



How to Eat Better for Less with The Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010

Every five years, the United States Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services publish updated Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The guidelines are intended for Americans over the age of two years and provide science-based recommendations for a healthier lifestyle. For the first time, the 2010 guidelines are written for a population in which a large percentage of adults and youth are overweight or obese. Following the 2010 recommendations that are focused on consuming fewer calories, making smart food choices and being physically active can help people reach and maintain a healthy weight, reduce their risk of chronic disease and promote overall health.

Overall concepts forming the basis for the 2010 Dietary Guidelines include:

- **Balance calories taken in with calories expended to achieve and sustain a healthy weight.** People who are most successful at achieving and maintaining a healthy weight consume only enough calories from foods and beverages to meet their needs and are physically active every day.
- **Focus on consuming nutrient-dense foods and beverages.** Americans currently consume too much sodium and too many calories from solid fats, added sugars and refined grains. A healthy eating pattern is one that limits intake of sodium, solid fats, added sugars and refined grains and emphasizes nutrient-dense foods and beverages—vegetables, fruits, whole grains, fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products, seafood, lean meats and poultry, eggs, beans and peas, and nuts and seeds.

Fruits and vegetables: Fresh, frozen, canned or dried, there are several low-cost options available to help you meet the guideline for fruits and vegetables. Sometimes fruits are cheapest in their fresh form, especially when in season in the U.S. Least expensive options include apples, bananas, grapes, grapefruit and watermelon. Canned fruit is an easy alternative to fresh, and several inexpensive options are available, such as applesauce, pineapple, pears and peaches. Frozen fruit is often the most expensive form to purchase; however, frozen fruit juice is considerably cheaper than fresh refrigerated or shelf-stable juice. Remember to go easy on fruit juice, as the Dietary Guidelines recommend the consumption of whole fruit rather than juice to ensure adequate fiber intake.

As with fruit, fresh vegetables in season are frequently the least expensive form to buy. Least expensive fresh vegetables include cabbage, potatoes, broccoli, romaine lettuce, carrots, radishes, cucumbers and mustard greens. Although a bit more expensive, canned and frozen vegetables are still a nutritional bargain and are a quick and easy way to add color to any meal. Canned green beans, tomatoes, corn or carrots are frequently the least expensive. Frozen vegetables tend to be more expensive than fresh or canned, with some exceptions like frozen green peas and frozen sweet corn.

Whole grains: Whole wheat bread is generally more costly than white bread, but still a pretty good bargain. There are many other whole grain foods available at low-cost, such as oatmeal, barley, brown rice and many whole grain ready-to-eat cereals and crackers, especially store brands. Look for discount, day-old bread stores in your area for a wide variety of whole grain bread products at a fraction of the cost. Day old grain products could be purchased and frozen for later use.

Dairy: Choosing low-fat dairy products generally won't cost more. Substituting lower-fat milk for whole milk may even save you money. Other low-cost options in this group include calcium-fortified soy milk, part-skim mozzarella cheese and low-fat yogurt. Many dairy foods may be purchased on sale and frozen for later use.

Protein: Meat, poultry and fish can be the most expensive items on your grocery bill. Plant sources of protein tend to be a good bargain. Canned fish also provides a low-cost way to meet your daily protein needs. Protein choices from lowest to highest cost are: peanut butter, cooked dry beans, egg, canned tuna, cooked chicken breast and lean ground beef. It helps to take time to compare fresh, frozen and canned items, to buy what's on special if the unit price label shows it costs less per unit serving, and to only buy what you can use or freeze for later use.

The best way to get the nutrients you need is by eating healthy foods. In certain cases, fortified foods and dietary supplements may be useful in providing one or more nutrients that are difficult to get in adequate amounts.

- Women who are capable of becoming pregnant should consume 400 micrograms (mcg) per day of synthetic folic acid (from fortified foods and/or supplements) in addition to food forms of folate from a varied diet.
- Pregnant or breastfeeding women should take an iron supplement, as recommended by an obstetrician or other health care provider.
- Individuals ages 50 years and older should consume foods fortified with vitamin B12, such as fortified cereals or dietary supplements.

Some eating patterns that have shown positive health benefits are the USDA Food Patterns (MyPlate) and their vegetarian adaptations, the DASH Eating Plan, and the traditional Mediterranean Diet. Although healthy eating patterns differ around the world, some common threads exist:

- They are abundant in vegetables and fruits.
- Many emphasize whole grains.
- They include moderate amounts and a variety of foods high in protein (seafood, beans and peas, nuts, seeds, soy products, meat, poultry and eggs).
- They include only limited amounts of foods high in added sugars and may include more oils than solid fats.
- Most are low in full-fat milk and milk products. However, some include substantial amounts of low-fat milk and milk products.
- In some patterns, wine is included with meals.
- They tend to be high in unsaturated fat and low in saturated fat.
- They are high in dietary fiber and potassium.
- Some are relatively low in sodium compared to current American intake.

Healthy eating patterns, such as the traditional Mediterranean pattern, generally do not include many processed foods. Cooking food from scratch rather than relying on packaged foods, and eating at home more often saves money and time. It also allows you to control the ingredients. If you consider the time it takes you after leaving your home until you get home it can take an average of 80 minutes to eat out. Studies have shown that most people can put dinner on the table in 30 minutes or less.

For a low-cost, healthy meal, try White Bean and Tuna Salad with a whole grain roll or crackers and fresh fruit for dessert.

White Bean Tuna Salad

Ingredients

1 (6-ounce) can tuna, packed in olive oil or water
1 (15-ounce) can cannellini white beans, drained and rinsed
1 Tablespoon small capers, drained and rinsed
3 Tablespoons red wine vinegar
Fresh ground black pepper and salt, to taste
1/2 medium red onion, thinly sliced
3/4 cup cherry tomatoes
1 cups fresh arugula or other dark leafy greens
3 fresh basil leaves

Directions

1. In a large bowl, add the tuna, reserving the olive oil in a separate small bowl.
2. Break tuna into bite-size pieces with a large fork.
3. Add the beans and capers.
4. Into the bowl of olive oil, add the red wine vinegar. You should have 1 part vinegar to 2 parts oil – add more extra-virgin olive oil if necessary.
5. Season with salt and pepper.
6. Pour dressing on the tuna, bean and caper mixture and allow the flavors to infuse while slicing the vegetables.
7. Add the onion and tomatoes to tuna mixture and toss gently.
8. Place the arugula or greens on large decorative platter and top with tuna mixture.
9. Tear fresh basil leaves over the top and serve immediately.

Makes 2 servings

Calories: 279

Total fat: 1 gram water packed, 7 grams oil packed

Sodium: 626 milligrams

Carbohydrates: 34 grams

Fiber: 8 grams

Protein: 32 grams

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

Prepared by Rosemary Rodibaugh, Ph.D., professor – nutrition, University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture