

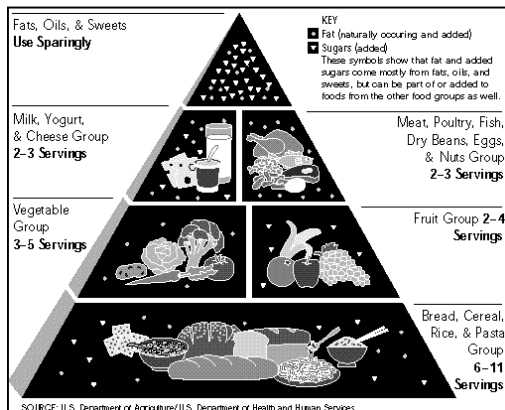


Dietary Guidelines for Americans

There is an abundance of nutrition information available today. Sometimes the information is confusing and conflicting. In an effort to combat the wealth of misinformation available to consumers, the Food and Drug Administration release in 1995 seven simple nutritional guidelines to lead Americans toward a healthier diet and better health.

Eat a Variety of Foods

In order to obtain all of the nutrients your body needs, you must eat a wide variety of foods. Regardless of what advertisers may lead you to believe, there isn't a perfect food that can supply all of the nutrients in the amounts your body needs. To ensure a balanced diet, choose recommended number of daily servings from each of the five major food groups displayed in the Food Guide Pyramid below.



Choosing a variety of foods isn't always enough to ensure a healthy diet. You must choose the right number of servings from each of the different food groups. As illustrated in the Food Guide Pyramid, foods from the products group, along with vegetables and fruits, are the basis of healthful diets. Meals that feature rice, pasta, potatoes or bread as the key element with sides of vegetables and fruit and low-fat foods from other groups are best.

It is important to limit fats and sugars while preparing a meal and while at the table. The Food Guide Pyramid makes it abundantly clear— fats and sugars should make up the smallest part of a healthy diet.

Serving Sizes

An important aspect of the Food Guide Pyramid is serving size. Some of the serving sizes are smaller than what you might usually eat. For example, a serving size for pasta is one-half cup. If you order pasta in a restaurant, the portion can easily constitute 3 to 4 servings. Suggested serving sizes are:

- *Grain Products*— 1 slice of bread; 1 oz. of ready-to-eat cereal; 1/2 cup cooked cereal, rice or pasta.
- *Vegetable Group*— 1 cup of raw leafy vegetables; 1/2 cup of other vegetables, cooked or chopped raw; 3/4 cup of vegetable juice.
- *Fruit Group*— 1 medium apple, banana, orange; 1/2 cup of chopped, cooked or canned fruit; 3/4 cup of fruit juice.
- *Milk Group*— 1 cup of milk or yogurt; 1-1/2 oz. of natural cheese; 2 oz. of processed cheese.
- *Meat and Beans Group*— 2-3 oz. of cooked lean meat, poultry or fish; 1/2 cup of cooked dry beans or 1 egg counts as 1 oz. of lean meat; 2 tablespoons of peanut butter or 1/3 cup of nuts counts as 1 oz. of meat.

Most of the calories in your diet should come from grain products, vegetables and fruits...

The base of the Food Guide Pyramid— grain products, vegetables and fruits— represents what should be the biggest part of your diet. Foods from these groups are rich in vitamins, minerals and complex carbohydrates. In addition, whole-grain breads and cereals, beans and peas and most fruits and vegetables are high in fiber. Eating a diet high in fiber is important for proper bowel function. It has also been associated with a lower risk for heart disease and some cancers. Fruits and vegetables are naturally low in fat and high in many essential nutrients, including antioxidants.

Choose a diet moderate in salt and sodium...

It probably isn't surprising to you to learn that most Americans consume more sodium than their body needs. The Nutrition Facts Label lists the Daily Value (recommended amount) for sodium as 2,400 mg per day. This equals approximately one level teaspoon of salt.

Sodium occurs naturally in foods and is often used in food processing. Many people add salt and salty sauces, such as soy sauce, to their food during preparation or before eating. Salt does enhance the flavor of many foods. However, consuming too much salt can increase your risk of high blood pressure.

To lower your sodium intake, choose a diet rich in fresh fruits and vegetables. While shopping, read the Nutrition facts label to compare sodium content of various foods and to identify foods lower in sodium. Remove your salt shaker from the table. Instead, flavor your food with herbs and spices.

Choose a diet moderate in sugars

Candy, bubblegum, soda pop, cakes, cookies, ice cream and on and on and on. The list of delicious foods containing sugar is almost endless. Sugar is a carbohydrate and occurs naturally in many foods, such as milk, fruits, some vegetables, breads, cereals and grains. Sugar is used as a natural preservative, thickener and baking aid.

Some foods containing a lot of sugar supply lots of calories but very few nutrients. These foods appear at the top of the food guide pyramid and should be eaten in moderation. For some active people with high caloric needs, sugar can be an extra source of energy. However, most Americans should avoid consuming sugar-laden snacks and beverages because they add unnecessary calories to your daily diet.

In addition to potential weight gain caused by sugar, the sweet substance contributes to tooth decay. The longer sugar stays in your mouth, the more damage it can do to your teeth. To prevent tooth decay, brush with a fluoride toothpaste and floss after eating a sugary snack.

Choose a diet low in fat and cholesterol

Fat has long been hailed as the bad guy of diets. In fact, some dietary fat is needed for good health because fats supply energy and essential fatty acids and promote the absorption of the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K. The problem is many Americans have too much fat in their diet. This excess is linked to increased blood cholesterol levels, greater risk for heart disease and certain cancers.

Fat contains more than twice the number of calories of an equal amount of carbohydrate or protein. The ideal diet should contain no more than 30% of total calories from fat. If you are counting on the Nutrition Facts label to plan your maximum fat intake, 65 grams of fat is the Daily Value for a 2,000-calorie a day diet.

Furthermore, a healthy diet restricts the consumption of saturated fat to less than 10% of calories. Saturated fat raises blood cholesterol more than other forms of fat. It is found in meat, milk and dairy products. Bakery products are also sources of saturated fats. Twenty grams of saturated fat is the Daily Value for a 2,000-calorie-diet.

The human body makes the cholesterol it requires, and yet Americans consume more cholesterol on a daily basis. Dietary cholesterol comes from animal sources, such as egg yolks, meat and higher fat milk products. These foods are also high in saturated fats. To lower your cholesterol intake, eat more grain products, vegetables and fruits.

Monounsaturated fats and polyunsaturated fats reduce blood cholesterol when they replace saturated fats in the diet. Olive and canola oils are particularly high in monounsaturated fats. Vegetable oils, nuts and high-fat fish are good sources of polyunsaturated fats.



Balance food with physical activity. Maintain or improve your weight.

Excess body weight increases the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, certain types of cancer, diabetes, arthritis, breathing problems and other illnesses. If you are not at an ideal body weight, reducing caloric intake and increasing activity is essential to lose the excess weight. Abiding by these dietary guidelines will assist you in achieving your weight goals. If you are at a healthy body weight, balance the amount of calories you consume with the amount of calories your body uses.