

# Where do *your* favorite foods fit?



"I like pizza a lot.

What food group is it in?"



"If I try to follow the Pyramid,

does that mean no more fast food?"

"When it says

'6 to 11 servings' of grains, how many should I eat?"



Putting the Guidelines into Practice

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Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion

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Have you ever looked at the Food Guide Pyramid and asked questions like these? If so, this brochure is for you. It will show you how to follow the Pyramid and fit the foods you like to eat — such as pizza, fast foods, and mixed dishes — into a healthy way to eat. It will also help you personalize the Pyramid for your own needs.

## Why is following the Pyramid a good idea?

The Food Guide Pyramid (Figure 1) is a good starting point for your food choices. Choosing foods according to the Pyramid can help you get all the nutrients and other things, such as fiber, that you need for health. No single food or food group supplies all the nutrients in the amounts you need — so choose the recommended number of servings from each Pyramid food group.



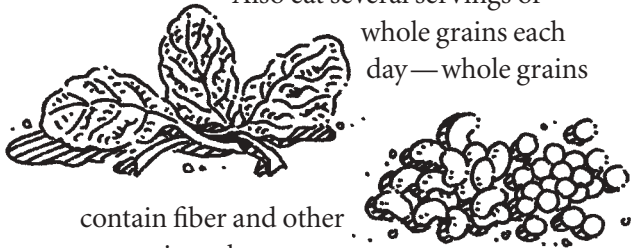
Following the Pyramid can also help you keep the amount of saturated fat and cholesterol you eat low, and keep total fat intake at a moderate level. You can do this by choosing mostly fat-free or low-fat items from the Milk group, and mostly lean or low-fat items from the Meat and Beans group.

### Using the Pyramid as a guide

Like the Pyramid, your food choices should be built on a base of plant foods — grains, fruits, and vegetables. Start with foods from these three groups as the foundation of your diet.

Choose a variety of different foods — especially in the Grains, Fruit, and Vegetable groups. Include dark-green leafy vegetables and dry beans or peas several times a week — they are rich in many vitamins and minerals.

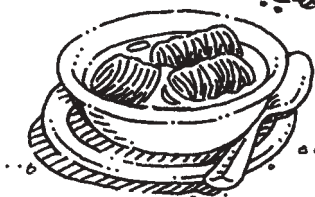
Also eat several servings of whole grains each day — whole grains



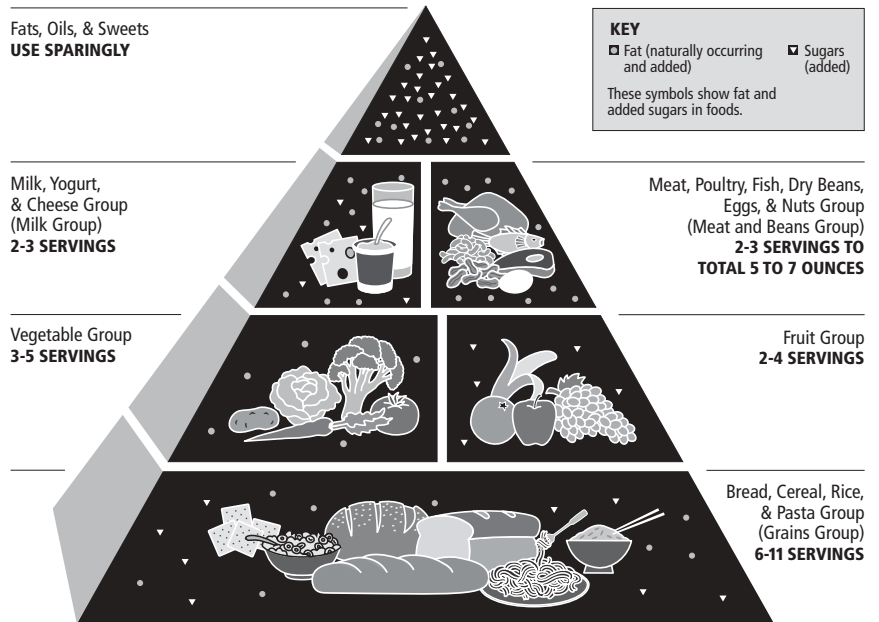
contain fiber and other protective substances.

Each food group contains many choices. For example, you may start some days with cereal — from the Grains group. Other days you may choose toast. Or, you may prefer tortillas or rice. All of these are good ways to get some grain foods into your morning. You may have your own personal choice: Popcorn for breakfast, anyone?

