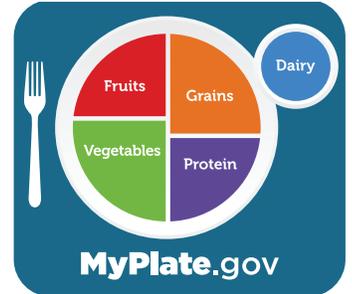




Find Food That **F.I.T.S!**

Food is a personal choice based in part on where you're from and perhaps cultural traditions. You might even have a special diet based on your medical history. As a result, there's a lot of information about the healthiest way to eat—so, let's break it down.

The US Department of Agriculture's MyPlate guide for healthy eating is a great place to start. MyPlate recommends a varied diet rich in fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, whole grains, and low-fat dairy. They even have an online tool to help you plan your meals based on your individual dietary needs!



You might need to go a bit further to find food that **F.I.T.S.** your lifestyle. The right food plan for you should be:

- **FRESH:** A diet rich in fresh fruits and vegetables is sure to be packed full of vitamins and other nutrients. Flash frozen fruits and vegetables are just as healthy. They're also convenient and affordable.
- **INTERESTING:** Most people don't want to eat the same thing every day. Experiment with new recipes to keep yourself interested in the healthy food you make right at home.
- **TASTY:** No one wants to eat bland, flavorless meals. Make sure you're seasoning your meals with healthy spices and avoiding excess salt.
- **SUSTAINABLE:** Let's be honest, you may not always feel like cooking and will need alternatives. That's the value of meal prep. Refrigerate or freeze a few meals that you can easily access when cooking isn't an option. Another idea, consider sharing cooking responsibilities with others in your household. Lastly, preparing a list of restaurants in advance with healthy options will help when you're starving and tempted to grab fast food. Adapt these suggestions to what works best for you and your lifestyle. Whether you're aiming for weight loss, muscle gain, or other health goals, select a food plan for your specific needs. Some of the most popular are Mediterranean, plant-based, and paleo. At first glance these methods for eating might seem overwhelming, but they don't have to be:

DIET	EAT THESE	AVOID THESE	BENEFITS	RECIPES
MEDITERRANEAN: Based on the traditional foods in countries on the Mediterranean Sea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruits • Veggies • Whole grains • Fish • Extra virgin olive oil • Poultry • Beans • Lentils • Nuts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red meat • Sugary foods and drinks • Butter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces your risk for heart disease and cancer • Supports a healthy gut, weight, blood pressure, and more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kale-Artichoke Stuffed Shells • Lamb Sliders with Yogurt Tahini Sauce • Lamb Shish Kebabs
PLANT-BASED: A diet mostly composed of fruits, vegetables, and other plant sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruits • Vegetables • Whole grains • Beans • Lentils • Nuts • Mushrooms • Lean proteins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritizes plant-based foods while reducing or eliminating meats, dairy, eggs, and processed foods when making dietary choices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages healthy weight, blood sugar, and cholesterol levels • Decreases your risk of death from heart disease and may help you avoid medication for chronic diseases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grilled Eggplant Parmesan • Pinto Bean Burgers • Mushroom Tacos with Charred Corn Salsa
PALEO: Inspired by foods people probably ate during the Paleolithic era	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruits • Veggies • Lean proteins • Fish • Seeds • Nuts • Eggs • Plant-based fats and oils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sugar • Salt • Dairy • Grains • Processed foods • Starchy veggies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports a healthy cardiovascular system • Helps with weight loss goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paleo Eggroll in a Bowl with Chicken • Salmon BLT Salad with Chive Ranch Dressing • Cajun Shrimp and Sausage Skillet



Looking for more information about healthy nutrition? You can find all sorts of information about healthy eating and living when you log on to BCBSIL Connect Community on [bcsil.com](https://www.bcsil.com)!



FOLLOW THE MOUSE:

We've hyperlinked resources you may want to access. Just hover and click!

Continued on next page

EAT THE RAINBOW, FIND YOUR POT OF GOLD!

