

CHAPTER 14

DIETARY GUIDELINES

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 | Define and describe the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
- 2 | Explain the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) nutrition programs that rely on the Dietary Guidelines.
- 3 | Define the key elements of healthy eating.
- 4 | Determine the dietary suggestions to align with healthy eating patterns.

CHAPTER 14 | Dietary Guidelines

US DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS):

A US federal department that oversees public health, welfare, and civil rights issues.

US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA):

A US federal department that manages programs for food, nutrition, agriculture, natural resources, and rural development.

DIETARY GUIDELINES:

Guidelines for healthy, lifelong eating habits for Americans two years of age and older.

FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION (FDA):

A US federal department that regulates the production and distribution of food, pharmaceuticals, tobacco, and other consumer products.

The **US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)** and **US Department of Agriculture (USDA)** create and update the **Dietary Guidelines** for Americans to promote sustainable, healthy food choices for lifelong health and good nutrition. With the aim of preventing chronic diseases such as cancer, hypertension, stroke, heart disease, and other chronic conditions, the guidelines address what to eat and what to avoid eating for optimal health.

Foods available to American consumers today include fresh, packaged, and processed products. To make the best choices, it is important for consumers to read and understand food labels. Even the simplest food packaging includes a nutrition label, list of ingredients, and often nutrition and health benefit claims. The **Food and Drug Administration (FDA)** regulates each of these elements for accuracy and effectiveness.

The current dietary guidelines are useful for making healthy food choices and crafting a well-rounded diet. Nutrition coaches and fitness professionals can use these guidelines as the basis for helping clients develop healthier dietary habits to support their goals.

Figure 14.1 Dietary Guidelines for Americans



The first half of the 164-page Dietary Guidelines contains chapters related to various nutrition topics.

The second half of the Dietary Guidelines contains the Dietary Guidelines Appendix with helpful tables of foods, nutrient sources, calorie intake, and more.

In addition to nutrition, the Dietary Guidelines also contain information about physical activity recommendations.

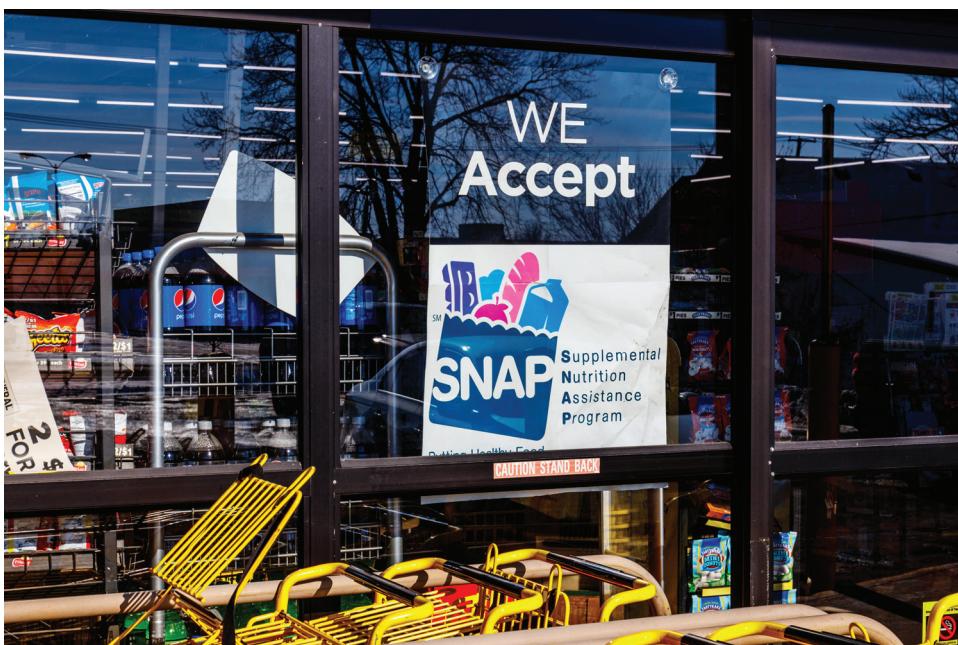
PURPOSE OF DIETARY GUIDELINES

Dietary Guidelines are meant to guide the development of federal food, nutrition, and health policies and programs. The primary audiences are policy makers and nutrition health professionals, rather than the public.

