

# SELF

## This Is How Your Meals Should Look If You Want To Lose Weight

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Bonus: Your Instagram will be so much prettier, too.



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Anyone who's ever watched a Skittles commercial has heard the suggestion to "taste the rainbow." While it may seem counterintuitive that a candy commercial has good **weight loss** and healthy eating advice, registered dietitians are fans of this guidance. The only catch: That "rainbow" you're talking about is **produce**, not sweets.

First, a head's up: You should know that when it comes to health and weight loss, it's all about finding what works for you, which may or may not be what works for other people. And if you want to lose weight, it's key to think about where that desire comes from—and whether losing weight is a decision that will ultimately make you healthier and happier. For instance, if you have a history of **disordered eating**, you should check in with your doctor before beginning a weight-loss plan or changing your dietary habits, no matter how healthy that change may seem. And keep in mind that even if you don't have that history, setting reasonable goals is key. When it comes down to it, weight loss is about a lot more than how many colors you have on your plate. Other crucial factors: how much you sleep, your general stress levels, hormonal changes, and more. No matter where you are on your health and fitness journey, do your best to be kind to yourself, take your time, and listen to your body.

Whether or not you're trying to lose (or maintain) your weight—maybe you just want to treat your body well in general—eating the rainbow might help you get there. “Everyone always hears to eat more fruits and vegetables,” Brigitte Zeitlin, M.P.H., R.D., C.D.N., founder of the New York-based **BZ Nutrition**, tells SELF. Specifically, the recommendation is that women between the ages of 19 and 30 eat 2.5 cups of **vegetables** and 2 cups of **fruit** each day. Women between 31 and 50 should eat the same amount of vegetables, but downgrade the fruit to 1.5 cups a day (fruit has a lot of sugar).

That all sounds good in theory. In practice, it's easy to fall short of taking full advantage of produce's potential, including bringing about weight loss. “A more fun, interesting way to approach [eating the recommended amount of produce]—and make sure you're actually doing it—is to eat the rainbow,” Zeitlin says. This method helps keep you from getting bored with your healthy meals, plus it allows you to eat plenty of nutrient-dense foods without overdoing it on calories, Laura Cipullo, R.D., C.D.N., C.D.E., C.E.D.R.D., owner of **Laura Cipullo Whole Nutrition**, tells SELF.

“Every fruit and vegetable has different colors based on the different minerals, vitamins, phytochemicals, and antioxidants it contains,” Zeitlin says. For example, sweet potatoes have that delightful orange color because

of their **beta-carotene**, an antioxidant that your body can convert into vitamin A, possibly boosting your eye health, immune system, and skin. By switching up the fruits and vegetables you eat, you're making sure to get as much varied goodness as possible.

You don't have to meet an exact number of produce-provided colors at each meal. It's more about the overall ethos of the "rule": To maximize fruits' and vegetables' incredible potential by getting as large of a variety as you can. "You don't need to have every single color in one **meal** as long as you're eating them throughout the day," Zeitlin says. "Greens can be a good basis, then you can build on that."

On the flip side, if your plates are regularly filled with various shades of white or brown, it could be a sign your diet isn't diverse enough, meaning you're likely missing out on a lot of nutrients. "If your plates are just one color, you aren't including a variety of vegetables—you're probably eating more packaged foods, probably doing more takeout," Cipullo says.

In addition to phytonutrients, foods that are plants are a great source of **fiber**, which is great for weight loss, weight maintenance, and keeping blood sugar level. "When you're trying to make your plate chock-full of colorful veggies, you're loading up on fiber, which keeps you full for a long time," Zeitlin says. She's right: Fiber is a bulky nutrient, taking up valuable real estate in your stomach and helping you feel more satisfied than you otherwise might. "When you get enough fiber, you don't needlessly snack as much between meals, and when you're heading into your next meal, you're not as ravenous," Zeitlin says.

Keep in mind that you can take baby steps when incorporating the rainbow IRL. "I just joined up a CSA—it forces you to get creative," says Cipullo, who also recommends trying a **meal delivery service**, or simply making an effort to eat locally. "Then you'll be eating in season, so it's going to be varied," she explains. But all of that can get expensive or seem overwhelming if you're not used to it, so eating the rainbow can be as simple as maximizing the number of colors of produce in your cart on your usual trip to the supermarket.

You may also like: [How To Make 3 Healthy Mason Jar Salads For Weight Loss](#)