In the Milk group, you may prefer yogurt, or lactose-free or lactose-reduced milk products. Also, soy-based beverages with added calcium are an option if you want a non-dairy source of calcium. There are many choices in each food group. *However, if you avoid all foods from any of the food groups, ask a health care professional to help you make choices that have all the nutrients you need.*



## Figure 1. Food Guide Pyramid

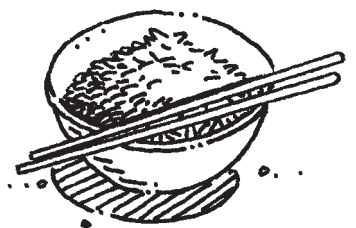


### How much do you need from each group?

The Pyramid gives a range of servings for each group. The number of servings you need depends on your calorie and nutrient needs. These are based on your age, sex, and level of physical activity.

Check Box 1 to see how many servings you need from each food group. For example, if you are an inactive woman, you should choose the number of daily servings from each food group in the Pyramid on the left — 6 servings from the Grains group, 3 from the Vegetable group, and so forth. If you become physically active, your food needs will increase and you can choose more servings from each group.

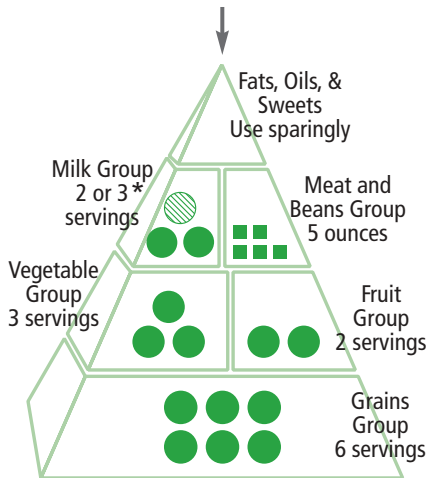
Other family members may have different calorie and nutrient needs. For example, a man may need more servings from each group — 9 servings of grains, 4 of vegetables, etc. A teenage boy may need even more — perhaps 11 servings of grains, 5 of vegetables, etc. Box 1 can help you find the recommendations for each family member.



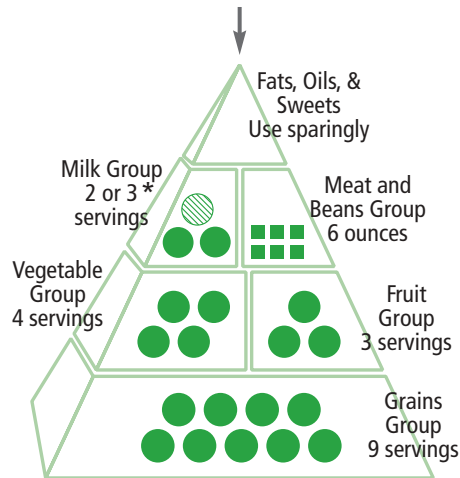
## Box 1. How many Pyramid servings do YOU need?

Find the number of servings that are right for you:

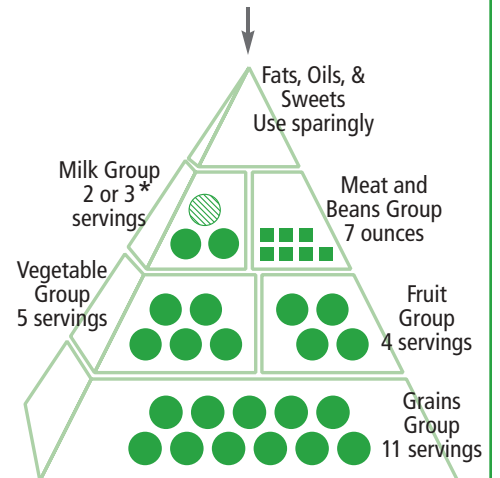
**Children 2 to 6, most women,  
some older adults  
(about 1,600 calories)**



**Older children, teen girls,  
active women, most men  
(about 2,200 calories)**



**Teen boys,  
active men  
(about 2,800 calories)**



● = 1 serving    ■ = 1 ounce

\*Older children and teens 9 to 18 and adults over 50 need 3 servings from the Milk group. Others need 2 servings daily.

### How do your choices stack up?

Check the number of servings you usually eat in each group to see how your choices match Pyramid recommendations. Remember—your portion may be more than one serving.

## Box 2. What counts as a Pyramid serving?

### Grains Group

- 1 slice of bread
- About 1 cup of ready-to-eat cereal flakes
- ½ cup of cooked cereal, rice, or pasta

### Vegetable Group

- 1 cup of raw leafy vegetables
- ½ cup of other vegetables—cooked or raw\*
- ¾ cup of vegetable juice

### Fruit Group

- 1 medium apple, banana, orange, pear
- ½ cup of chopped, cooked, or canned fruit
- ¾ cup of fruit juice

### Milk Group

- 1 cup of milk or yogurt
- 1½ ounces of natural cheese (such as Cheddar)
- 2 ounces of processed cheese (such as American)

### Meat and Beans Group

The Pyramid recommends 2 to 3 servings for a total of 5 to 7 ounces. The following all count as 1 ounce equivalent:

- 1 ounce of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish
- ½ cup of cooked, dry beans\*
- ½ cup of tofu or 2½-ounce soyburger
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons of peanut butter
- ⅓ cup of nuts

\*Dry beans, peas, and lentils can be counted as servings in either the Meat and Beans group or the Vegetable group. As a vegetable, ½ cup of cooked, dry beans counts as 1 serving. As a meat substitute, ½ cup of cooked, dry beans counts as 1 ounce of meat.

