This interactive piece seeks to display the nutritional value of the American meal in a meaningful, unique format.

Health Matters

Research

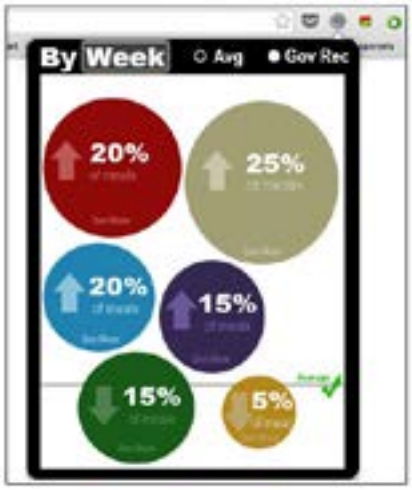
In the data piece, we worked hard to uncover the most relevant information about nutrition in America.

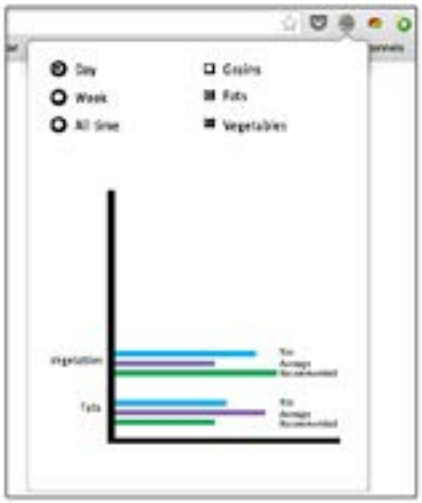
For our project, we have decided to take a closer look at those nutritional statistics in order to understand the American relationship to food. Specifically, our research looked at the nutritional composition of American meals, and we did not focus on other components of overall health such as exercise or lifestyle.

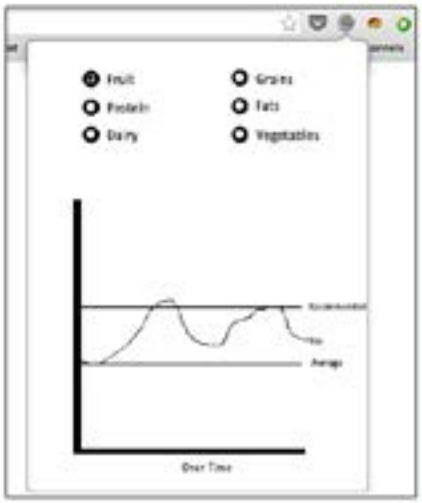
Of our three main data sources, one was an infographic which describes what the typical American eats throughout the year. Through this infographic, we looked at the sources provided to find more in-depth data. Data came from infoplease.com, Choose My Plate, and government sites. We also contacted a local nutritionist named Jessica Cloud who works as a nutritionist at Cobb & Douglas Public Health. As an expert in the field, she shared several helpful nutrition resources as well as information on SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). The final main source, Choose My Plate, is a government initiative to inform the public about making healthy lifestyle choices. We used this resource for data on what Americans should be eating. Our hypothesis was that Americans won't be fulfilling these government recommendations of nutrition.

Initial Idea

For Phase 1, we chose to make a chrome extension that could connect with MyFitnessPal.





