



Your guide to

# Latin American and Caribbean cuisine

Simple strategies  
to help you thrive

Bonus: 1-day  
sample menu



# Welcome!

Planning healthy meals and snacks is at the heart of any wellness journey. But there is no one meal plan that is best for everyone. The colours, flavours, and aromas of food help to connect us to who we are. Plus, we all have different nutrition needs, likes and dislikes, budgets, and more. That's why we created Your guide to Latin American and Caribbean cuisine.

This guide is packed with healthy-eating ideas infused with a taste of the tropics. We'll spice things up with meal-planning tools to help you create a strategy that will work for you. Use this guide to create lasting changes so you can live better.

Enjoy!

## Sneak peek inside

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# Understanding the basics

Food is made of three basic nutrients that provide fuel to your body: carbohydrates, protein, and fats. Knowing how the body uses each nutrient and meeting the goals below will help you build well-balanced meals that are healthy and satisfying.



## Carbohydrates

Carbs are the sugars and starches that your body breaks down into glucose to use for energy. Carbs cause your blood sugar to rise. Too many of the less nutritious kinds, like added sugars, can cause weight gain and increase your risk of diabetes and heart disease. If you have diabetes, it's important to closely monitor carb intake.

**Your goal: Choose moderate portions of the more nutritious carb foods. Avoid added sugars.**



## Non-starchy veggies

Non-starchy veggies are low in carbs and calories and a great source of fibre, vitamins, and minerals.

**Your goal: Fill half of your plate with a variety of non-starchy veggies at each meal. It's not necessary to limit portion sizes like you do with other carb-containing foods — eat as much as you desire.**



## Protein

Protein helps build and keep muscle. It also helps you feel full. Protein has very little impact on your blood sugar.

**Your goal: Include protein when eating carbs. This slows the rise of blood sugar following a meal or snack. Opt for lean or plant-based protein sources.**



## Fats

Fats help your brain and nervous system work, and add great flavour and texture to food. When eaten alone, fats will not raise your blood sugar.

**Your goal: Choose foods that contain healthy fats (poly and monounsaturated). Limit saturated fats and avoid trans fats.**

*Curious about how these nutrients translate into the foods you eat? Keep reading to take a look at our detailed Teladoc Health food groups guide.*

# Teladoc Health food groups

The next step: Figuring out what to eat! Below you'll find examples of foods that fall into each group. Depending on your health needs, you may be able to eat more than one serving at a meal. Use this as a guide to build a variety of satisfying meals that will help you reach your goals.



## Non-starchy veggies

*One serving contains about 5 grams of carbohydrates and around 25 calories  
1/2 cup cooked or 1 cup raw for one non-starchy vegetable choice below*

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Artichoke</b>                             | <b>Cabbage (green, red)</b>                     |
| <b>Arugula</b>                               | <b>Greens (collard, mustard, turnip, chard)</b> |
| <b>Asparagus</b>                             | <b>Jicama</b>                                   |
| <b>Broccoli</b>                              | <b>Mushrooms</b>                                |
| <b>Brussels sprouts</b>                      | <b>Okra</b>                                     |
| <b>Cactus</b>                                | <b>Onions</b>                                   |
| <b>Cauliflower</b>                           | <b>Peppers (chili, jalepeno, bell)</b>          |
| <b>Chayote squash</b>                        | <b>Radishes</b>                                 |
| <b>Cucumber</b>                              | <b>Spinach, kale</b>                            |
| <b>Eggplant</b>                              | <b>Summer squash (yellow, zucchini)</b>         |
| <b>Green beans, wax beans, Italian beans</b> | <b>Tomatoes, tomatillos</b>                     |



