

How Can I Make Healthier Food Choices



The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans are the newest science-based advice from the United States Department of Agriculture. The Dietary Guidelines will help Americans make smart choices about food and physical activity, so they can have healthier lives. What do the experts say?

We should make smart choices from every food group. The best way to give your body the balanced nutrition it needs is by eating a variety of nutrient-packed foods every day. But, be sure to stay within your daily calorie needs.

A healthy eating plan is one that:

- Emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products.
- Includes lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts.
- Is low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars.
- Mixes up your choices within each food group.

The information below is based upon a 2,000 calorie diet. Different people have different calorie needs. Servings will vary based upon your calorie need. Turn the page to see how your diet compares to what the experts recommend.



Focus on fruits

Eat a variety of fruits—whether fresh, frozen, canned, or dried—rather than fruit juice for most of your fruit choices. For a 2,000-calorie diet, you will need 2 cups of fruit each day (for example, 1 small banana, 1 large orange, and 1/4 cup of dried apricots or peaches).

How many servings of fruit do I usually eat each day? _____



Vary your veggies

Eat more dark green veggies, such as broccoli, kale, and other dark leafy greens; orange veggies, such as carrots, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, and winter squash; and beans and peas, such as pinto beans, kidney beans, black beans, garbanzo beans, split peas, and lentils.

What vegetable am I willing to eat more of? _____



Get your calcium-rich foods

Get 3 cups of low-fat or fat-free milk—or an equivalent amount of low-fat yogurt and/or low-fat cheese (1½ ounces of cheese equals 1 cup of milk)—every day. For kids aged 2 to 8, its 2 cups of milk. If you

don't or can't consume milk, choose lactose-free milk products and/or calcium-fortified foods and beverages.

What type of milk do I drink: whole milk 2% 1% skim

Do I get enough calcium-rich foods? Yes No



Make half your grains whole

Eat at least 3 ounces of whole-grain cereals, breads, crackers, rice, or pasta every day, with the rest of the recommended grains coming from enriched or whole-grain products. One ounce is about 1 slice of bread, 1 cup of breakfast cereal, or 1/2 cup of cooked rice or pasta. Look to see that grains such as wheat, rice, oats, or corn are referred to as "whole" in the list of ingredients.

Do I check to see if the grains I am eating are “whole-grains”? Yes No



Go lean with protein

Choose lean meats and poultry. Bake it, broil it, or grill it. And vary your protein choices—with more fish, beans, peas, nuts, and seeds.

Do I trim the fat from chicken or meat before I cook or eat it? Yes No

Do I remove the skin from chicken before I eat it? Yes No



Know the limits on fats, salt, and sugars

Read the Nutrition Facts label on foods. Look for foods low in saturated fats and trans fats. Choose and prepare foods and beverages with little salt (sodium) and/or added sugars (caloric sweeteners).

Do I read the Nutrition Facts Label on Foods? _____ Yes _____ No

How many regular sodas do I drink per day? _____

Did you know that water has 0 calories? _____ Yes _____ No

On a scale of 1 (= very poor) to 10 = (excellent), rate how healthy your diet is? _____

List one thing that you are willing to do to improve your eating habits during the next week:

Source:

<http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/document/html/brochure.htm#b1>



Simple Things You Can Do to Maintain a Healthy Body Weight

People sometimes worry about gaining weight when they quit smoking. Below is a list of things you can do to prevent weight gain.

Check off all the things on the list below that you currently do:

- Choose water instead of soda
- Choose fresh fruit instead of fruit juice (which is frequently loaded with sugar)
- Choose skim or low-fat milk instead of whole milk
- Check serving size and calories. Look at the serving size on the nutrition fact label and know how many servings you are actually consuming. If you double the servings, you double the calories!
- Make your calories count. Look at the calories on the label and compare them with what nutrients you are also getting to decide whether the food is worth eating. When one serving of a single food item is over 400 calories per serving, it is high in calories
- Don't sugarcoat it. Since sugars are loaded with calories and few, if any nutrients, look for foods and beverages low in added sugars. Read the ingredient list and make sure added sugars are not one of the first few ingredients. Some names for added sugars include sucrose, glucose, high fructose corn syrup, corn syrup, and fructose
- Try not to eat high-calorie "junk food" (such as potato chips, cookies, candy, cake)

- Snack on crunchy vegetables and fruit (such as carrots, celery, broccoli, cucumbers, red and green pepper slices, apples, oranges, strawberries, blueberries, and watermelon)
- Stay away from fast food
- Use sugar free gum and mints

1. Write down one item from the list above that you are willing to try this week:
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Remember to find your balance between food and physical activity. Increasing your physical activity can also help you find your way to a healthier you!