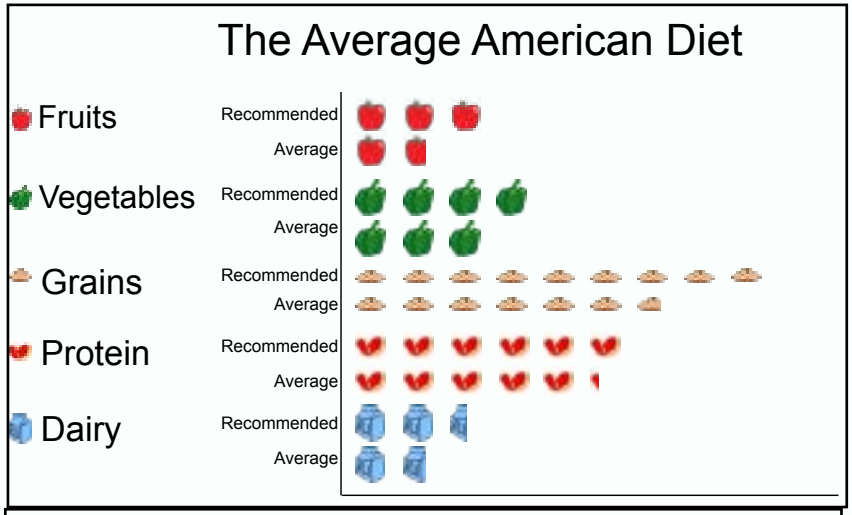


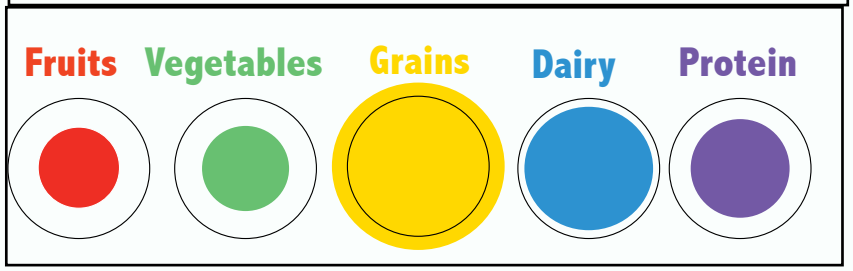
We initially planned on making a chrome extension that would pull a user's data from a diet tracking website like myFitnessPal. With this phase, we focused on making simple sketches to try out several displays for the data. We wanted to compare the user's data with government recommendations and the average American. The purpose of this was both to compare and contrast the average American's diet with government recommendations as well as to encourage the user. We hoped that by the user seeing their progress over time and compared to other data, it would encourage her to continue making healthy choices ad tracking their food. We struggled with finding an appropriate color scheme and accurate data in this phase.

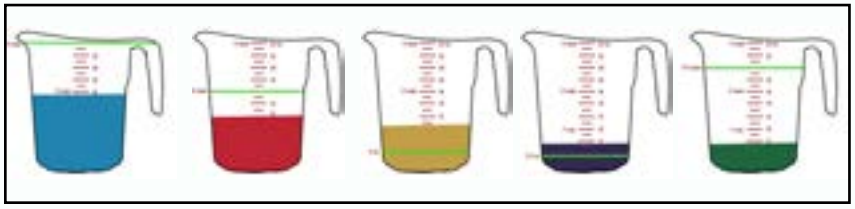
We also realized we did not have a good reason for choosing the media form of chrome extension. Although we had thought a chrome extension might be good for integration with myFitnessPal, we decided the case was not strong enough. However, we did realize that the use of government information was a strong source that should be further investigated.

Second Try

Chrome Extensions did not turn out to be the right media, so we then turned to other data representation methods.