St. Patrick's Day is right around the corner. Let a colorful plate be your rainbow to a healthy pot of gold. The colors on your plate come from a variety of nutrients that support whole health. Being mindful of eating many different colors is a great way to make sure you're getting a healthy, tasty mix of vitamins and minerals.



RED — LYCOPENE

Fruits and vegetables rich in lycopene are red. Lycopene is great for heart health, lowering your risk for cardiovascular events. Studies show it can also protect against cancer, exercise-induced asthma, and more.

- Tomatoes
- Watermelon
- Strawberries
- Raspberries
- Cherries
- Red peppers
- Beets



ORANGE & YELLOW — CAROTENOIDS

Orange and yellow fruits and veggies get their color from carotenoids like beta-carotene. When you eat foods rich in beta-carotene, your body converts it into vitamin A which is great for your eyes and immune system!

- Bananas
- Carrots
- Mangoes
- Corn
- Oranges
- Lemons
- Squash
- Yellow peppers
- Cantaloupe



GREEN — CHLOROPHYLL

The same chlorophyll that plants use for photosynthesis is also great for your health. It's also where green fruits and vegetables get their color from. Eat plenty of green fruits and vegetables to support improved cognition and help prevent brain diseases like Alzheimer's and dementia.

- Cucumbers
- Green leafy vegetables
- Avocados
- Limes
- Honeydew melon
- Tomatillos
- Okra
- Green beans



BLUE & PURPLE — ANTHOCYANINS

In addition to being great for your health, blue and purple fruits and vegetables are also used as natural pigments. Their color comes from anthocyanins which help support healthy blood pressure, improved memory, and lower your risk for stroke.

- Blackberries
- Blueberries
- Plums
- Grapes
- Eggplant
- Purple cauliflower
- Pomegranates

You may not find yourself wrapped in gold and riches after eating a rainbow, but you'll find something even better: a healthy mind, body, and spirit. That's worth so much more than any pot of gold!

KID FRIENDLY RECIPE: RAINBOW CHARCUTERIE BOARD

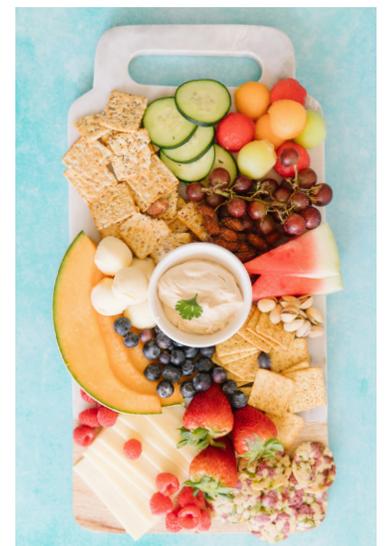
Instill healthy food habits in your kids while also making memories! Spend an afternoon making a charcuterie board and learning about the health benefits of eating a rainbow.

Here's what you'll need:

- Charcuterie board or individual plates
- Knife
- Fruits and veggies for every color of the rainbow
- Any dips, dressings, or sauces you like

Directions:

1. Thoroughly wash and dry your fruits and veggies.
2. Slice your fruits and veggies. **Fun tip:** make it even more fun by using cookie cutters to cut your fruits and veggies into fun shapes. Stars, hearts, triangles—the sky's the limit!
3. Arrange your fruits and veggies in the shape of a rainbow. You can add small bowls with dips, dressings, and sauces as you see fit.
4. While you make your board, talk about the nutrients that give fruits and veggies their bright colors and why they're healthy for you.
5. Enjoy!



SOURCES: [MyPlate.gov](https://www.myplate.gov), [ClevelandClinic.org](https://www.clevelandclinic.org), [NIH.gov](https://www.nih.gov), [MayoClinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org), [MSKCC.org](https://www.mskcc.org), [MountSinai.org](https://www.mountsinai.org), [NIH.gov](https://www.nih.gov), [ClevelandClinic.org](https://www.clevelandclinic.org)