## Carbohydrates (fruits)

*One serving contains 15 grams of carbs and around 60 calories*

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Apple</b>                        | <b>1 small</b>                         |
| <b>Banana</b>                       | <b>1 extra small or 1/2 large</b>      |
| <b>Blueberries</b>                  | <b>3/4 cup</b>                         |
| <b>Cantaloupe or honeydew melon</b> | <b>1 cup diced</b>                     |
| <b>Dried fruit</b>                  | <b>2 Tbsp</b>                          |
| <b>Grapes</b>                       | <b>17 small</b>                        |
| <b>Mango</b>                        | <b>1/2 cup or 1/2 small</b>            |
| <b>Nectarine or peach</b>           | <b>1 medium</b>                        |
| <b>Orange</b>                       | <b>1 medium</b>                        |
| <b>Papaya</b>                       | <b>1 cup cubed or 1/2 papaya</b>       |
| <b>Pineapple</b>                    | <b>3/4 cup fresh or 1/2 cup canned</b> |
| <b>Raspberries or blackberries</b>  | <b>1 cup</b>                           |
| <b>Strawberries</b>                 | <b>1 1/4 cup whole</b>                 |
| <b>Watermelon</b>                   | <b>1 1/4 cups diced</b>                |

# Teladoc Health food groups



## Carbohydrates (starches)

One serving contains 15 grams of carbs and around 80 calories

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Bagel</b>   | <i>1/4 large bagel (28 g)</i>                            |
| <b>Beans</b><br>(black, garbanzo, kidney, lima, navy, pinto, etc.) | <i>1/2 cup cooked</i><br><i>also = 1 protein serving</i> |
| <b>bolillo roll</b>  | <i>1/2 roll</i>  |
| <b>Arepas</b> (3 1/2 in across by 1/4 in thick)                    | <i>1/2 an arepa</i>                                      |
| <b>Bread slice</b>   | <i>1 slice (28 g)</i>                                    |
| <b>Corn</b>  | <i>1/2 cup or 1/2 large cob</i>                          |
| <b>Corn tortilla</b> (15 cm)                                       | <i>1 small tortilla</i>                                  |
| <b>English muffin</b>  | <i>1/2 muffin</i>  |
| <b>Flour tortilla</b> (25 cm)                                      | <i>1/2 tortilla</i>                                      |
| <b>Green peas</b>  | <i>1/2 cup</i>   |
| <b>Grits</b>   | <i>1/2 cup cooked</i>                                    |
| <b>Hamburger/hot dog bun</b>                                       | <i>1/2 bun</i>   |
| <b>Oatmeal, cream of wheat</b>                                     | <i>1/2 cup cooked</i>                                    |
| <b>Pita</b> (15 cm across)   | <i>1/2 pita</i>  |
| <b>Plain potato, sweet potato, yam</b>                             | <i>1/2 cup</i>   |
| <b>Plantain</b>  | <i>1/4 medium</i>  |
| <b>Popcorn</b>   | <i>3 cups</i>  |
| <b>Rice, pasta, quinoa, couscous</b>                               | <i>1/3 cup cooked</i>                                    |
| <b>Taco shell</b> (hard)   | <i>2 taco shells</i>                                     |
| <b>Winter squash</b> (butternut, acorn)                            | <i>1 cup</i>   |
| <b>Yuca</b> (cassava)  | <i>1/3 cup</i>   |



## Carbohydrates (milk & yogurt)

One serving contains 6-12 grams of carbs and around 80-160 calories

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| <b>Chocolate milk</b>                                | <i>1/2 cup</i> |
| <b>Cow's milk</b> (whole, reduced fat, skim)         | <i>1 cup</i>   |
| <b>Kefir</b> (plain, unsweetened)                    | <i>1 cup</i>   |
| <b>Rice milk</b> (plain, unsweetened)                | <i>1 cup</i>   |
| <b>Almond milk</b> (plain, unsweetened)              | <i>1 cup</i>   |
| <b>Soy milk</b> (plain, unsweetened)                 | <i>1 cup</i>   |
| <b>Yogurt, greek or regular</b> (plain, unsweetened) | <i>175 ml</i>  |