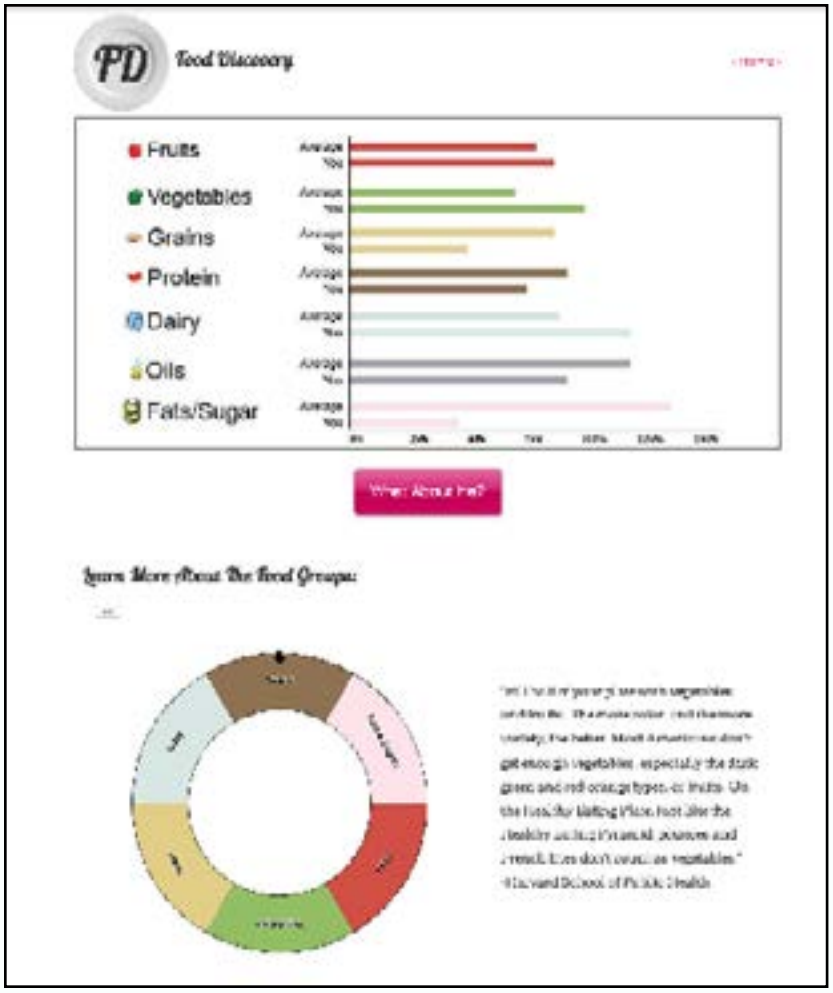


We decided that we didn't like the idea of a chrome extension, so with this iteration we experimented with other ways to display a user's data. We planned on making a website that the user could connect to through myFitnessPal. We decided to make a more direct comparison of the user and the average American on the bar chart. We also experimented with circular representations to portray deficits or surpluses of the different food categories. We also created a few representations of food using the symbol of a measuring cup. We were much more successful with our color scheme in this iteration, but we still struggled with the appropriate way to display the data.

None of these visualizations were particularly successful, but we thought perhaps the answer to the issues would come with pulling all the data together in a cohesive way, so we scrapped all the visualizations except for the best one (the bar graph) and began to work on the complete site.

Website

With some feedback about how to represent the data, we attempted to put together a website that would work in tandem with MyFitnessPal.

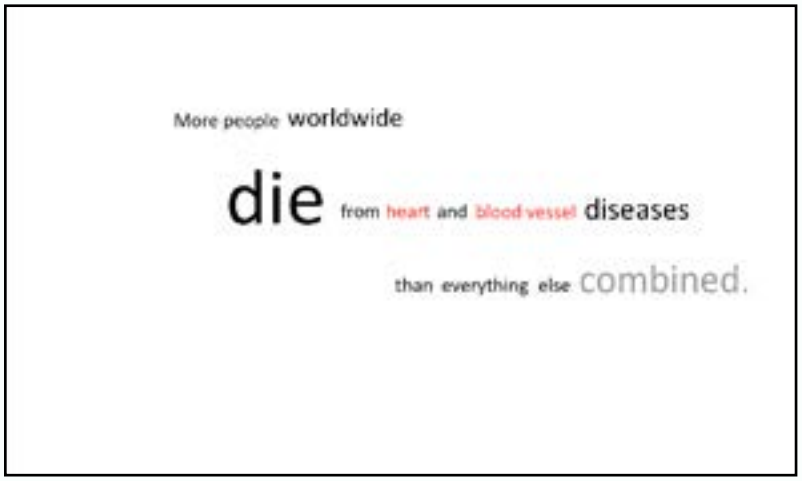


We then iterated on our previous phase and attempted to put together the website to display the data. In addition to the bar graph comparison, we also implemented a "spinner" that the user could activate. This spinner would land on a food group and provide the user with information about that particular group. We thought this would be a good user interaction experience. During this iteration, we also finally got our color scheme right. However, with more feedback from our class, we finally decided that the website wasn't the best way to get our message across to our intended audience.

