



# Dietary Guidelines For Good Health

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## Aim, Build, Choose—for good health

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans contain ten guidelines that can help build a healthy diet and reduce the risk of heart disease, certain cancers, diabetes, stroke, and osteoporosis. These diseases are leading causes of death and disability among Americans. A healthy diet can also reduce major risk factors including obesity, high blood pressure, and high blood cholesterol.

The Dietary Guidelines are intended for healthy children (ages 2 years and older) and adults of any age. The Dietary Guidelines promote three basic messages—the ABC's for health:

**Aim for fitness**

**Build a healthy base**

**Choose sensibly**

### Aim for fitness

- Aim for a healthy weight.
- Be physically active each day.

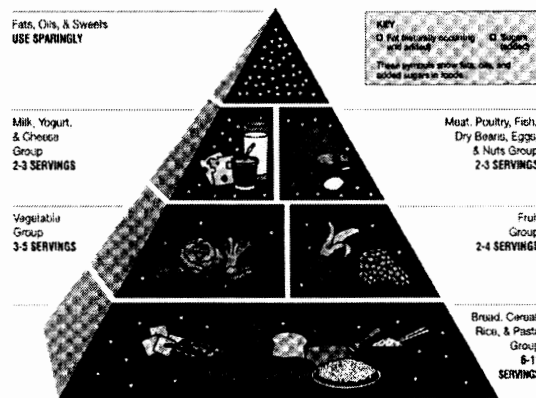
Aim for a healthy weight by choosing a lifestyle that combines healthy eating with regular physical activity. Most adults need to avoid gaining weight, and many need to lose weight. Being overweight or obese increases the risk of high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and certain types of cancer. A healthy weight is key to good health.

Managing weight takes a long-term change in eating and physical activity. Build a healthy diet and make sensible choices. Diets should follow the Food Guide Pyramid by choosing a variety of foods that include whole grains, vegetables, fruits, skim milk, lean meat, poultry, and fish or beans. Choose foods that are low in fat and added sugar and salt. Eat a sensible portion size.

If overweight, losing 5 to 15% of body weight may improve health and quality of life. Healthy weight loss is slow and gradual. Aim to lose about 10% of the weight over about 6 months. A safe weight loss rate is  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 pounds per week.

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## Food Guide Pyramid A Guide to Daily Food Choices



### Food Guide Pyramid

Being physically active each day is also important for health. Three types of physical activity; aerobics, strengthening, and flexibility, are especially beneficial. Aerobic activities speed up breathing and heart rate. Aerobic activities are beneficial for cardiovascular fitness. Activities for strength and flexibility can help build and maintain bones and muscle strength. Most importantly, choose enjoyable activities that can be done on a regular basis. Adults should aim to accumulate at least 30 minutes, and children 60 minutes, of moderate physical activity daily. Physical activity can be done all at one time, or spread it out over two or three times during the day.

Following these two guidelines will help keep the family healthy and fit. Healthy eating and regular physical activity enable people of all ages to work productively, enjoy life, and feel their best. They also help children grow, develop, and do well in school.

## Build a healthy base

- Let the Pyramid guide food choices
- Choose a variety of grains daily, especially whole grains
- Choose a variety of fruits and vegetables daily
- Keep food safe to eat.

Eat the nutrients needed, by choosing the recommended number of daily servings from each of the five major Food Guide Pyramid food groups.

A healthy diet starts with the three food groups at the base of the Food Guide Pyramid: the bread, cereal, rice, and pasta group, the vegetable group, and the fruit group. Choosing a variety of grain foods (especially whole grain), vegetables, and fruits accompanied by a moderate amount of low-fat foods from the milk group and the meat, poultry, fish, dried beans, egg, and nuts group is the basis of healthy eating. Go easy on foods high in fats or sugars.

Choosing a variety of foods is a key to good nutrition. Different foods contain different nutrients. No one food supplies all the nutrients in the needed amounts. A variety of foods help provide all the nutrients for good health.

Safe foods are vital for healthy eating. "Safe" means that foods pose little risk of foodborne illness. Farmers, food producers, and food preparers have a role in keeping food as safe as possible. However, another important role is keeping and preparing foods safely in the home.

The following are steps that can help keep food safe. Be particularly careful with perishable foods such as eggs, meats, poultry, fish, shellfish, milk products, fresh fruits, and vegetables.

