



# DIETARY GUIDELINES FOR AMERICANS 2015-2020 EIGHTH EDITION

## Executive Summary

Over the past century, deficiencies of essential nutrients have dramatically decreased, many infectious diseases have been conquered, and the majority of the U.S. population can now anticipate a long and productive life. At the same time, rates of chronic diseases—many of which are related to poor quality diet and physical inactivity—have increased. About half of all American adults have one or more preventable, diet-related chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and overweight and obesity.

However, a large body of evidence now shows that healthy eating patterns and regular physical activity can help people achieve and maintain good health and reduce the risk of chronic disease throughout all stages of the lifespan. The *2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* reflects this evidence through its recommendations.

The *Dietary Guidelines* is required under the 1990 National Nutrition Monitoring and Related Research Act, which states that every 5 years, the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and of Agriculture (USDA) must jointly publish a report containing nutritional and dietary information and guidelines for the general public. The statute (Public Law 101-445, 7 U.S.C. 5341 et seq.) requires that the *Dietary Guidelines* be based on the preponderance of current scientific and medical knowledge. The 2015-2020 edition of the *Dietary Guidelines* builds from the 2010 edition with revisions based on the *Scientific Report of the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee* and consideration of Federal agency and public comments.

The *Dietary Guidelines* is designed for professionals to help all individuals ages 2 years and older and their families consume a healthy, nutritionally adequate diet. The information in the *Dietary Guidelines* is used in developing Federal food, nutrition, and health policies and programs. It also is the basis for Federal nutrition education materials designed for the public and for the nutrition education components of HHS and USDA food programs. It is developed for use by policymakers and nutrition and health professionals. Additional audiences who may use *Dietary Guidelines* information to develop programs, policies, and communication for the general public include businesses, schools, community groups, media, the food industry, and State and local governments.

Previous editions of the *Dietary Guidelines* focused primarily on individual dietary components such as food groups and nutrients. However, people do not eat food groups and nutrients in isolation but rather in combination, and the totality of the diet forms an overall eating pattern. The components of the eating pattern can have interactive and potentially cumulative effects on health. These patterns can be tailored to an individual's personal preferences, enabling Americans to choose the diet that is right for them. A growing body of research has examined the relationship between overall eating patterns, health, and risk of chronic disease, and findings on these relationships are sufficiently well established to support dietary guidance. As a result, eating patterns and their food and nutrient characteristics are a focus of the recommendations in the *2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines*.

The *2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines* provides five overarching Guidelines that encourage healthy eating patterns, recognize that individuals will need to make shifts in their food and beverage choices to achieve a healthy pattern, and acknowledge that all segments of our society have a role to play in supporting healthy choices. These Guidelines also embody the idea that a healthy eating pattern is not a rigid prescription, but rather, an adaptable framework in which individuals can enjoy foods that meet their personal, cultural, and traditional preferences and fit within their budget. Several examples of healthy eating patterns that translate and integrate the recommendations in overall healthy ways to eat are provided.





## The Guidelines

- 1 Follow a healthy eating pattern across the lifespan.** 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 amount.** 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.** Consume an eating pattern low in added sugars, saturated fats, and sodium. Cut back on foods and beverages higher in these components to amounts that fit within healthy eating patterns.
- 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 to work to communities.

Key Recommendations provide further guidance on how individuals can follow the five Guidelines. The *Dietary Guidelines'* Key Recommendations for healthy eating patterns should be applied in their entirety, given the interconnected relationship that each dietary component can have with others.



## Key Recommendations:

### Consume a healthy eating pattern that accounts for all foods and beverages within an appropriate calorie level.

#### A healthy eating pattern includes:<sup>[1]</sup>

- A variety of vegetables from all of the subgroups—dark green, red and orange, legumes (beans and peas), starchy, and other
- Fruits, especially whole fruits
- Grains, at least half of which are whole grains
- Fat-free or low-fat dairy, including milk, yogurt, cheese, and/or fortified soy beverages
- A variety of protein foods, including seafood, lean meats and poultry, eggs, legumes (beans and peas), and nuts, seeds, and soy products
- Oils

