



Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005



Frequently Asked Questions

An Overview of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005*

Q: What are the *Dietary Guidelines*?

The *Dietary Guidelines* are the cornerstone of federal nutrition policy and education. They are based on what experts have determined to be the best scientific knowledge about diet, physical activity and other issues related to what we should eat and how much physical activity we need.

The *Dietary Guidelines* answer the questions, "What should Americans eat, how should we prepare our food to keep it safe and wholesome, and how should we be active to be healthy?" The *Dietary Guidelines* are designed to help Americans choose diets that will meet nutrient requirements, promote health, support active lives and reduce risks of chronic disease.

Q: Why are the *Dietary Guidelines* important?

The *Dietary Guidelines* will help Americans make smart choices about food and physical activity, so they can have healthier lives.

The *Dietary Guidelines* allow government to speak with one voice to the public when presenting advice about proper dietary habits for healthy Americans ages two years of age and older and how to make food and physical activity choices to promote health and prevent chronic disease. All federal dietary guidance for the public is required to be consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines*.

The *Dietary Guidelines* provide the foundation for food and nutrition policy and the government's position for debating standards and international reports.

The *Dietary Guidelines* influence the direction of government nutrition programs, including research, labeling, and nutrition promotion. This includes the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Guidance System – what's now known as the Food Guide Pyramid – which is being updated to reflect the new *Dietary Guidelines*.

Federal nutrition assistance programs such as USDA's School Meal and Food Stamp Programs, and the WIC Program (Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children) use the principles in the *Dietary Guidelines* as the scientific underpinning for designing benefit structures and nutrition education programs.

Q: Who approves the *Dietary Guidelines*?

The Secretaries of Health and Human Services and of Agriculture jointly approve.

Q: How were the *Dietary Guidelines* developed?

The 2005 *Dietary Guidelines* were prepared in a three-stage process. In the first, a 13-member Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee drew up a report based on the best available science. In the second, government scientists and officials reviewed the advisory committee's report and based on the report and agency and public comments, developed the *Dietary Guidelines*. In the third stage, experts worked to translate the *Dietary Guidelines* into meaningful messages for the public and educators.

Q: What value did the three-stage process provide?

The three-stage process was created to ensure that the best available science, including medical science, was the foundation of the 2005 *Dietary Guidelines*. It allowed the advisory committee members to use their expertise and base their recommendations solely on the evidence-based review of the literature. The advisory committee was not responsible for developing policy or consumer-friendly messages.

Q: What criteria were used in choosing members of the scientific advisory committee?

The members were nominated by the public and selected for their expertise. In addition to general knowledge of the field of human nutrition and chronic disease, members had specialized knowledge in subject areas such as overweight and obesity, physical activity, cardiovascular disease, cancer, pediatrics, epidemiology, general medicine, public health, nutrition education, and food safety and technology.

Q: What was the public's role in developing the *Dietary Guidelines*?

Members of the public, including lay people, academic researchers, consumer and trade groups, and businesses, submitted comments for the committee and the agencies to consider. All comments were considered.

Q: Where do the *Dietary Guidelines* fit in the HealthierUS Initiative?

The *Dietary Guidelines* support two of the four pillars of the President's HealthierUS Initiative to help Americans have longer, better and healthier lives. Those pillars are: Eat a Nutritious Diet, and Be Physically Active Every Day.

Q: How is the government helping consumers understand advice from the *Dietary Guidelines*?

The consumer focus is in two phases: the *Guidelines* lay the groundwork, and consumer-oriented material shows how to live by the *Guidelines*' principles. A consumer brochure will be available to accompany the *Dietary Guidelines*. The brochure translates the *Guidelines* into actionable, easy to understand language

for consumers. An initiative to make the *Guidelines* consumer-friendly is USDA's new Food Guidance System, which replaces USDA's 12-year-old Food Guide Pyramid. USDA and HHS will develop additional materials to help consumers learn about the *Dietary Guidelines* and make the recommended healthier choices.

Q: What is the relationship between the *Dietary Guidelines* and USDA's Food Guidance System?

The *Dietary Guidelines* are a foundation of the Food Guidance System, which presents the science in a consumer-friendly form that helps people to be healthier by applying the science to their own lives. The Food Guidance System updates the Food Guide Pyramid, which was released in 1992. This new educational tool incorporates the updated 2005 *Dietary Guidelines* and makes recommendations on what and how much to eat.

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