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Ottawa Journal: healthy eating using the ?Eat Well Plate?

During this time of year when flu season has begun and the holiday season is right around the corner, it's important to ensure we're incorporating lots of healthy food choices into our daily meals. One way to stay on track with healthy eating is to use the ?Eat Well Plate,? which can help each of us follow Canada's Food Guide when making meal plans and preparing meals.

The ?Eat Well Plate? is available from the Government of Canada's Healthy Canadians website (www.healthycanadians.gc.ca). Visitors to the ?Eat Well Plate? website can view the plate which provides an illustration of suggested food group proportions to help determine how much of each food group we should aim to have on our plate. It suggests that half of our plate should be made up of vegetables and fruit. It is also suggests that just over a quarter of the plate be reserved for grain products with the remaining portion reserved for meat and alternatives. A helpful feature of the plate allows visitors to place their cursor over each food group section of the plate to receive helpful eating tips.

The ?Eat Well Plate? includes suggested information on oils and fats, such as replacing shortening, lard, or hard margarines with healthy oils and fats (i.e. canola, olive, soybean oils) and to include a small portion of unsaturated fats into our daily eating (i.e. two to three tablespoons). Water is included in the ?Eat Well Plate.? It suggests making water our beverage of choice which allows us to stay hydrated. It also suggests that we include lower fat milk (skim, 1% or 2%) or unsweetened fortified soy beverages during some meals each day for a total of 500 mL (2 cups) each day to ensure we receive enough vitamin D.

The ?Eat Well Plate? website provides additional helpful information on related topics, such as: fast and easy meal ideas (i.e. mixing canned or frozen peaches or berries into low-fat yogurt with a slice of raisin bread for breakfast); planning for healthy meals (i.e. develop healthy eating habits with children by involving them in selecting a meal or trying a new food or recipe); tips for a well-stocked kitchen (i.e. stocking the pantry and fridge with whole grain products); preparing healthy meals and snacks (i.e. preparing a salad with spinach or arugula instead of iceburg lettuce); healthy shopping tips (i.e. read the Nutrition Facts Table on products, including the Percent Daily Value to select products that are lower in fat, sodium, and calories); tips for eating out (i.e. ask for sauces and dressings ?on the side?); healthy snacking (i.e. plain popcorn); tips for young chefs (i.e. having a cooking party for kids); and how to count Food Guide servings in a meal.

For more information, please visit the Healthy Canadians website. The ?Eat Well Plate? can help us ensure we're planning and preparing healthy meals, while following Canada's Food Guide.

By David Tilson, MP