#### A healthy eating pattern limits:

- Saturated fats and *trans* fats, added sugars, and sodium

Key Recommendations that are quantitative are provided for several components of the diet that should be limited. These components are of particular public health concern in the United States, and the specified limits can help individuals achieve healthy eating patterns within calorie limits:

- Consume less than 10 percent of calories per day from added sugars<sup>[2]</sup>
- Consume less than 10 percent of calories per day from saturated fats<sup>[3]</sup>
- Consume less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) per day of sodium<sup>[4]</sup>
- If alcohol is consumed, it should be consumed in moderation—up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men—and only by adults of legal drinking age.<sup>[5]</sup>

In tandem with the recommendations above, Americans of all ages—children, adolescents, adults, and older adults—should meet the *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* to help promote health and reduce the risk of chronic disease. Americans should aim to achieve and maintain a healthy body weight. The relationship between diet and physical activity contributes to calorie balance and managing body weight. As such, the *Dietary Guidelines* includes a Key Recommendation to:

- Meet the *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*.<sup>[6]</sup>

[1] Definitions for each food group and subgroup are provided throughout Chapter 1: Key Elements of Healthy Eating Patterns and are compiled in Appendix 3. USDA Food Patterns: Healthy U.S.-Style Eating Pattern.

[2] The recommendation to limit intake of calories from added sugars to less than 10 percent per day is a target based on food pattern modeling and national data on intakes of calories from added sugars that demonstrate the public health need to limit calories from added sugars to meet food group and nutrient needs within calorie limits. The limit on calories from added sugars is not a Tolerable Upper Intake Level (UL) set by the Institute of Medicine (IOM). For most calorie levels, there are not enough calories available after meeting food group needs to consume 10 percent of calories from added sugars and 10 percent of calories from saturated fats and still stay within calorie limits.

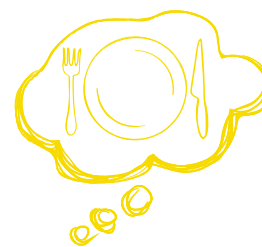
[3] The recommendation to limit intake of calories from saturated fats to less than 10 percent per day is a target based on evidence that replacing saturated fats with unsaturated fats is associated with reduced risk of cardiovascular disease. The limit on calories from saturated fats is not a UL set by the IOM. For most calorie levels, there are not enough calories available after meeting food group needs to consume 10 percent of calories from added sugars and 10 percent of calories from saturated fats and still stay within calorie limits.

[4] The recommendation to limit intake of sodium to less than 2,300 mg per day is the UL for individuals ages 14 years and older set by the IOM. The recommendations for children younger than 14 years of age are the IOM age- and sex-appropriate ULs (see Appendix 7. Nutritional Goals for Age-Sex Groups Based on Dietary Reference Intakes and Dietary Guidelines Recommendations).

[5] It is not recommended that individuals begin drinking or drink more for any reason. The amount of alcohol and calories in beverages varies and should be accounted for within the limits of healthy eating patterns. Alcohol should be consumed only by adults of legal drinking age. There are many circumstances in which individuals should not drink, such as during pregnancy. See Appendix 9. Alcohol for additional information.

[6] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*. Washington (DC): U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2008. ODPHP Publication No. U0036. Available at: <http://www.health.gov/paguidelines>. Accessed August 6, 2015.

## Terms to Know



Several terms are used to operationalize the principles and recommendations of the *2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines*. These terms are essential to understanding the concepts discussed herein:

**Eating Pattern**—The combination of foods and beverages that constitute an individual’s complete dietary intake over time. Often referred to as a “dietary pattern,” an eating pattern may describe a customary way of eating or a combination of foods recommended for consumption. Specific examples include USDA Food Patterns and the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) Eating Plan.

