



The 2005 dietary guidelines: What you need to know

Uncle Sam wants you—to be healthy, that is.

In an effort to help Americans live healthier lives and reduce their risk of chronic diseases, such as heart disease and diabetes, the federal government has released its new dietary guidelines.

The 2005 guidelines, which are reviewed every five years, place a stronger emphasis on reducing calories and increasing physical activity than ever before.

Among the new recommendations in the guidelines:

Weight management. To maintain a healthy weight, try to burn as many calories as you consume from food and beverages. Prevent gradual weight gain by making small cuts in food and beverage calories and increasing physical activity.

Physical activity. Regular exercise promotes health, mental well-being and a healthy body weight. To help reduce your risk of chronic disease, you need at least 30 minutes a day of moderate activity most days of the week. However, you need about 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity on most days of the week to help manage weight and to prevent gradual weight gain. And 60 to 90 minutes a day is recommended if you want to sustain weight loss.

A physical fitness program should include cardiovascular conditioning, stretching and resistance exercises.

According to the American Heart Association, you should talk to a doctor before starting an exercise program if you aren't used to exercising, are overweight, have a high risk of heart trouble or have a chronic health condition.

Healthy food choices. Eat a variety of foods from the basic food groups without getting too many calories. The guidelines offer the following tips for a healthy diet:

- Choose from all five vegetable subgroups—dark green, orange, legumes, starchy vegetables and other vegetables—several times a week.
- Choose whole grains for at least half of your overall grain intake.
- Consume three cups of fat-free or low-fat milk products a day.
- Keep fat intake between 20 percent and 35 percent of your total calories. Emphasize polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fatty acids, such as fish, nuts and vegetable oils, and limit saturated fat, cholesterol and trans fat.

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- When choosing meat, poultry, dry beans or dairy products, select varieties that are lean, low-fat or fat-free.
- Choose carbohydrates wisely. Select fiber-rich fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Limit foods and beverages that are high in added sugars, such as soft drinks and candy.
- Cut back on salt. Consume less than 2,300 milligrams—about 1 teaspoon—of salt per day.

Overall, the guidelines list 41 key recommendations—23 that apply to everyone and 18 for special populations including children, older adults and pregnant women.

For more information about the guidelines, go to www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines.

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