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Too Much On Your Plate?

County's Senior Medical Advisor serves up new USDA MyPlate icon

Delaware County Council and the County's Senior Medical Advisor want to inform residents that it *IS* possible to have too much on your plate, literally. To encourage residents to adopt healthy eating habits, the County is making the U.S. Department of Agriculture's new, colorful MyPlate icon easily available online.

The MyPlate icon replaces the food pyramid that represented a healthy diet for 20 years. The new graphic icon created to encourage healthier eating comes in the form of a dinner plate, presented with brightly colored sections showing what types of foods should comprise your main meals — one-half vegetables and fruit, one-fourth grains and one-fourth protein, with a little low-fat dairy on the side.

"The pyramid was helpful, but the plate is a very simple, visual cue to help people adopt healthy eating habits," said Dr. George Avetian, Delaware County Senior Medical Advisor. "We invite families and other caregivers to go to our County website and download the MyPlate graphic and display this at your dinner table. Kids will have fun learning about the food types and portions."

The MyPlate graphic is based on new department dietary guidelines released in January. Those guidelines, which are revised every five years, direct people to drastically reduce salt intake and continue limiting saturated fats. They recommend smaller portions and water instead of sugary drinks.

Dr. Avetian said the guidelines suggest making half of your plate fruits and vegetables, paired with lean proteins, whole grains and a low-fat dairy product.

"We live in a fast-food, super-size world. It's hard for parents to be nutritionists while they are juggling busy schedules, but MyPlate is a quick, simple reminder that you can keep on the kitchen counter," Dr. Avetian said. "Parents are a child's most important role model, so it's important for parents to not just tell their children to eat their vegetables and get exercise, but to show them."

(more)

(MyPlate icon continued)

Originally identified in the Child Obesity Task Force report which noted that simple, actionable advice for consumers is needed, MyPlate replaces the MyPyramid image as the government's primary food group symbol.

ChooseMyPlate.gov provides practical information to individuals, health professionals, nutrition educators, and the food industry to help consumers build healthier diets with resources and tools for dietary assessment, nutrition education, and other user-friendly nutrition information.

As Americans are experiencing epidemic rates of overweight and obesity, the online resources and tools can empower people to make healthier food choices for themselves, their families, and their children.

The MyPlate icon reflects the healthy eating habits recommended in the *2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, launched in January of this year. The *2010 Dietary Guidelines* are the basis of the federal government's nutrition education programs, federal nutrition assistance programs, and dietary advice provided by health and nutrition professionals. The *Guidelines* messages include:

Balance Calories

- Enjoy your food, but eat less.
- Avoid oversized portions.

Foods to Increase

- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.
- Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk.
- Make at least half your grains whole grains.

Foods to Reduce

- Compare sodium (salt) in foods like soup, bread, and frozen meals, and choose foods with lower numbers.
- Drink water instead of sugary drinks.

For a printable MyPlate icon, visit www.co.delaware.pa.us and to Intercommunity Health.

For more information about the MyPlate program and the government's 2010 Dietary Guidelines, visit www.chosemyplate.gov