**Nutrient Dense**—A characteristic of foods and beverages that provide vitamins, minerals, and other substances that contribute to adequate nutrient intakes or may have positive health effects, with little or no solid fats and added sugars, refined starches, and sodium. Ideally, these foods and beverages also are in forms that retain naturally occurring components, such as dietary fiber. All vegetables, fruits, whole grains, seafood, eggs, beans and peas, unsalted nuts and seeds, fat-free and low-fat dairy products, and lean meats and poultry—when prepared with little or no added solid fats, sugars, refined starches, and sodium—are nutrient-dense foods. These foods contribute to meeting food group recommendations within calorie and sodium limits. The term “nutrient dense” indicates the nutrients and other beneficial substances in a food have not been “diluted” by the addition of calories from added solid fats, sugars, or refined starches, or by the solid fats naturally present in the food.

**Variety**—A diverse assortment of foods and beverages across and within all food groups and subgroups selected to fulfill the recommended amounts without exceeding the limits for calories and other dietary components. For example, in the vegetables food group, selecting a variety of foods could be accomplished over the course of a week by choosing from all subgroups, including dark green, red and orange, legumes (beans and peas), starchy, and other vegetables.

An underlying premise of the *Dietary Guidelines* is that nutritional needs should be met primarily from foods. All forms of foods, including fresh, canned, dried, and frozen, can be included in healthy eating patterns. Foods in nutrient-dense forms contain essential vitamins and minerals and also dietary fiber and other naturally occurring substances that may have positive health effects. In some cases, fortified foods and dietary supplements may be useful in providing one or more nutrients that otherwise may be consumed in less-than-recommended amounts.

For most individuals, achieving a healthy eating pattern will require changes in food and beverage choices. This edition of the *Dietary Guidelines* focuses on **shifts** to emphasize the need to make substitutions—that is, choosing nutrient-dense foods and beverages in place of less healthy choices—rather than increasing intake overall. Most individuals would benefit from shifting food choices both within and across food groups. Some needed shifts are minor and can be accomplished by making simple substitutions, while others will require greater effort to accomplish.

Although individuals ultimately decide what and how much to consume, their personal relationships; the settings in which they live, work, and shop; and other contextual factors strongly influence their choices. Concerted efforts among health professionals, communities, businesses and industries, organizations, governments, and other segments of society are needed to support individuals and families in making dietary and physical activity choices that align with the *Dietary Guidelines*. Everyone has a role, and these efforts, in combination and over time, have the potential to meaningfully improve the health of current and future generations.

## Figure ES-1.

### 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans at a Glance

The 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines focuses on the big picture with recommendations to help Americans make choices that add up to an overall healthy eating pattern. To build a healthy eating pattern, combine healthy choices from across all food groups—while paying attention to calorie limits, too. Check out the 5 Guidelines that encourage healthy eating patterns:

1

**Follow a healthy eating pattern across the lifespan.** 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.

Follow a healthy eating pattern over time to help support a healthy body weight and reduce the risk of chronic disease.

#### A Healthy Eating Pattern Includes:



#### A Healthy Eating Pattern Limits:



2

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

Choose a variety of nutrient-dense foods from each food group in recommended amounts.

#### Example Meal:



## Figure ES-1. (continued...)

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3

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

Consume an eating pattern low in added sugars, saturated fats, and sodium. Cut back on foods and beverages higher in these components to amounts that fit within healthy eating patterns.

Consume an eating pattern low in added sugars, saturated fats, and sodium.

#### Example Sources of:



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.

Replace typical food and beverage choices with more nutrient-dense options. Be sure to consider personal preferences to maintain shifts overtime.

#### Example:

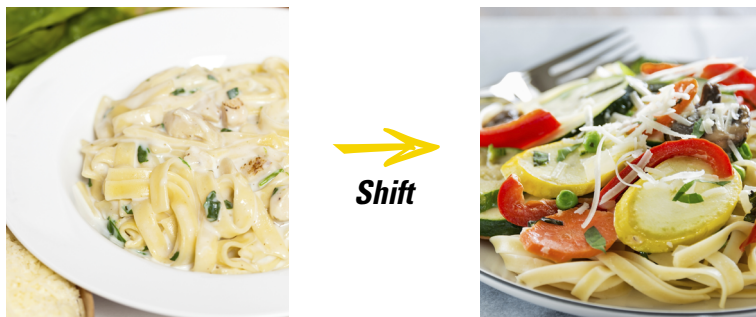




Figure ES-1. (continued...)

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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 to work to communities.

