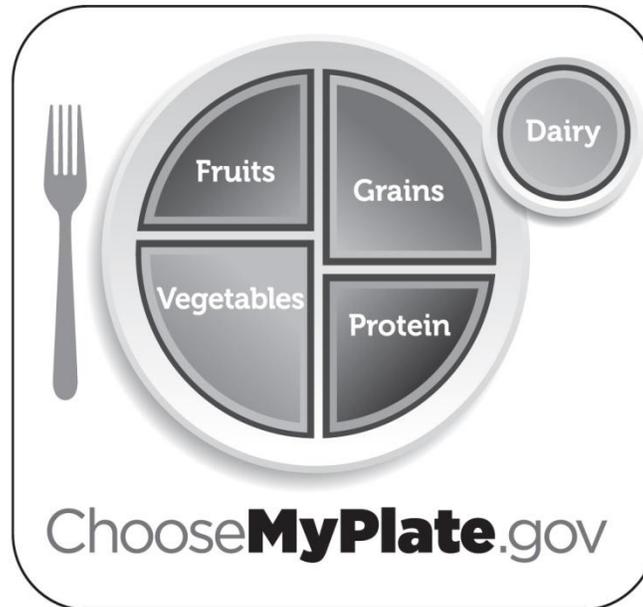


For Immediate Release
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September is *Fruit and Veggies – More Matters* Month and promotes the health benefits of eating fruit and vegetables. Fruit and vegetables are an important part of a healthy diet that can help protect you from many diseases. Joan Russell, Chairperson of the Board of Health and a Washington County Board Supervisor from Hartford knows the preventative value of health and wellness information. So as the new national initiative by First Lady Michelle Obama and the USDA called *My Plate* is being promoted to remind consumers to make healthier food choices she requested the Health Department remind everyone about the new user friendly website www.ChooseMyPlate.gov that shows fruit, vegetable, grains, protein and dairy food groups on a plate in the recommended proportions.

I looked at the website www.ChooseMyPlate.gov and it 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 Director of the Washington County Health Department I know Americans are experiencing epidemic rates of overweight and obesity and that this website can empower people to make healthier food choices for themselves, their families, and their children. Nutrition and physical activity are priorities in the state health plan *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020: Everyone Living Better, Longer* because they are modifiable factors that can affect health over a lifetime. The affects of poor nutrition and lack of appropriate amounts of physical activity can contribute significantly to obesity and overweight which in turn can lead to poor health. Washington County has identified obesity as a community health issue that needs more attention to improve the overall health of the community. The Healthy People Project of Washington County has established goals to prevent and decrease obesity that include increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables and increasing activity levels.

The *2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* include the following important but easy to remember messages:

Balance Calories

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

Foods to Increase

- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.
- 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.

Almost everyone needs to eat more fruits and vegetables. A growing body of research shows that fruits and vegetables are critical to promoting good health. Fruits and vegetables contain essential vitamins, minerals, and fiber that may help to protect you from chronic diseases. Substituting fruits and vegetables for higher calorie foods can be part of a strategy to achieve or maintain a healthy weight. Busy lives can benefit from food that's nutritious, yet easy to eat on-the-go. To get a healthy variety, think color. Eating fruits and vegetables of different colors gives your body a wide range of valuable nutrients.

If you are pregnant or just had a baby, call 262-335-4466 to find out if you qualify for WIC services. WIC provides vouchers for supplemental nutritious foods for medically at risk mothers and children who are income eligible.

For more prevention information, ideas and links go to the Washington County Health Department section on the County's website at www.co.washington.wi.us.

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