



build a better plate

When you have HIV, meal planning is a simple and effective method for maximizing nutrition, which may help to improve energy levels and help medications work better! Choose a variety of foods from all food groups to give your body what it needs to feel its best. [Here are some tips to get started:](#)

1. Divide the Plate

Imagine a vertical line down the middle of a dinner plate. On one half, imagine a horizontal line—dividing your plate into three sections.

2. Eat a Variety of Fruits & Vegetables

Fill the largest section with your favorite well-washed fruits and vegetables. Check out the *Build a Better Plate from Around the World* handout for ideas. Aim for a total of 5 cups of fruits and vegetables daily.

3. Focus on Grains and Starches

In one of the smaller sections, focus on energy-giving grains and starches. Whole grains, like corn tortillas, whole wheat bread and brown rice are great choices. Starchy vegetables, like potatoes, yams and corn would also go in this section of your plate.

4. Feed Your Muscles

In the other small section, add lean protein foods, like white meat poultry, fish, eggs or tofu. A serving of protein foods is typically 4 ounces.

5. Don't Forget Your Dairy

Add a cup of yogurt, low-fat milk or a fortified dairy alternative, like almond milk.

6. Include the Right Types of Fat

Foods rich in healthy fats (avocados, nuts, seeds, olives, salmon) and healthy oils (avocado oil, extra virgin olive oil, canola oil) may be an important source of calories. Extra calories may be needed if you have an active infection or are losing weight.

7. Hydrate!

Drink plenty of liquids, particularly water!* Water helps to keep you hydrated, which is especially important when experiencing diarrhea or vomiting. Being well-hydrated can also help to reduce the side effects of medications and give you more energy. Aim for 8-10 glasses of water or other decaffeinated beverages daily.

**If you're concerned about the safety of your tap water, choose bottled water or boil water before drinking.*