

Balancing Act!

Dietary Guidelines Updated

After a lengthy process, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services released the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010* on January 31, 2011. Developed every 5 years, the Dietary Guidelines have the goal of moving Americans toward a more healthful diet. The update incorporates existing scientific research on food, nutrition and health to prevent disease and battle obesity.

Here's what has not changed: Americans don't eat enough fruit, vegetables and seafood; and they eat too much sodium, solid fats, refined grains and added sugars. Taken as a whole, the Dietary Guidelines have two overarching messages: (1) balance calories to manage weight; and (2) consume nutrient-dense foods and beverages.

The 2010 update places a stronger emphasis on *reducing* consumption of particular foods and food components. Here is a brief summary of highlights that stand out from the previous recommendations:

Reduce sodium to less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) per day, with an even further reduction to 1,500 mg per day for about half the population, including African Americans, all adults 51 and older, and those with hypertension, diabetes or chronic kidney disease.

- Consume less saturated fat by replacing it with unsaturated fats. Avoiding trans fat remains a key recommendation.
- Reduce intake of solid fats and added sugars.
- Limit intake of refined grains, especially those with added sugar, fat and sodium.
- The new guidelines also recommend increasing consumption of certain foods and nutrients:
- Shift to a more plant-based diet. USDA food patterns, the DASH diet and Mediterranean-style eating are promoted.



Increase consumption of seafood by choosing it in place of meat and poultry.

Choose more foods that are rich in potassium, fiber, calcium and vitamin D--all nutrients of concern in American diets.

"Everyone has a role in the movement to make America healthy," says the report, which emphasizes a coordinated, systematic approach to address our nation's diet-related health problems. One chapter offers a number of strategies that can help create opportunities for all Americans to make healthier choices, including:

- creating local, state and national plans to achieve the Dietary Guidelines' goals;
- increasing access to fresh produce and safe places to play;
- improving nutrition literacy, gardening and cooking skills;
- increasing health, nutrition and physical education in schools;
- partnering with the food industry to create and offer healthier foods, in smaller portions; and
- implementing the National Physical Activity Plan.

Despite such guidance, there are still major barriers that make it difficult for all Americans to eat well and maintain a healthy weight. The 2010 Dietary Guidelines go beyond individual behavior change and integrate the evidence into a Call to Action with the potential to address political and social factors that shape America's food environment.

For the complete set of the new guidelines, go to www.DietaryGuidelines.gov.

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