are meat/starch heavy. Chili is an example of a meal that can be meat heavy. Consider ways to make chili more of a well-balanced meal. You could consider making a [meatless chili](#) and increasing the non-starchy vegetables in the recipe. A bowl of chili that is filled with peppers, onions, tomatoes and beans served with a slice of cornbread would be a fantastic way to enjoy a hearty, well-balanced meal.

This week continue to fill out your food journal with ways you're making more well-balanced meals and how you've felt about these meals – positive, negative and/or neutral!

## Week 4 Email

Subject: Week 4 of the Create a Healthier Plate Challenge

Body:

It's the final week of the **Create a Healthier Plate Challenge!** Over the past few weeks you've been finding ways to make meals more well-balanced ( $\frac{1}{2}$  non-starchy vegetables,  $\frac{1}{4}$  starchy vegetables, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  protein). Other parts of your meal to consider would be to enjoy [fruits](#), sources of [dairy](#) (or [non-dairy](#)), and [healthy fats](#). You probably already found ways to incorporate these into your meals. For example, if you enjoyed a vegetable filled chili bowl and topped it off with some cheese (*dairy*) or avocado (*healthy fat*) and then enjoyed a sweet treat of strawberries (*fruit*) with cool whip then you are well on your way to an overall healthier eating pattern!

This week continue to strive to make your meals well-balanced. In your food journal take the time to reflect on some of your favorite meals from the challenge. Note any areas in which you might have some room for improvement. Remember to please share your recipes and/or pictures to [<insert email>](#) so that you can help inspire others!

[Type here]

## Wrap Up Email

Subject: The End of the Create a Healthier Plate Challenge

Body:

We are at the end of the **Create a Healthier Plate** challenge! Thank you for participating and hopefully you enjoyed trying to make more well-balanced meals.

Please submit your [Create a Healthier Plate Food Journal](#) to < insert email > by \_\_\_\_\_.) <OPTIONAL> There will be a random drawing at the end for a prize(s). <OPTIONAL>



