

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans are issued and updated every five years by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Their purpose is to encourage the consumption of foods and beverages that can assist in achieving a healthy weight, promote health, and prevent chronic disease, by addressing the current health and trends of the nation. They guide all federal nutrition programs and include actions for individuals, communities and populations. The revision process is led panel of nutrition experts, the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC), who reviews the old guidelines, evaluates current research and makes recommendations for the next round. Once DGAC recommendations are issued, the public has the opportunity to comment, and based on these, along with agency input, new guidelines are created. Recommendations for the 2015 Guidelines were released in March and the public comment period is now open until May 8, 2015. New guidelines are scheduled for release in fall 2015.

What are the recommendations?

Healthy dietary patterns that are low in saturated fat, added sugars and sodium, and those that are plant based, are recommended by the DGAC.

More specifically:

- Saturated fat not to exceed 10% of total daily calories
- Replace saturated fats with polyunsaturated fats
- Swap refined carbohydrates with whole grains
- Limit added sugars to 10% of total daily calories
- Make water the beverage of choice
- Engage in regular physical activity

Based upon its review of current scientific evidence, the committee also updated previously supported practices.

- A limit on dietary cholesterol is no longer recommended. There is no relationship between dietary cholesterol and cholesterol found in blood.
- Moderate coffee consumption (3 to 5 8-oz cups or 400 mg of caffeine per day) is considered safe and not correlated with increased long-term health risks.
- Current evidence suggests that aspartame is safe for healthy people at the present consumption levels.

What's New: Sustainability, food security and the culture of health

For the first time, the recommendations address sustainability, food security, and the culture of health. Sustainable diets are those in which a pattern of eating promotes health, well-being and provides food security for the present population while sustaining human and natural resources for future generations. This concept recognizes that environmental factors contribute to one's diet and also acknowledges the relationship between policy approaches and individual efforts. The mention of food security, when all people have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious foods to maintain a healthy and active life, indicates recognition of how access to food and the role it plays in food choices and thus chronic disease. In addition, the new recommendations seek to shift the paradigm around healthy lifestyle choices, calling for a culture of health in which healthy lifestyles choices are easy, accessible and normative. The inclusion of these issues is significant in acknowledging their interrelationship in promoting a healthier society.

What can I do?

Learn more about the recommendations and submit comments here:

www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2015/comments

Promote sustainability. Eat locally produced foods, eat more plant foods, and reduce food waste by using less attractive foods creatively and composting.

Help establish a culture of health in your community. Advocate for the creation of needed food and physical activity resources. For example, water accessibility in all public and private settings – parks, workplaces, schools, community centers, etc.