### Box 3. Mixed dishes—How do they contribute to Pyramid food groups?

NOTE: The values listed are estimates based on how these foods are often prepared.

The amounts in an item you eat may be more or less than these examples.

Food and sample portion	Pyramid servings in this portion					Fat, % Daily Value*
	Grains Group	Vegetable Group	Fruit Group	Milk Group	Meat and Beans Group (oz. equiv.)	
Cheese pizza (2 medium slices)	2½	½	0	½	0	19
Lasagna (1 piece 3½" by 4")	1½	½	0	½	1	23
Macaroni and cheese (1 cup, made from packaged mix)	2	0	0	½	0	30
Tuna noodle casserole (1 cup)	1½	0	0	½	2	29
Spinach quiche (1 piece)	1	½	0	½	½	40
Chicken pot pie (8 oz. pie)	2½	½	0	0	1½	43
Beef taco (2)	2½	½	0	¼	2	40
Bean and cheese burrito (1)	2½	¼	0	1	1	44
Egg roll (1)	½	¼	0	0	½	10
Chicken fried rice (1 cup)	1½	½	0	0	1	19
Rice and beans (1 cup)	1½	0	0	0	1½	17
Stuffed peppers with rice and meat (½ pepper)	½	1	0	0	1	19
Beef stir-fry (1 cup)	0	1½	0	0	1½	16
Clam chowder—New England (1 cup)	½	¼	0	½	3½	8
Cream of tomato soup (1 cup)	½	1	0	½	0	7
Double cheeseburger (with mayo)	3½	½	0	½	2½	54
Italian sub (6" sub)	2	½	0	½	2½	58
Peanut butter & jelly sandwich (1)	2	0	0	0	1	22
Tuna salad sandwich (1)	2	½	0	0	2	11
Chef salad (3 cups, no dressing)	0	3	0	0	3	5
Pasta salad with vegetables (1 cup)	1½	1	0	0	0	24
Apple pie (1 slice)	2	0	½	0	0	25
Pumpkin pie (1 slice)	1½	¼	0	¼	¼	22

**What other mixed dishes do you enjoy?**

List them below and "guess-timate" their servings from the food groups:

Food and portion	Grains servings	Vegetable servings	Fruit servings	Milk servings	Meat and beans servings
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

\*The % Daily Value (%DV) shows how much of the recommended daily limit for fat is in these sample portions of food. %DVs are based on recommendations for a 2,000-calorie diet. The %DV in this table can be compared to the %DV listed on Nutrition Facts labels on food packages.

Note that in the Milk group, the number of servings you need depends on your age. Older children and teenagers (ages 9 to 18) and adults over 50 need 3 servings daily. Others need 2 servings daily. During pregnancy and breastfeeding, the recommended number of Milk group servings is the same as for nonpregnant women.

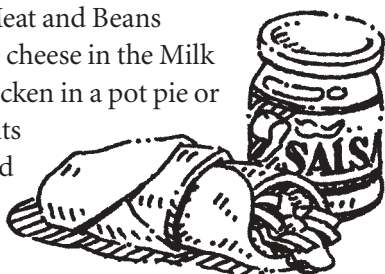
### How much is a serving?

Pyramid **servicing sizes** for some common foods in each group are listed in Box 2. Some of the serving sizes are smaller than the **portions** you might usually eat. Some are also smaller than the serving listed on the Nutrition Facts label. For example, you may eat 2 slices of bread in a sandwich, which equals 2 Pyramid servings. One cup of cooked pasta or rice also equals 2 Pyramid servings. So it's easy to meet the recommended number of servings. For more information about portion sizes and Pyramid serving sizes, see the brochure "*How much are you eating?*"

NOTE: Young children 2 to 3 years old need the same number of servings from each food group as others but, **except for milk**, smaller serving sizes. Offer a portion about  $\frac{2}{3}$  the size listed in Box 2.

