



Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010 Foods and Nutrients to Increase

Nutrient-dense foods provide vitamins, minerals and other substances that may have positive health effects, with relatively few calories. They are lean or low in solid fats, and have little or no added solid fats, added sugars and added refined starches. Nutrient-dense foods have little or no added salt or other compounds high in sodium. Ideally, they are minimally processed and retain naturally occurring components, such as dietary fiber. **All vegetables, fruits, whole grains, fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products, seafood, lean meats and poultry, eggs, beans and peas (legumes), and nuts and seeds that are prepared without added solid fats, sugars, starches and sodium are nutrient-dense.** Individuals should strive to meet the following recommendations as part of a healthy eating pattern while staying within their calorie needs.

- **Increase vegetable and fruit intake.** Most vegetables and fruits provide a number of nutrients that Americans do not eat enough of, including folate, magnesium, potassium, dietary fiber, and vitamins A, C and K. Eating vegetables and fruits is associated with reduced risk of many chronic diseases. Moderate evidence indicates that intake of at least 2½ cups of vegetables and fruits each day is associated with a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, including heart attack and stroke. Some vegetables and fruits may be protective against certain types of cancer.

Most vegetables and fruits are relatively low in calories when prepared without added fats or sugars. Eating them instead of higher calorie foods can help adults and children achieve and maintain a healthy weight. The majority of the fruit should come from whole fruits, including fresh, canned, frozen and dried forms, rather than from juice. When juices are consumed, 100% juice should be encouraged. Eat a variety of vegetables, especially dark-green, red and orange vegetables and beans and peas.

- **Consume at least half of all grains as whole grains.** Increase whole-grain intake by replacing refined grains with whole grains. Less than 5 percent of Americans consume the minimum recommended amount of whole grains, which for many is about 3 ounce-equivalents per day. The most direct way to meet the whole grain recommendation is to eat at least half of one's grain-based foods as 100% whole-grain foods. Check the label and choose foods that say 100% whole-grain. Another way to tell is if all the grains in the ingredients list are whole grains. Many grain foods contain both whole grains and refined grains. Look for those with at least 8 grams of whole grains per ounce-equivalent.
- **Increase intake of fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products,** such as milk, yogurt, cheese or fortified soy beverages. Milk and milk products contribute many nutrients, such as calcium, vitamin D (if fortified with vitamin D) and potassium, to the diet. Moderate evidence shows that intake of milk and milk products is linked to improved bone health, especially in children and adolescents. Moderate evidence also indicates that intake of milk and milk products is associated with a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes and with lower blood pressure in adults.

Select fat-free or low-fat fluid milk or yogurt rather than cheese most of the time to increase intake of potassium, vitamin A and vitamin D, and decrease intake of sodium, cholesterol and saturated fat. Soy beverages fortified with calcium and vitamins A and D can be an alternative for people with food allergies or intolerances.

- **Choose a variety of protein foods**, which include seafood, lean meat and poultry, eggs, beans and peas, soy products and unsalted nuts and seeds. The fats in meat, poultry and eggs are considered solid fats, while the fats in seafood, nuts and seeds are considered oils. Meat and poultry should be consumed in lean forms to decrease intake of solid fats. Consumption of a balanced variety of protein foods can lead to improved nutrient intake and health benefits. Moderate evidence indicates that eating peanuts and certain tree nuts (i.e., walnuts, almonds and pistachios) reduces risk factors for cardiovascular disease when consumed as part of a healthy diet. Because nuts and seeds are high in calories, they should be eaten in small portions and used to replace other protein foods, like some meat or poultry, rather than being added to the diet.
- **Increase the amount and variety of seafood consumed** by choosing seafood in place of some meat and poultry. Seafood contributes a range of nutrients, notably omega-3 fatty acids. Moderate evidence shows that consumption of about 8 ounces per week of a variety of seafood that provides an average consumption of 250 mg per day of omega-3 fatty acids is associated with reduced cardiac deaths among individuals with and without pre-existing cardiovascular disease. Moderate, consistent evidence shows that the health benefits from consuming a variety of seafood in the amounts recommended outweigh the health risks associated with methyl mercury, a heavy metal found in seafood in varying levels. Seafood higher in omega-3 fatty acids and lower in mercury include salmon, anchovies, herring, sardines, Pacific oysters, trout, and Atlantic and Pacific mackerel (not king mackerel, which is high in mercury).

In addition to the health benefits for the general public, the nutritional value of seafood is of particular importance during fetal growth and development, as well as in early infancy and childhood. Moderate evidence indicates that intake of omega-3 fatty acids from at least 8 ounces of seafood per week for women who are pregnant or breastfeeding is associated with improved infant health outcomes, such as visual and cognitive development. Therefore, it is recommended that women who are pregnant or breastfeeding consume at least 8 and up to 12 ounces of a variety of seafood per week, from choices that are lower in methyl mercury. Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding should not eat tilefish, shark, swordfish and king mackerel. They can eat all types of tuna, including white (albacore) and light canned tuna, but should limit white tuna to 6 ounces per week because it is higher in methyl mercury.

- **Use oils to replace solid fats where possible.** Fats with a high percentage of monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fat are usually liquid at room temperature and are referred to as “oils”. Oils contribute essential fatty acids and vitamin E to the diet. Replacing some saturated fat with unsaturated fat lowers both total and low-density lipoprotein (LDL) blood cholesterol levels.

Tips for replacing solid fats with oil:

- use soft margarine instead of stick margarine
- replace some meats and poultry with seafood or unsalted nuts
- use vegetable oils instead of solid fats, such as butter, in cooking

- **Choose foods that provide more potassium, dietary fiber, calcium and vitamin D,** which are nutrients of concern in American diets. These foods include vegetables, fruits, whole grains and milk and milk products.
 - Dietary potassium can lower blood pressure by blunting the negative effects of sodium on blood pressure. Other possible benefits of an eating pattern rich in potassium include a lower risk of developing kidney stones and decreased bone loss. Potassium is found in foods from all food groups, especially vegetables, fruits and milk and milk products.
 - Dietary fiber is the non-digestible form of carbohydrates in plant foods, and lignin, another substance found in plants. Dietary fiber helps provide a feeling of fullness and is important in promoting healthy gut action. Some of the best sources of dietary fiber are beans and peas, such as navy beans, split peas, lentils, pinto beans and black beans. Other sources of dietary fiber include other vegetables, fruits, whole grains, bran and nuts. Women should strive for 25 g of fiber per day and men should strive for 38g per day.

Reference: Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010. <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/DGAs2010-PolicyDocument.htm>, accessed May 9, 2011.

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