

FOOD

IRREGULAR WORKING HOURS

Health through smart choices

Good eating habits

- help you to stay energetic
- balance your hunger and help maintain a regular meal rhythm
- give you energy for physical activity and other activities that matter to you
- reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

Food is also about other things, such as

- enjoyment of flavours
- spending time together
- a rejuvenating break.

What is important to you about food and eating?



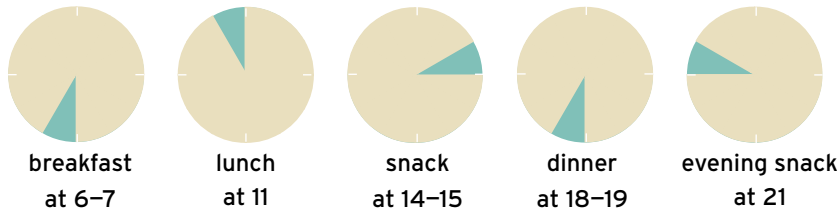
A suitable meal rhythm

- keeps your blood sugar stable and your mind alert
- helps you keep portion sizes reasonable
- prevents snacking between meals.

You know you have a good meal rhythm when you feel moderately or slightly hungry before a meal or snack.

Eat breakfast, lunch, dinner, and 1-3 snacks.

Example of a daily meal rhythm



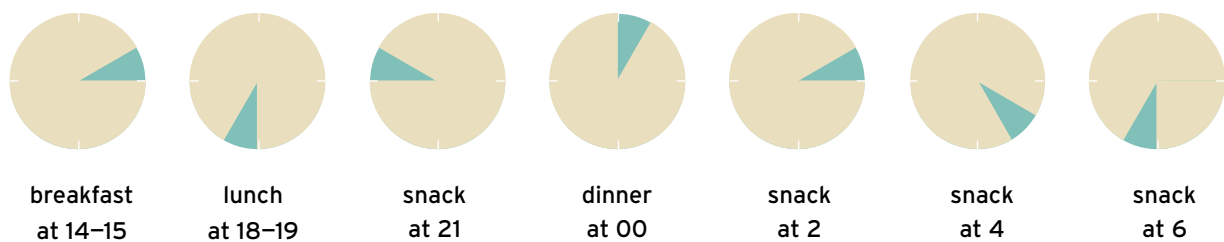
Aim to eat half of your daily food by the middle of your waking hours.

If you work night shifts, keep a meal rhythm during the night too

Prefer light meals and snacks every couple of hours. You may choose soups or hearty salads. Avoid snacks and drinks that are high in sugar and fat.

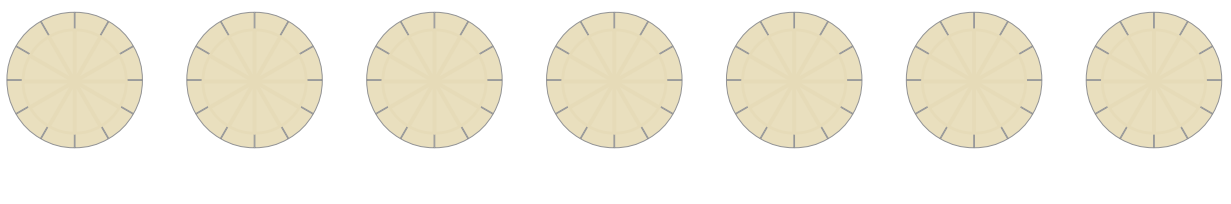
Structure your day with breakfast, lunch, and dinner regardless of your work schedule. Eat your main meal before 1 AM.

