

# Dietary Guidelines and the Food Guide Pyramid

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## Dietary Guidelines:

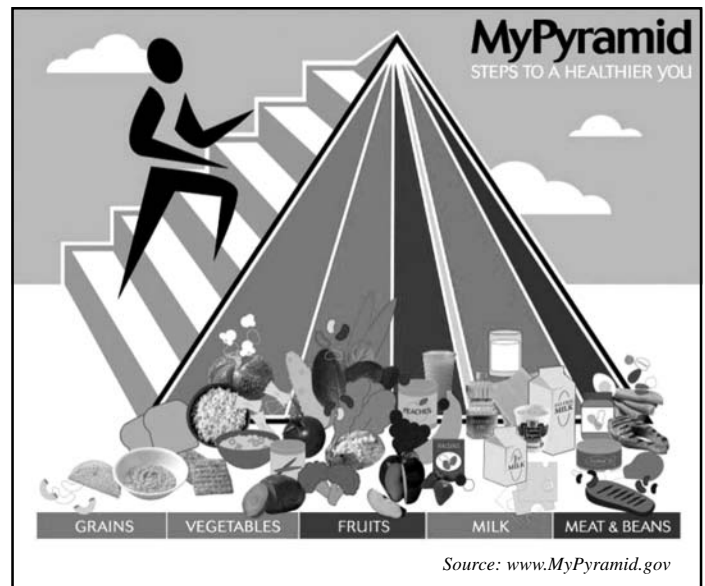
### What are they and why are they important?

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans (Dietary Guidelines) were first published in 1980. These food and physical activity recommendations are designed to promote health and active lifestyles and to reduce the risk of chronic disease for anyone over the age of 2. The guidelines are updated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture every five years to incorporate the latest scientific research. The most recent Dietary Guidelines were published in early 2005.

Good nutrition and physical activity are vital to good health and are absolutely essential for our well-being. Specific diseases and conditions linked to a poor diet and lack of physical activity include heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, and some types of cancer. Furthermore, strengthening muscles and improving balance can reduce falls among older adults.

Nutrient needs should be met primarily through eating food. Food provides the nutrients needed by healthy people. Supplements may be useful when they fill a specific, identified nutrient gap that cannot or is not being met by the individual's food consumption. Nutrient supplements cannot replace a healthful diet. Individuals who are already consuming the recommended amount of a nutrient in food will not achieve any additional health benefits if they also take the nutrient as a supplement.

Regular physical activity is important for overall good health. Maintaining good physical fitness enables one to comfortably meet the physical demands of work and leisure activities. People with higher levels of physical fitness are also at lower risk of developing chronic disease. On the other hand, a sedentary lifestyle increases risk of overweight, obesity, and many chronic diseases.



Source: [www.MyPyramid.gov](http://www.MyPyramid.gov)

## What Are the Key Messages?

### Good Nutrition:

#### Adequate nutrients within calorie needs

Many Americans consume more calories than they need but do not meet their need for a number of nutrients. This means most people need to choose meals and snacks that are high in nutrients but low to moderate in calories. Meeting nutrient recommendations must go hand-in-hand with keeping calories under control. Key nutrient recommendations include:

- Consume a variety of nutrient-dense foods and beverages while choosing foods that limit the intake of saturated and trans fats, cholesterol, added sugar, salt, and alcohol.
- Meet nutrient needs without exceeding calorie needs.

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### **Weight Management: A weight that optimizes health**

The prevalence of obesity in the United States has doubled in the past 20 years. Nearly one-third of adults are obese, and about 16 percent of children and adolescents are overweight. In West Virginia 64 percent of adults are obese or overweight, and 29 percent of high school students are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight (CDC BRFSS, 2004) A high prevalence of overweight and obesity is of great concern because excess body fat leads to higher risk for premature death from a number of chronic diseases. Key weight management recommendations include:

- Maintain body weight in a healthy range; balance calories from food with calories used in activity.
- Prevent gradual weight gain over time; make small decreases in food and beverage calories and increase physical activity.

### **Physical Activity: Movement that results in energy use**

Americans tend to be relatively inactive. However, regular physical activity has been shown to reduce the risk of certain chronic diseases, including high blood pressure, stroke, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and osteoporosis. It is important to limit sedentary behaviors, such as television watching and video viewing, and replace them with activities requiring movement. Key physical activity recommendations include:

- Engage in regular physical activity and reduce sedentary activities to promote health, psychological well-being, and a healthy body weight.
- Include heart-conditioning exercise, stretching and flexibility movement, and muscle-strengthening exercise.