*Note: If food/drink is flavoured or sweetened, read the label for more details*

# Teladoc Health food groups



## Protein

*One serving contains 7 grams of protein and around 35-100 calories*

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| <b>Cheese</b>  | 28 g         |
| <b>Chicken, turkey, fish, beef, lamb, goat, pork</b>             | 28 g         |
| <b>Cottage cheese</b>  | 1/4 cup      |
| <b>Egg substitute</b>  | 1/4 cup      |
| <b>Egg whites</b>  | 2 egg whites |
| <b>Eggs</b>  | 1 egg        |
| <b>Nut spread, no sugar added (peanut, almond, soy butter) *</b> | 1 Tbsp       |
| <b>Nuts and seeds</b>  | 1 Tbsp       |
| <b>Tempeh (check label for carb counts) *</b>                    | 1/4 cup      |
| <b>Tofu *</b>  | 1/2 cup      |



## Fats

*One serving contains 5 grams of fat, around 45 calories, usually 0 carbs, but always check the label*

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Almonds or cashews *</b>  | 6 nuts                                 |
| <b>Avocado</b>   | 2 Tbsp                                 |
| <b>Bacon</b>   | 1 slice                                |
| <b>Butter, stick</b>   | 1 tsp                                  |
| <b>Coconut milk, canned</b>  | 1/3 cup light or 1 1/2 Tbsp regular    |
| <b>Coconut, shredded</b>   | 2 Tbsp                                 |
| <b>Cream cheese</b>  | 28 g                                   |
| <b>Mayonnaise</b>  | 1 tsp regular or<br>1 Tbsp reduced fat |
| <b>Nut butters (almond butter, peanut butter, cashew butter, etc.) *</b> | 1 1/2 tsp                              |
| <b>Oil (olive, canola, peanut, vegetable, etc.)</b>                      | 1 tsp                                  |
| <b>Olives</b>  | 8 black or 10 green                    |
| <b>Peanuts*</b>  | 10 nuts                                |
| <b>Pecans and walnuts</b>  | 4 halves                               |
| <b>Pistachios*</b>   | 16 nuts                                |
| <b>Seeds (pumpkin, flax, sunflower)</b>                                  | 1 Tbsp                                 |
| <b>Sour cream, regular</b>   | 2 Tbsp                                 |

\* Plant-based protein foods provide quality protein, healthy fats, and fibre. They vary in how much fat and carbohydrate they contain, so make sure to read labels.

You can eat well and still enjoy yummy meals! The balanced plate model is an easy, delicious way to fuel your body. Following this format will help you fill your plate with healthy foods in the right proportions.

It's as simple as eyeballing it. A balanced plate has 50% non-starchy veggies, 25% lean proteins, and 25% carbs. It may also include a little healthy fat.

Start with a **9-inch (about 23 cm) plate**. Measure your usual plates and see how wide they are. If they're bigger than 9 inches, try using smaller plates. You can also fill your regular plates to the 9-inch mark.

Use the Teladoc Health food groups guide on the previous pages to help you fill your plate. You'll find lots of tasty options to help create a variety of balanced and satisfying meals. Plugging different foods into the sections of the plate can even inspire creativity and get you out of a rut.

## 50%

**Non-starchy veggies = half of your plate**

Options include: Leafy greens, tomatoes, tomatillos, chayote squash, cactus, cucumber, mushrooms, cauliflower, garlic, and peppers

## 25%

**Carbs = a quarter of your plate**

Options include: Brown rice, sweet potatoes, cassava, yuca, plantains, tortillas, oats, quinoa, fruit

