

MyPyramid Message: Moderation¹

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Moderation is represented in the MyPyramid symbol by the narrowing of the colored food bands from the bottom to the top. Foods located at the bottom of the pyramid are more nutrient dense. Nutrient-dense foods contain lots of vitamins and minerals and fewer calories. Foods with more added sugar and solid fats are found higher up the bands. You should choose more foods from the base of the pyramid.



Ways to Practice Moderation

To practice moderation in your diet, choose foods from the **base** of MyPyramid that are fresh; less processed; higher in fiber, vitamins and minerals; and low in calories. Here are some examples of foods at the base of each food group:

- Grains: whole grains, oatmeal, popcorn, and brown rice
- Vegetables: any vegetables especially dark green and orange vegetables such as collard greens, carrots, and sweet potatoes
- Fruits: banana, berries, grape fruit, and kiwi fruit
- Milk: fat-free milk and milk products
- Meat and Beans: lean cuts of beef, poultry, fish, beans and peas
- Oils: olive, corn, canola oils

Fact: oils are not a food group but small amounts are needed for good health.

Choose healthier foods from the **middle** of MyPyramid. Foods at this level are more processed and contain more salt, added sugar, and fat and less fiber than foods from the base. Pay special attention to how much of these foods you eat. Here are some examples of foods from the middle of each food group:

- Grains: refined pasta, ready-to-eat cereals low in added sugar
- Vegetables: vegetable juice, low-sodium canned vegetables.
- Fruits: fruit juices, dried fruits, and canned fruits in 100% juice or light syrup.
- Milk: frozen yogurt, low and reduced fat milk and cheeses.
- Meat and Beans: walnuts, roasted beef, and fish such as salmon
- Oils: nuts, avocado, and oil-based salad dressing

Limit food choices from the **top** of MyPyramid. They are highest in fat, salt, and added sugar and lowest in the nutrients needed for good health.

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Many of these foods are prepared with rich sauces, and are deep fried, and breaded. Here are some examples of foods from the tip of each food group

- Grains: cookies
- Vegetables: vegetable pies and creamy style corn

- Fruits: cherry pie
- Milk: ice cream and pudding
- Meat and Beans: peanut butter and lunch meats
- Oils: margarine

Let's Try an Exercise

Using the food list below, fill the following table with foods that belong at the top, middle or base of the MyPyramid food groups. Remember, foods that are highly processed and high in solid fat and added sugar belong at the top. But foods that are nutrient-dense with little or no solid fat and added sugar, and those low in calories are found at the base. Finally, all others fit in the middle.

fat-free milk	raw broccoli	chicken—grilled without skin	soft margarine
apple	apple pie	2% milk	spaghetti enriched, added salt
croissants	whole milk	low-fat mayonnaise	broccoli with sauce
fried chicken wings	canola oil	broccoli—fried, breaded	apple sauce
whole grain spaghetti	chicken—roasted		

	Grains	Vegetables	Fruits	Oils	Milk	Meat and Beans
Top						
Middle						
Base						

The order of the answers is from Grains (left) to Meat and Beans (right) group.

Top: croissants; broccoli-fried, breaded; apple pie; soft margarine; whole milk and fried chicken wings

Middle: spaghetti enriched, added salt; broccoli with sauce; apple sauce; low-fat mayonnaise; 2% milk; chicken-roasted

Base: whole grain spaghetti; raw broccoli; apple; canola oil; fat-free milk; chicken-grilled without skin

References

United States Department of Agriculture, MyPyramid.gov. *MyPyramid Basics* [Online]. Available at <http://www.mypyramid.gov/>