This publication is a critical tool used by professionals to help Americans make healthy choices in their daily lives with the goal of preventing chronic disease. The publication serves as the evidence-based foundation for nutrition education materials that the federal government creates for the public. For example, federal dietary guidance publications are required by law to be consistent with the Dietary Guidelines.

The Dietary Guidelines are also used to guide USDA and HHS food programs as well as many other programs administered by federal departments, such as:

- The USDA's National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, which feed more than 30 million children each school day
- The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- The HHS Administration on Aging's Older Americans Act Nutrition Services programs, including thousands of community-based service providers
- Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs food programs



The Dietary Guidelines are also used to develop programs, policies, and communication by audiences other than those specifically targeted by the document. These companies and organizations share the common goal of serving the public. They include businesses, schools, community groups, media, the food industry, and state and local governments.

The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines translate science into succinct, food-based guidance to help Americans choose foods for a healthy and enjoyable diet. The focus is disease prevention, not treating disease.

All Americans, regardless of individual health status, can benefit from making better food choices and developing healthy eating patterns. Thus, the Dietary Guidelines may be used or adopted by medical and nutrition professionals to encourage healthier habits in their clients.

FIVE FOCUS AREAS OF THE DIETARY GUIDELINES

The Dietary Guidelines are organized progressively, starting with five core concepts which are followed up with more detailed guidelines for food choices.

1. Follow a healthy eating pattern across the life span.

EATING PATTERN:

The types of food and beverages an individual consumes.

NUTRIENT DENSITY:

The amount of nutrients in a food relative to the number of calories it provides, usually measured per 100 kilocalories.

All food and beverage choices matter. Choose a healthy **eating pattern** at an appropriate calorie level to help achieve and maintain a healthy body weight, support nutrient adequacy, and reduce the risk of chronic disease.

2. Focus on variety, nutrient density, and food amounts.

To meet nutrient needs within calorie limits, choose a variety of nutrient-dense foods across and within all food groups in recommended amounts.

3. Limit calories from added sugars and saturated fats and reduce sodium intake.

A healthy eating pattern should be low in added sugars, saturated fats, and sodium.

DID YOU KNOW?

Sodium is a major target for physicians and the FDA to prevent and reduce chronic disease and hypertension. More than half of the sodium the average American consumes comes from:

- Bread
- Pizza
- Canned soups
- Burritos and tacos
- Snack foods, like chips, crackers, and popcorn
- Cheese
- Cold cuts and deli meats

4. Shift to healthier food and beverage choices.

Choose nutrient-dense foods and beverages across and within all food groups in place of less healthy choices. Consider cultural and personal preferences to make these shifts easier to accomplish and maintain.

5. Support healthy eating patterns for all.

Everyone has a role in helping to create and support healthy eating patterns in multiple settings nationwide, from home to school, at work, and in communities.

DID YOU KNOW?

There are a variety of socioeconomic factors that contribute to an individual's food and eating habits. Economic status, belief systems, food access, culture, and many other outside influences play a role in a person's choices. Health professionals must be aware of those influences when developing plans for clients.

The Dietary Guidelines' key recommendations for healthy eating patterns should be applied in their entirety. There are complex, interconnected relationships between dietary components that can be missed if only a few recommendations are followed.

LIMITING ADDED SUGARS

It is equally important to consider what to limit in a diet for a healthy eating pattern. These include added sugars, certain fats, and sodium. These are of concern for public health in the United States. Specified limits can help individuals achieve healthy eating patterns within calorie limits.

The recommendation for **added sugars**, those sugars not found naturally in whole foods, is to limit consumption to less than 10 percent of daily calories. This is based on modeling of food patterns and national data on calorie intake. Once all the recommended food groups are consumed for a typical individual, there is no room for added sugars.

ADDED SUGARS:

Any type of sugar that is added to a food or beverage when it is processed. This is compared to natural sugars found in whole foods, like fruit or milk.

LIMITING UNHEALTHY FATS

Calories from saturated and trans fats should be limited to less than 10 percent of calories per day. This recommendation is based on research that shows replacing saturated fats with unsaturated fats is associated with reduced risk of cardiovascular disease. As with added sugars, once food recommendations are met within a day, there is little room for extra calories from saturated fats.

LIMITING SODIUM

Sodium intake is recommended in quantities less than 2,300 milligrams per day. This is the Tolerable Upper Intake Level set by the National Academy of Medicine for people ages 14 and older. Refer to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans to view the recommendation for younger children.

