

# Dietary Guidelines for Americans and MyPyramid

**O**ur diet provides energy and nutrients to fuel activity and support body functions. Body functions include growth, maintaining tissue health and fighting infections. The balance of nutrients and nonnutrients in our food choices can promote health and prevent disease or increase susceptibility to both systemic and oral diseases. Poor food choices leading to too little or too much energy intake, too little or too much nutrient intake or too much nonnutrient (for example, cholesterol, saturated fat, sodium) intake can increase the risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes and cancer, as well as dental caries, periodontal disease and tooth loss.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is charged with overseeing the nutritional health of the nation. As part of this charge, the USDA develops dietary recommendations designed to prevent diseases associated with food and/or nutrient deficiencies or excesses. Historically, the recommendations have been based on the best available science from human observational studies, clinical trials and animal studies. Recommendations are modified continuously as new science emerges, the food supply changes and/or the consumer's environment changes (for example, food preparation behaviors). The USDA recently revised the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and MyPyramid to help consumers make better food choices.

## 2005 DIETARY GUIDELINES

The 2005 edition of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans ([www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines](http://www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines)) is designed to promote dietary and activity habits for optimal health and prevention of obesity-related diseases, including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and cancers. The guidelines contain nine themes:

- select nutrient-dense foods and beverages to achieve adequate nutrient intakes within energy requirements;
- balance energy intake with activity for weight

management;

- engage in physical activity to reduce the risk of developing chronic disease and to manage weight;
- select a sufficient number and variety of fruits and vegetables, make one-half of grain selections whole grain, and choose a sufficient number of dairy products to ensure adequate nutrient and fiber intakes;
- restrict saturated fats, total fats and transfatty acids and select low-fat meat and dairy products to reduce the risk of obesity and obesity-related diseases;
- select high-fiber fruits, vegetables and whole grains while limiting added sugars to ensure adequate fiber intake and reduce caries risk;
- limit sodium intake and consume potassium-rich foods to reduce the risk of developing hypertension;
- consume alcoholic beverages responsibly to prevent alcohol-related illnesses and accidents;
- practice safe food handling to reduce the risk of developing food-borne illnesses.

## MYPYRAMID

The USDA's new MyPyramid, which replaces the previous Food Guide Pyramid dietary recommendations, is designed to identify individual dietary patterns that provide adequate nutrient intakes within energy requirements. MyPyramid outlines six food groups that provide the essential nutrients: grains, vegetables, fruits, milk, meat and beans, and oils.

The USDA has developed an interactive MyPyramid Web site ([www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov)). In addition to identifying dietary patterns based on age, sex and activity, the Web site contains links within each food group. These links provide detailed information about health benefits, serving sizes and serving tips for foods within the group. MyPyramid also contains a tracker to record dietary and activity information. ■

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