### Where do pizza and other mixed dishes fit in the Pyramid?

Many popular foods don't fit neatly into one Pyramid group. For example, cheese pizza counts in several Pyramid groups: Grains (the crust), Milk (the cheese), and Vegetable (the tomato sauce). You can choose the mixed dishes you like to eat — from fast food places, ethnic restaurants, or "Mom's" kitchen — and still eat the Pyramid way. In a bean burrito the tortilla counts in the Grains group, the beans in the Meat and Beans group, and the cheese in the Milk group. The chicken in a pot pie or fried rice counts in the Meat and



### Portions and servings— What's the difference?

A **portion** is the amount of food you choose to eat. There is no standard portion size.

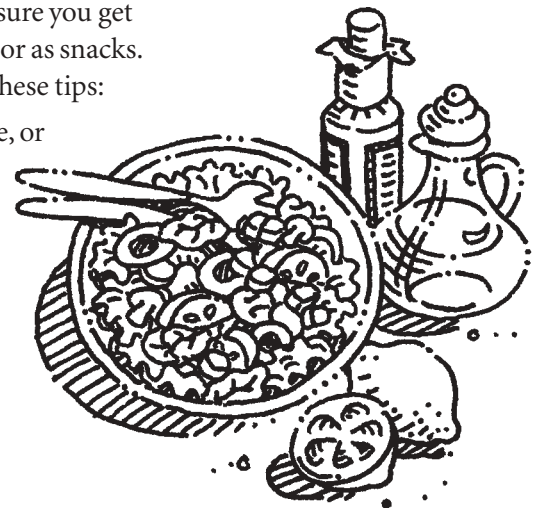
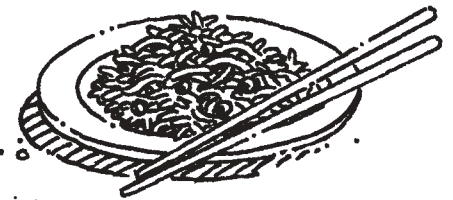
A **servicing** is a standard amount of food, like 1 cup or 1 ounce. It is used to help give advice about how much to eat, or to identify how many calories and nutrients are in a food.

Beans group, and the spinach in a quiche or a chef's salad counts in the Vegetable group. Check Box 3 to see how some of the foods you eat fit into the Pyramid. Some mixed dishes also contain a lot of fat. Box 3 also shows about how much fat is in these foods.

### Fast food and the Pyramid

Does eating the Pyramid way mean "no more fast food"? No...but you *do* need to pay attention to your choices. Many menu items may be high in calories and fat, especially saturated fat. Fast food menus also tend to have limited variety, and especially limited choices of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. Make sure you get enough of these at other meals or as snacks. If you eat fast foods often, try these tips:

- Extras such as sauces, cheese, or bacon on burgers can add a lot of calories and fat. Try your burger with lettuce, tomato, and onion instead.
- Order small or medium sizes — *giant-size portions aren't a bargain if they're more calories and fat than you need.*
- Try a green salad instead of fries.
- Choose fat-free or low-fat milk, fruit juice, or water as a beverage instead of a soft drink.



## The Tip of the Pyramid

The small “tip” of the Pyramid represents fats, oils, and sweets. These are foods such as salad dressings, cream, butter, margarine, sugars, soft drinks, fruitades, and candies. They provide calories but few nutrients. So, they may contribute to weight gain or lower your intake of more nutritious foods and beverages. It’s okay to have these foods and drinks occasionally, but use them sparingly.



## The Bottom Line

- Use the Food Guide Pyramid to help you make food choices.
- Build your meals on a variety of plant foods—grains (especially whole grains), fruits, and vegetables.
- Also choose foods from the Milk group and Meat and Beans group each day. Make most of your choices from these groups low in fat.
- Choose the amounts to eat from each group based on your needs (see Box 1).
- It’s fine to enjoy fats and sweets occasionally.



## Dietary Guidelines for Americans

The Dietary Guidelines offer sound advice that will help to promote your health and reduce your risk for chronic diseases such as heart disease, certain cancers, diabetes, stroke, and osteoporosis.

The 10 Guidelines are grouped into the ABC’s of nutrition:



### A: Aim for fitness

- Aim for a healthy weight.
- Be physically active each day.

### B: Build a healthy base

- Let the Pyramid guide your food choices.
- Choose a variety of grains daily, especially whole grains.
- Choose a variety of fruits and vegetables daily.
- Keep food safe to eat.

### C: Choose sensibly

- Choose a diet that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol and moderate in total fat.
- Choose beverages and foods to moderate your intake of sugars.
- Choose and prepare foods with less salt.
- If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation.

To order Dietary Guidelines publications, call 888-878-3256. Ask for the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (40-page bulletin, \$4.75 per copy) or *Using the Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (5-panel brochure, \$.50 per copy).

You can also find out more about the guidelines and download these publications by visiting USDA’s Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion website at [www.cnpp.usda.gov](http://www.cnpp.usda.gov).



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