Example of a meal rhythm for night shift work



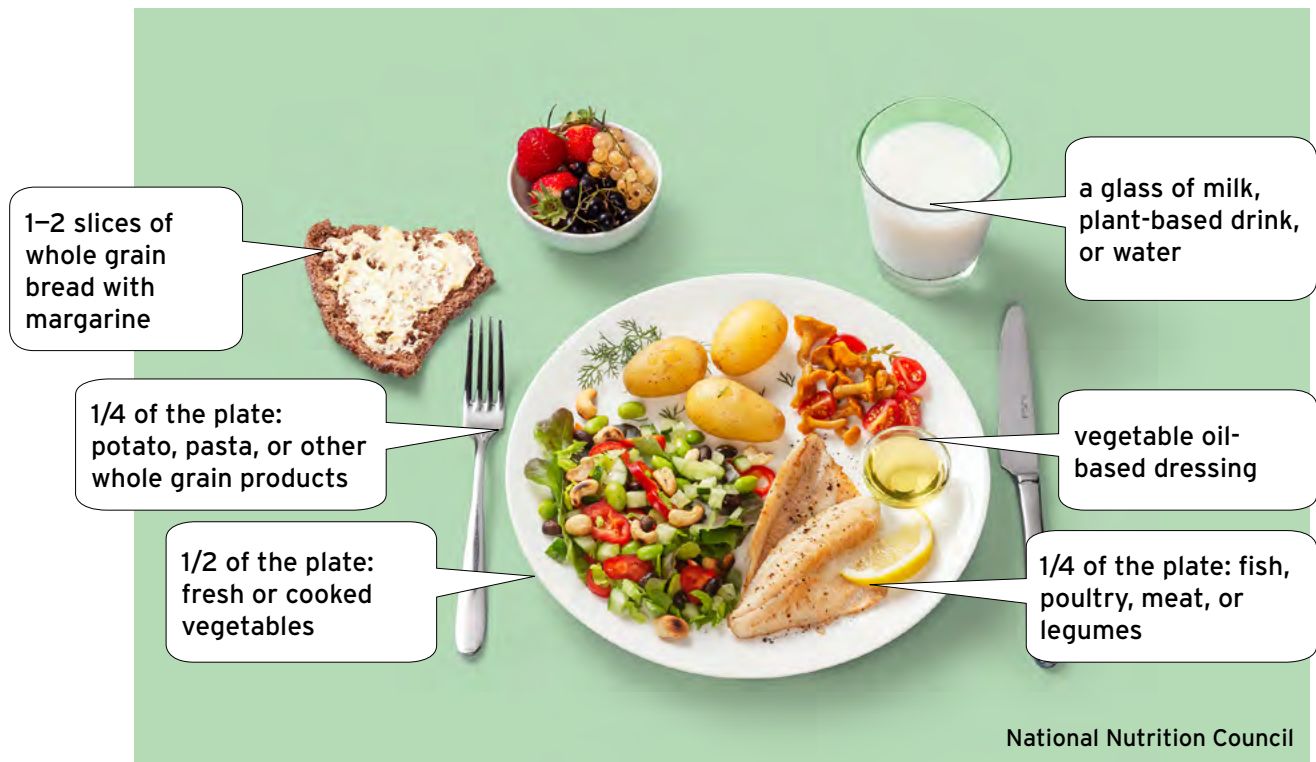
Plan your own meal rhythm

Mark the times on a clock and write the meal type below. This is an easy way to map out your daily meal rhythm.



Half a plate of vegetables

The plate model helps you put together a balanced and varied meal.



Enjoy every day

- **vegetables, fruits, and berries** at every meal
The vitamins and minerals they contain protect your immune system and help you stay healthy and energetic.
- healthy fats from **vegetable oils, margarine, nuts, seeds, and fatty fish**
They are good for your blood vessels. Margarine is better than butter-oil blends.
- **cooked legumes, such as peas, beans, and lentils**
They are rich in protein and a good alternative to meat. Add legumes to your diet gradually.
- whole grain products, such as **high-fibre bread and porridge**
They help you feel satiated for longer.
- low-fat **dairy products**
They provide calcium, which helps keep your bones strong.
- **drink water when thirsty; with meals, choose water, milk, buttermilk, or fortified plant-based drinks**
Smart drink choices help keep your teeth healthy.

Remember the plate model also when eating convenience foods or packing a lunch.

Plate model for packed lunches

- a hearty salad with vegetables, legumes, and egg
- whole grain bread with spread
- a glass of milk or plant-based drink

Healthy snacks

- whole grain sandwich
- fruits and berries
- yoghurt, Finnish curdled milk (villi), or quark
- oatmeal and berry soup
- snack bar

Eating habits checklist

Tick the circle that best describes your situation: ☐ usually ☐ occasionally ☐ never

I eat regularly

- breakfast, lunch, dinner, and 1-3 snacks

☐ ☐ ☐

I follow the plate model

- 1/2 of a plate vegetables, 1/4 fish, legumes, poultry, or meat, and 1/4 potato, pasta, or other whole grain products

☐ ☐ ☐

I eat vegetables, fruits, and berries

- 5-9 handfuls (500-800 g) a day

☐ ☐ ☐

I choose whole grain products

- at least 90 g (5-6 servings) of oatmeal, bread, pasta, or other whole grain products a day

☐ ☐ ☐

I eat fish

- at least twice a week (300-450 g), about half of which should be fatty fish (e.g., rainbow trout)

☐ ☐ ☐

I choose low-fat dairy products or plant-based alternatives

- 3.5-5 dl of dairy products a day
- fat-free milk, buttermilk, or fortified plant-based drink (e.g. oat or soy drink)
- low-fat cheese (less than 17 % fat) with reduced salt (up to 1,2 % salt)

☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐

I choose vegetable oils

- margarine on bread (at least 60% fat)
- vegetable oil or oil-based dressing for salads
- vegetable oil for cooking (e.g., rapeseed or canola oil)

☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐

I eat red meat and poultry in moderation

- beef, pork, lamb, chicken, and turkey - maximum 350 g per week

☐ ☐ ☐

I enjoy salty and sweet treats and drinks in moderation

- candy, crisps, pastries, cold cuts, sausages, and soft drinks - only a few times a week or in small amounts

☐ ☐ ☐

I drink

- mainly water or sparkling water when thirsty
- water, milk, buttermilk, or plant-based drinks with meals

☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐

What are you happy with in your eating habits? _____

What would you like to change? _____

Write down 1-2 goals you want to achieve. _____

This leaflet was last updated in September 2025.

The content follows the Finnish national nutrition recommendations published in 2024.