- **Clean.** Wash hands and surfaces often.
- **Separate.** Separate raw, cooked, and ready-to-eat foods while shopping, preparing, or storing.
- **Cook.** Cook foods to a safe temperature.
- **Chill.** Refrigerate perishable foods promptly.
- **Follow the label.** Follow the label and follow safety instructions on packages.
- **Serve safely.** Keep hot foods hot (140 °F or above) and cold foods cold (40 °F or below).  
Whether raw or cooked, never leave meat, poultry, eggs, fish, or shellfish out at room temperature for more than 2 hours (1 hour in hot weather 90 °F or above). Be sure to chill leftovers promptly.
- **When in doubt, throw it out.** If not sure that food has been prepared, served, or stored safely, throw it out.

Following these four guidelines builds a base for healthy eating. Make grains, fruits, and vegetables the meal base, accompanied by a moderate amount of low-fat foods from the milk and meat groups, and go easy on

foods high in fat and sugar. This forms a foundation for good nutrition and health.

## Choose sensibly

- Choose a diet that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol and moderate in total fat.
- Choose beverages and foods to moderate intake of sugars.
- Choose and prepare foods with less salt.
- Drink alcoholic beverages in moderation.

By choosing a variety of foods from the Food Guide Pyramid, all the nutrients needed will be provided. When making food choices choose sensibly to lower the risk of disease.

Fats supply calories and essential fatty acids, and they help absorb the fat-soluble vitamins. Some fat is needed, but too much can increase the risk of coronary heart disease, high cholesterol, and obesity. Obesity in itself can increase the risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, and certain types of cancer. Choose foods low in saturated fat and cholesterol and moderate in total fat. Aim for a total fat intake less than 30% of calories, saturated fat less than 10% of calories, and cholesterol less than 300 milligrams per day.

Dietary carbohydrates include sugars, complex carbohydrates, starch, and dietary fiber. During digestion all carbohydrates except fiber are broken down into sugars. Many foods including milk, fruits, vegetables, breads, cereals, and other grain foods naturally contain sugar and starches as well as other nutrients. Added sugars are sugars added to foods during processing or preparation. The body cannot tell the difference between naturally occurring sugars and added sugars because they are chemically the same. Many foods containing added sugars provide calories, but have few vitamins and minerals. In the U.S., the major source of added sugar is non-diet soft drinks. Sweets, candies, cakes, cookies, and bakery items are also major sources of added sugars. Consuming foods high in added sugars is a concern because these foods provide excess calories, which may contribute to weight gain or lower the intake of more nutritious foods.

Salt is the major source of sodium in foods. Many people can reduce their risk of developing high blood pressure by consuming less salt. There is no way to tell who might develop high blood pressure from eating too much salt. However, most people consume too much salt, and consuming less salt is not harmful. Most foods do not contain a lot of salt naturally. Most salt comes from foods that have salt added during processing or preparation. A small amount of salt meets sodium needs. Aim for a total sodium intake of no more than 2,400 milligrams per day.

Drink alcoholic beverages sensibly and in moderation. Alcoholic beverages supply calories but few nutri-

ents, and they are harmful when consumed in excess. Taking more than one drink per day for women or two drinks per day for men can raise the risk of high blood pressure, stroke, and certain types of cancer. Alcohol consumption during pregnancy increases the risk of birth defects. Avoid drinking before or when driving, or whenever it puts others at risk. These four guidelines encourage sensible choices that promote health and reduce the risk of certain diseases. Enjoy all foods as part of a healthy diet as long as fat, sugar, salt, and alcohol are consumed in moderation. Read labels to identify foods high in fat, saturated fat, sugar, and salt (sodium).

### **Aim, Build, Choose—for good health**

Use the Dietary Guidelines ABC's to **Aim** for fitness, to **Build** a healthy base, and to **Choose** sensibly. Follow-

ing the ten Dietary Guidelines can help build a healthy diet and lifestyle, plus reduce disease risk.

### **References**

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- United States Department of Agriculture, Human Nutrition Information Service. The Food Guide Pyramid. 1992. Home and Garden Bulletin No. 252. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.

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Extension carries out programs in the broad categories of agriculture, natural resources and environment; family and consumer sciences; 4-H and other youth; and community resource development. Extension staff members live and work among the people they serve to help stimulate and educate Americans to plan ahead and cope with their problems.

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- Extension programs are nonpolitical, objective, and research-based information.
- It provides practical, problem-oriented education for people of all ages. It is designated to take the knowledge of the university to those persons who do not or cannot participate in the formal classroom instruction of the university.
- It utilizes research from university, government, and other sources to help people make their own decisions.
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- It dispenses no funds to the public.
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