## 25%

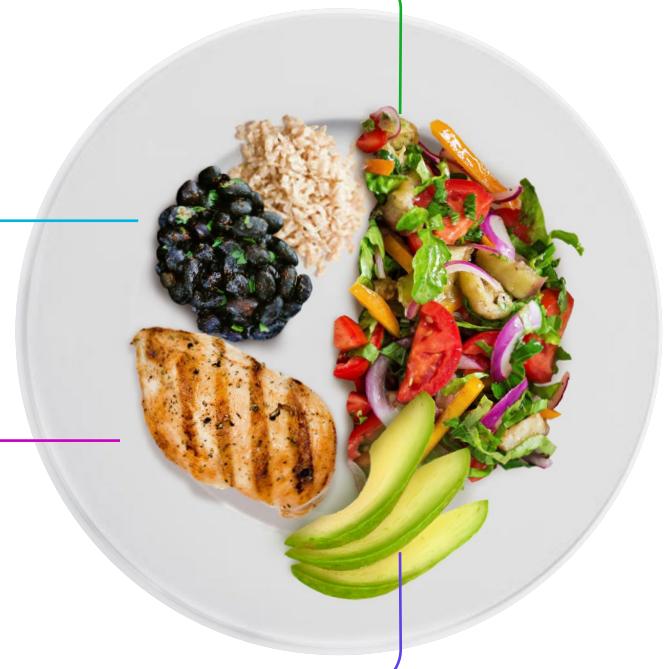
**Proteins = another quarter of your plate**

Options include: Beans\*, codfish, salmon, shrimp, chicken, turkey, tofu, eggs, lean pork, lean beef, yogurt  
(\*also contains carbs)

\*

**Healthy fats = just a bit**

Options include: Olive oil, avocado, olives, sunflower oil, nuts, and seeds



# Healthy portion sizes, any time

Now that you know how to balance your plate, it's important to consider how *much* you eat. When it comes to portion sizes, it can feel like the world is working against us. Restaurant servings for one can be enough for a family to share. Even the plates we use at home have gotten bigger!

Luckily, you can retrain your eyes — and your stomach — to recognize what “enough” looks and feels like. Use your hand as a guide to estimate portions that will satisfy and help you reach your goals.



## Fist

Whole grains, starchy vegetables, whole fruits

## Palm of hand

Meat, fish, tofu, tempeh



## Thumb

Dressings, dips, desserts

## Two flat hands side by side

Total amount of food per meal

## Flat hand

Non-starchy vegetables

# How to build a healthy meal

Knowing what to eat is only the first step. Here are some strategies you can use to enjoy healthy foods that fit your nutrition needs:



## Plan and shop

- Make a meal plan and shop only for foods that are on your plan.
- Don't be fooled by discounts. "Good deal" doesn't mean "good for you."



## Prep ahead

- Wash, cut, and store produce in containers right after grocery shopping.
- Cook once, eat twice: Prepare more than you need so you can enjoy leftovers, too.



## Get cooking

- **Cut the fat:**
  - Simmer foods in water or vegetable stock instead of frying in oil.
  - Use a spray of extra-virgin olive oil instead of ghee or shortening.
- **Slash the sodium:**
  - Skip the salt in recipes. Replace it with your favourite herbs and spices.
  - Use lemon juice and vinegar to tone down bitterness and sharpen flavours.
- **Bump up the veggies:**
  - Double the amount of non-starchy veggies in a recipe.
  - Grill, roast or steam veggies to mellow bitterness and help bring out their flavour.
- **Include lean proteins:**
  - Make sure your meals contain lean meat, fish, eggs, beans or tofu.
  - Cook using healthier methods: Grill, roast or sauté.
- **Choose whole grains:**
  - Whole grains are also sources of carbs and calories. Portion size matters!



## Eat and enjoy

- **Be mindful when eating:**
  - Avoid distractions like the TV, your phone or your tablet.
  - Slow your pace by putting down your fork between bites. Chew and savour!

# Smarter Snacks

Having a snack between meals can curb hunger throughout the day. Well-planned snacks can also keep you from eating too much at meals. Snacks that contain both produce and protein or fat are your best bet. That combo will help fill you up and keep you satisfied until mealtime.

Here are a few dynamic snack duos:



+



**Bean dip + bell pepper slices**



+



**Dried mango + almonds**



+



**Papaya + Greek yogurt**



+



**Sliced bell pepper + guacamole**



+



**Lettuce cups + egg salad**



+



**Carrot sticks + roasted chickpeas**

If you're craving a snack, check in with your body. Are you low on energy? Is your stomach empty? Avoid eating when you're bored or stressed. Instead, save snacking for when you need extra fuel to make it to the next meal.