### **Food Safety: Avoid food contaminated with bacteria and other contaminants**

Every year, an estimated 76 million people in the United States become ill from disease-causing contaminants in food; about 5,000 of them die. To keep food safe, people who prepare foods should wash hands, food-contact surfaces, and fruits and vegetables. Food must be cooked to a safe internal temperature, and raw food must be kept separate from cooked foods. Perishable foods must be kept chilled. Additional food safety recommendations include:

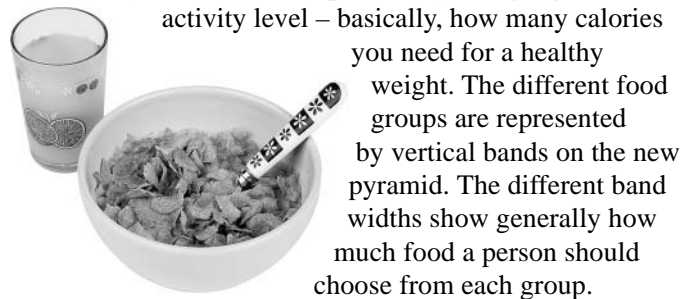


- Do not wash or rinse raw meat and poultry. Rinsing these foods can allow bacteria on the surface to spread to ready-to-eat foods, kitchen utensils, and counter surfaces.
- Avoid raw (unpasteurized) milk or any products made from unpasteurized milk; raw or undercooked eggs or foods containing raw eggs; raw or undercooked meat and poultry; raw or undercooked fish or shellfish; unpasteurized juices; and raw sprouts.

### **'MyPyramid': A personal approach**

While a pyramid is still used to convey the educational message from the Dietary Guidelines, there are changes in how the information is presented. "MyPyramid: Steps to a Healthier You" has replaced the old Food Guide Pyramid. The key difference between the two pyramids is that MyPyramid symbolizes a personalized approach to healthy eating and physical activity.

Food is still categorized into food groups. But MyPyramid places more emphasis on the fact that the amount of food you should eat depends on your age, gender, and activity level – basically, how many calories



you need for a healthy weight. The different food groups are represented by vertical bands on the new pyramid. The different band widths show generally how much food a person should choose from each group.

The MyPyramid for Kids activities for children ages 6 to 11 and classroom materials for educators are also available on the Web ([www.MyPyramid.gov/](http://www.MyPyramid.gov/)). The MyPyramid for Kids slogan is "Eat Right. Exercise. Have Fun."

## A healthy eating plan:

- emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products
- includes lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts
- is low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars

To meet your nutrient and calorie needs, it is important to eat a variety of foods while monitoring the total amount you eat. The guidelines recommend approximately 20 to 35 percent of your daily calories come from fat (with no more than 10 percent being saturated fats),



45 to 65 percent of calories from carbohydrates (half from whole-grain sources), and 10 to 35 percent of calories from lean or low-fat protein sources. The following statements will help you remember some of the key points.

- Focus on Fruits – 2 cups a day
- Vary Your Veggies – 2 1/2 cups a day
- Eat Calcium-rich Foods – 3 cups low-fat or fat-free a day
- Make Half Your Grains Whole – 3 ounces a day
- Go Lean with Protein

(Note: The **amounts** listed above are for a 2,000-calorie diet for a healthy adult.)

The 2005 MyPyramid uses cup or ounce measurements for the recommended amounts to be eaten. This change helps to prevent confusion caused by the term “servings,” which was used in the past.

To find out how to plan daily meals and snacks for you and your family, go to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Web site ([www.MyPyramid.gov](http://www.MyPyramid.gov)). After you fill in a few details, this online pyramid calculates the proper calorie levels for males and females between the ages of 2 and 76, based on whether their activity levels are sedentary, moderately active, or active.



**Physical activity** holds a much more prominent place in the 2005 edition of the guidelines than in previous ones. It is represented by the person climbing the steps on the pyramid. Regular physical activity is important for your overall health and fitness. It also helps control body weight by balancing the calories you take in with the calories you use.

## Here are some general guidelines:

- Be physically active for at least 30 minutes most days of the week.
- Increase the intensity or the amount of time that you are physically active to achieve even greater health benefits and to control body weight. About 60 minutes a day may be needed to prevent weight gain.
- Encourage children and teenagers to be physically active for 60 minutes every day or almost every day.
- Find your balance between food and physical activity. Consider this: If you eat 100 more food calories a day than you burn, you’ll gain about 1 pound in a month. That’s about 10 pounds in a year. You may not be eating the right foods that give your body the nutrients it needs to be healthy. You may not be getting enough physical activity to stay fit and burn those extra calories.

Eating right and being physically active aren’t just a “diet” or a “program”— they are keys to a healthy lifestyle. With healthful habits, you may increase your chances for living a longer life and reduce your risk of getting a chronic disease such as heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, and certain cancers.



You may download a free copy of the 70-page *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* or a consumer brochure from the Internet ([www.USDA.gov/cnpp](http://www.USDA.gov/cnpp)).

Another government Web site ([www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines](http://www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines)) contains more information on the 2005 Dietary Guidelines. Additional materials specifically for children will be available later this year.

Go to the Cattleman’s Beef Board’s Web site ([www.beefnutrition.org/](http://www.beefnutrition.org/)) for one copy of the large MyPyramid poster and 100 8x11 tear sheets of the MyPyramid.

## References

[www.MyPyramid.gov/](http://www.MyPyramid.gov/)

Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005, USDHHS, USDA, [www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines](http://www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines)