



Salad bars full of fresh vegetables seem like an obvious choice when looking for a delicious and healthy meal, and they often are. Depending on the mix of options you choose however, your salad could weigh in with more calories than a plate of fried food. To build a better salad, follow these tips:



#### Lead with Leafy Greens & Colorful Vegetables

To keep your salad high in nutrients and lower in calories, start with at least one cup of dark green leafy vegetables. Leafy greens offer fiber along with a variety of vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals. Colorful vegetables not only brighten the look of your salad, but add key nutrients like beta carotene from carrots and lycopene in tomatoes.



#### Pick up Some Protein

Beans, eggs, lean meats and poultry give your salad a boost of protein and turn it from a side dish into a meal. When adding protein, think of the 1/4 plate (or bowl) rule from MyPlate to guide your portion. About a 1/4 of your salad should be from the protein group. If you like your salad to have some crunch, a sprinkle of nuts or seeds will do the trick and bring some additional protein and other nutrients.



#### Drizzle with Dressing

A drizzle of dressing can add flavor and some important healthy fats. Just be careful not to drown your salad. Calories from dressing can add up quickly and throw off the balance of your salad. If creamy dressings are your preference, start with a small amount and toss your salad well to spread the flavor around. You can also create your own dressing flavors by mixing vinegars, lemon juice, fresh herbs and a touch of olive oil.



#### REFERENCES:

1. MyPlate and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Available at [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov). Written by Jennifer M. Ignacio, MS, RD, March 2014.