# 1-Day sample meal plan



## Breakfast: Poached egg in tomato sauce (Makes 1 serving)

| Calories | Fat  | Sat. Fat | Sodium | Cholesterol | Carbs | Fibre | Sugars | Protein | Potassium |
|----------|------|----------|--------|-------------|-------|-------|--------|---------|-----------|
| 343      | 13 g | 1 g      | 264 mg | 619 mg      | 31 g  | 6 g   | 4 g    | 11 g    | 572 mg    |

1 egg, poached

Sauté onion, garlic, bell pepper, and tomato in olive oil. Add a pinch of thyme, rosemary, and oregano to taste. Top with 1 poached egg and serve with a piece of whole wheat bread or tortilla.

½ onion, small

**Veggie boost:**

Add chopped zucchini or eggplant to the sauté.

2 tsp garlic, minced

**Flavour boost:**

Top with chopped parsley, hot pepper, or hot sauce.

½ bell pepper

**Energy boost:**

Use an extra egg, top with 28 g of manchego cheese.

½ tomato, chopped

½ Tbsp olive oil

Pinch of thyme, rosemary and oregano



## Lunch: South American black beans & rice with sautéed kale (Makes 1 serving)

| Calories | Fat  | Sat. Fat | Sodium | Cholesterol | Carbs | Fibre | Sugars | Protein | Potassium |
|----------|------|----------|--------|-------------|-------|-------|--------|---------|-----------|
| 426      | 16 g | 2 g      | 517 mg | 0 mg        | 59 g  | 14 g  | 2 g    | 16 g    | 864 mg    |

½ cup black beans, low-sodium (drained and rinsed)

Add black beans to a saucepan, then add chicken stock. Cook the beans on medium heat, season with a pepper, onion powder, garlic powder, and cayenne. Prepare ½ cup of brown rice per package directions. Sauté chopped kale and 1 clove minced garlic in 1 tsp olive oil. Serve beans on top of rice, a side of kale.

½ cup chicken broth, low-sodium

**Veggie boost:**

Add a tossed side salad with tomatoes, cucumbers, radishes, and leafy greens.

½ tsp pepper

**Flavour boost:**

Serve with salsa or pico de gallo.

½ tsp onion powder

**Energy boost:**

Add ¼ cup sliced lean sausage to the beans during cooking.

½ tsp garlic powder

½ tsp cayenne

½ cup brown rice

2 cups kale, chopped

1 clove garlic, minced

1 tsp olive oil



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# 1-Day sample meal plan



## Dinner: Chicken tortilla soup with green salad (Makes 1 serving)

| Calories | Fat  | Sat. Fat | Sodium | Cholesterol | Carbs | Fibre | Sugars | Protein | Potassium |
|----------|------|----------|--------|-------------|-------|-------|--------|---------|-----------|
| 506      | 24 g | 4 g      | 700 mg | 124 mg      | 42 g  | 12 g  | 8 g    | 32 g    | 2,556 mg  |

85 g chicken, cooked, and shredded  
½ cup black beans  
½ cup chicken broth, low-sodium  
½ cup water  
¼ cup green chiles  
2 Tbsp enchilada sauce  
Dash of cumin, black pepper  
Tbsp. cilantro, fresh  
2 tsp. lime juice  
5 tortilla chips, crushed  
2 cups leafy greens  
½ cup cherry tomatoes  
1 Tbsp. balsamic vinaigrette

In a pan, warm shredded cooked chicken, black beans, chicken broth, water, green chilies, enchilada sauce, cumin powder and black pepper. Bring to a simmer. Serve in a bowl and top with cilantro, lime juice, and crushed corn tortilla chips. Serve with 2 cups of leafy greens, ½ cup cherry tomatoes, and 1 Tbsp balsamic vinaigrette.