The main challenge of this iteration was realizing that the entire medium through which we wanted to express our ideas was not ideal. At this point, we began to focus a lot on the process of visualizing this data in the hopes of truly being able to convey the story we wanted to tell in a way that would make sense.

Video PSA

Eventually, we realized we had to scrap the website and focus less on incorporating personal data. We chose to create a “PSA” type film.

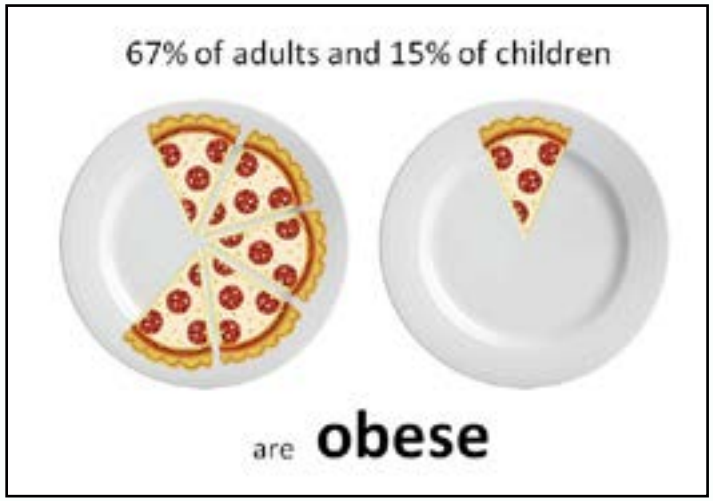


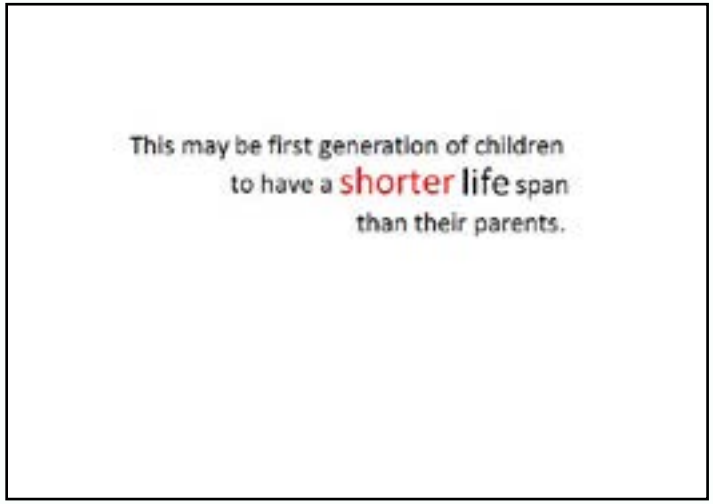
For our final iteration, we decided to rethink our idea. We started over and created a short video PSA. We used PowerPoint to bring our vision to life. We decided to use a tool that we were familiar with since we were short on time. We used a lot of information that we learned from Dean Ornish’s TED Talk: The killer American diet that’s sweeping the planet.” We moved away from nutrition and more towards informing the American public that their lifestyle choices had a serious impact.

While we tried to incorporate some graphics, we used words to convey our message to inform the public. While the idea and wording was present in our first draft, our transitions between ideas, timing, and lack of consistent style and font needed to be addressed.

Final

We created a final polished 1:13 animated video. We learned a lot through this process.





Our final version is a one minute and 13 second PSA video. After our class critique, we focused on improving the timing as well as the transitions between the slides. We also reworked the color accents with our slides, using green to highlight encouraging words and red to highlight startling or unsettling facts.

After this final version, we have a greater understanding of the American relationship to nutrition and diet. We also have a healthy understanding of the difficulties of redesigning something that is visualized and re-visualized all the time. We can now focus our ideas into the right medium / form, as well as the art of drawing the eye to certain words and places in a video, and many other visual techniques across media.