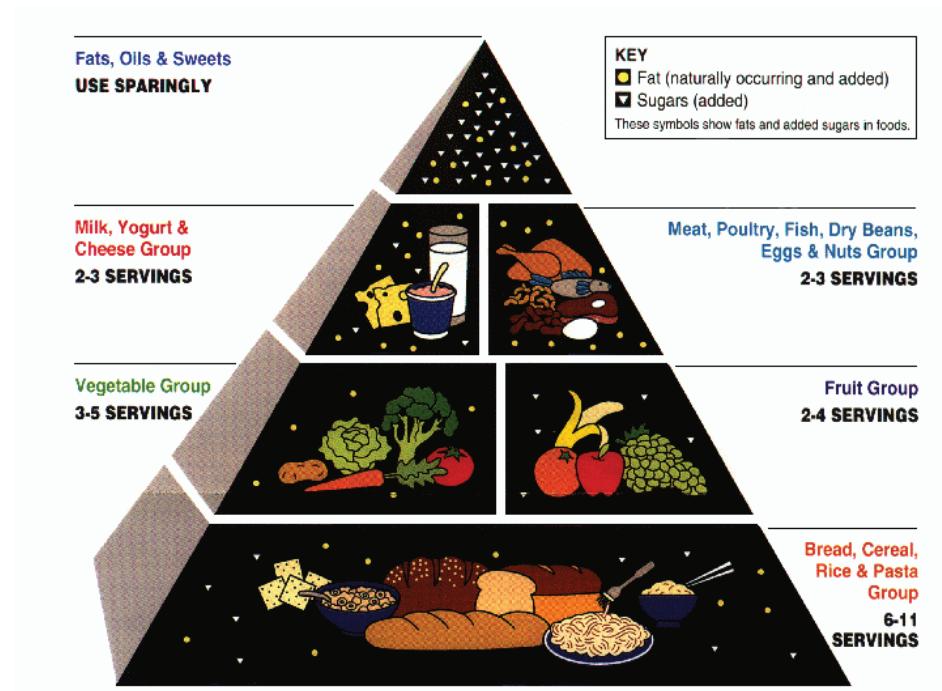
LIMITING ALCOHOL

The current recommendation for alcohol consumption is to limit beverages to one drink per day for women and two per day for men, which is considered moderate drinking. Consuming more than the recommendation is considered heavy drinking and carries health risks. See the Dietary Guidelines for Americans for more information about who should abstain completely.

THE FOOD PYRAMID TO MYPLATE

A previous representation for the Dietary Guidelines, and one that most consumers still recognize, is the Food Pyramid. It acted as a visual tool to help individuals make better choices about food and creating a healthy eating pattern.

Figure 14.2 The Food Pyramid



The Food Pyramid used the number of servings per day of each food type to represent how much the average American should consume. It included servings for grains, vegetables, fruits, meats and other protein sources, dairy, and fats. The gradual thinning of the categories up the pyramid was intended to show that grains should be the focus of the diet, with each subsequent food group making up a smaller and smaller portion. Left out however, was a distinction between healthier whole grains and the processed, sugary foods like white pasta and cereals that are now known to have contributed to the US obesity epidemic.

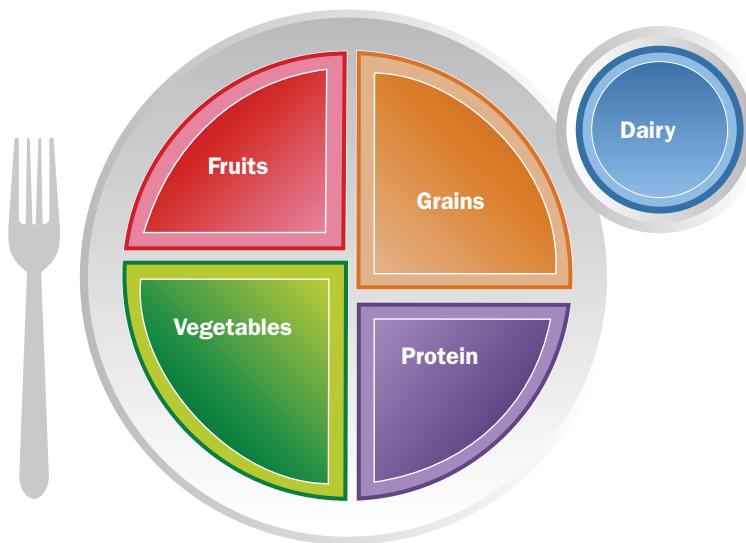
Newer resources take fats, oils, and sweets completely out of the picture. Processed foods, desserts, and sugary beverages are now treated as foods to avoid as much as possible. The food pyramid is also now thought to have put too little focus on fruits and vegetables and protein sources. The research that led to the transition from the Food Pyramid to **MyPlate** puts a greater focus on the Dietary Guidelines and choosing larger quantities of healthy whole foods.