### Veggie boost:

Top with salsa, pico de gallo, or sautéed onions and peppers.

### Energy boost:

Finish dinner with ½ cup of berries topped with Greek yogurt.



## Snack: Melon with mint and fresh lime (Makes 1 serving)

| Calories | Fat  | Sat. Fat | Sodium | Cholesterol | Carbs | Fibre | Sugars | Protein | Potassium |
|----------|------|----------|--------|-------------|-------|-------|--------|---------|-----------|
| 343      | 13 g | 1 g      | 264 mg | 0 mg        | 31 g  | 6 g   | 9 g    | 11 g    | 320 mg    |

½ cup mixed, pre-cut melon cubes (watermelon, cantaloupe, honeydew, etc.)  
4 mint leaves, chopped  
1 wedge fresh lime

Top melon with chopped mint and a squeeze of fresh lime juice. Enjoy!



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# Understanding food labels

Learning how to read food labels can help you make healthier choices. Use this guide to help you make the most of the Nutrition Facts label.

**Keep in mind that the healthiest foods, like fruits and veggies, don't have food labels.**

## Step 1: what's in a serving?

- Read the number of servings per container.
- Learn the size of each serving.
- Remember, the numbers below are for ONE serving.
- If you're eating more than one serving, multiply the numbers below by that amount.

## Step 2: aim for less:

- Saturated fat
- Trans fats
- Sodium (below 2,300 mg per day)
- Sugar
- Added sugars

## Step 3: aim for more:

- Fibre
- Protein
- Nutrients like vitamin D, iron, potassium, and calcium.

## Nutrition Facts

|                                   |                |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| 8 servings per container          |                |
| <b>Serving size</b> 2/3 cup (55g) |                |
| <b>Amount per serving</b>         |                |
| <b>Calories</b> 230               | % Daily Value* |
| <b>Total Fat</b> 8g               | 10%            |
| Saturated Fat 1g                  | 5%             |
| Trans Fat 0g                      |                |
| <b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg            | 0%             |
| <b>Sodium</b> 160mg               | 7%             |
| <b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 37g     | 13%            |
| Dietary Fiber 4g                  | 14%            |
| Total Sugars 12g                  |                |
| Includes 10g Added Sugars         | 20%            |
| <b>Protein</b> 3g                 |                |
| Vitamin D 2mcg                    | 10%            |
| Calcium 260mg                     | 20%            |
| Iron 8mg                          | 45%            |
| Potassium 235mg                   | 6%             |

## Step 4: check the ingredients list (separate from the nutrition facts panel)

- Ingredients are listed in by quantity, from highest to lowest.
- Avoid food additives like "monosodium glutamate," "sodium nitrates," and "food colouring". These are likely processed foods.
- Avoid items with ingredients that contain the word "hydrogenated", this means trans-fat. Avoid added sugars, often listed as "high fructose corn syrup," "dextrose," "sucrose," "honey," and "molasses".

# Dining out tips and tricks

Going to restaurants is a part of life. While it can be a challenge to dine out healthfully, it can be done! Here's how you can set yourself up for success:

## Before you go

- Review the menu online to help make better choices when it's time to order.
- Eat normally. Skipping meals just sets you up to be overly hungry when you sit down to order.
- Have a produce and protein snack an hour before the meal to curb hunger.

## At the restaurant

- Choose the treat that you like best—drink, starter, bread or dessert—to go along with your meal. Enjoy it!
- Cut your meal in half. Pack up the rest to bring home as leftovers.
- Ask for lower-calorie options like salad dressing on the side, light oil on pasta and veggies, and grilled chicken instead of crispy!
- Stick with balanced plate portions: 50% non-starchy veggies, 25% lean protein, 25% carbs.
- Chew food well and wait until you have swallowed your current bite to take another one.

It's okay if one meal isn't "perfect." But by planning ahead, you'll be able to stay closer to your wellness goals!





This content is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.

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