While the Food Pyramid was a popular resource, it is now considered dated. It has been replaced with the simplified, updated MyPlate representation. The official reason for the change is to simplify the visual tool and to promote healthy eating for a new generation of Americans. The guidelines presented are the same as those from the Dietary Guidelines, but the MyPlate tools and graphics are intended for use by the general population. They provide resources that nutrition, health, and fitness professionals can use to communicate effectively with clients.

MYPLATE:

The current visual nutrition guide published by the USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion.

Figure 14.3 MyPlate



The new MyPlate is shaped like a plate with colorful fractions dedicated to dairy, vegetables, fruits, protein, and grains. This helps people visualize filling their plates at each meal with appropriate amounts of each food type. It is easy enough for a child to understand. Fats and sugars previously at the top of the Food Pyramid are left off the MyPlate graphic because of how they contribute to obesity in the overall population. Nutrition coaches and fitness professionals can use the MyPlate graphic as a teaching tool to explain healthy food choices and proportions to their clients.

DID YOU KNOW?

The USDA's first dietary guidelines were published in 1980 and have been updated every five years since 1985.

FRUITS AND VEGGIES

According to the USDA, half of a healthy plate should be fruits and vegetables. The focus should be on choosing whole fruits and vegetables which may include fresh, frozen, dried, or canned products with no additives. One can enjoy fruits as a sweet snack or dessert or with meals to increase daily intake. Vegetables should be varied in type and color. There are several healthful ways to prepare vegetables: sautéed, roasted, raw, or steamed.

GRAINS

Whole grains should fill up a quarter of a well-rounded plate. At least half the grains consumed daily should be whole grains. Any processed product is considered whole grain if the first or second item on the ingredients list is whole grains. Whole grain foods include brown rice, oatmeal, popcorn, whole wheat pasta, and whole grain breads.

PROTEINS

Lean proteins make up the final quarter of MyPlate. Seafood, beans, unsalted nuts and seeds, eggs, poultry, and lean meats are great choices for protein. Choose a variety of protein sources for building muscle tissue; for bone, blood, and skin health; and to produce hormones. Consuming protein from several different sources provides a variety of amino acids for the body to use.

DAIRY

For dairy products MyPlate encourages a switch to low-fat or fat-free products to reduce saturated fat intake. Foods like sour cream, heavy cream, and regular cheese can be replaced with lower-fat varieties.

Simple changes like choosing vegetable oils instead of butter and choosing water over sugary drinks can have a big effect over time. Nutrition coaches and trainers can encourage change by focusing their clients on small steps. A client should choose one thing to change at a time, like adding a fruit to every meal for a week or increasing the serving of vegetables in each meal. Habits generally take two to four weeks to form, and consistency is key. When it comes to eating, overhaul diets are impossible to maintain. The guidelines are a great way to inform and promote small, sustainable lifestyle changes.

MYPLATE TOOLS AND RESOURCES

MyPlate provides a variety of visual tools for trainers and coaches working with clients on nutrition. There are printable materials that can be filtered by age group and topic, videos, food safety tips, and even resources to help clients be more mindful with their food waste.

One valuable resource offered by MyPlate is the MyWins tools. These tools show consumers how to make small changes to create big results. For example, MyWins helps with healthier drink choices: instead of a 12-ounce grape soda (150 calories and 32 grams of added sugars), choose 6 ounces of 100 percent grape juice mixed with 6 ounces of club soda (115 calories and no added sugars).

Figure 14.4 MyWins Tools and Tips



Another example of a small win promoted by the MyWins tools is a food swap at lunch. Exchange a peanut butter and jelly sandwich with potato chips for a sandwich with whole wheat bread, natural peanut butter, and banana with a serving of baby carrots. This small change reduces calories, saturated fats, sodium, and added sugars.