



EMPLOYEE HEALTH INITIATIVE: NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH

DURING NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH AND BEYOND, THE KEY TO A HEALTHFUL DIET IS IMPROVING YOUR NUTRITION FROM THE GROUND UP

March is National Nutrition Month®, a time for reinforcing healthy and nutritious eating habits. **The 2010 theme is “Nutrition from the Ground Up” — a return to basics.**

“Nutrition from the Ground Up” means choosing more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and beans to create a healthful eating plan. Current guidelines call for eating at least three whole grain servings per day where a serving is one slice of bread or ½ cup of pasta. For fruits, guideline varies with age and activity. An average amount is 2 cups per day or 2 pieces of fruit. When it comes to vegetables 2½ cups of vegetables per day is the minimum for most adults. If your whole grain, fruit and vegetable consumption is lagging behind, use this month to build your “Nutrition from the Ground Up.” Visit the [National Nutrition Month](#) page for more information.



It’s common knowledge that a healthful diet is an important part of a healthful lifestyle, but most people have trouble figuring out what to do when planning a complete diet overhaul. During National Nutrition Month®, the American Dietetic Association reminds everyone that an easy way to focus on eating better is to start with the basics: build your nutritional health from the ground up. “By starting slowly and giving yourself a good foundation, you can work towards a healthier life,” says registered dietitian and ADA spokesperson Toby Smithson. “Change doesn’t have to be dramatic to make a difference.”

Ways to improve your nutrition from the ground up:

- Focus on fruits and veggies:** Take a good look at your current diet and you’ll probably realize you’re not eating enough fruits or vegetables. Add a serving each day to one meal and increase it every few weeks. Adding more of these foods into your diet is important whether you buy frozen, fresh, or organic.
- Look locally:** From farmer’s markets to community-supported agriculture, you have many options to find new, fresh foods in your area. This can be a great way to eat well and support your community at the same time.
- Make calories count:** Too often, people think of foods as good or bad and that only those on the ‘good foods’ list are okay to eat. When you’re choosing between options, focus instead on the one with more of the vitamins and nutrients that you need. Sometimes, foods with fewer calories aren’t always the healthiest options. To figure out how many calories you need to achieve a healthy weight, visit www.mypyramid.gov.
- Test your taste buds:** A healthy eating plan emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or fat-free dairy and includes lean meats, poultry, fish, beans and nuts. Those are the basics, but within this wide range there are always opportunities to try new things and find new favorites. Expand your horizons. Try a fish you’ve never eaten before or find a new vegetable recipe. By testing yourself, you might find new healthy favorites to add to your regular grocery list.
- Trick yourself with treats:** A healthful diet doesn’t mean deprivation. If you have a sweet tooth, have fruit and yogurt for dessert. If you want a snack in the afternoon, have some trail mix or nuts. There is no reason to go hungry just because you’re making healthful changes.

The new government food pyramid is called “[My Pyramid](#)” because it has an interactive Web site that allows you to customize it based on your age and level of activity. My Pyramid is an improvement over the old USDA pyramid because it includes exercise as an important factor in the equation and it offers 12 different eating plans. Still, it fails to differentiate between different types of carbohydrates, fats, and proteins. **It used to be so simple.** Fats were the villains, and carbohydrates were the heroes. More protein was good. However, ongoing research on macronutrients has shifted the emphasis away from white carbohydrates onto whole grains, good fats, and healthy sources of protein.

Macronutrients are the three basic categories of nutrients that humans need. They provide the body with energy, and they enable the body to carry out many normal biological functions. A healthy diet consists of a mix of foods from each of these categories, although not in equal amounts. **If you want to know the amount of each food group you need daily, enter your information at the [MyPyramid](#) link to find out and receive a customized food guide.**

[MyPyramid Tracker](#) is an online dietary and physical activity assessment tool that provides information on your diet quality, physical activity status, related nutrition messages, and links to nutrient and physical activity information. The Food Calories/Energy Balance feature automatically calculates your energy balance by subtracting the energy you expend from physical activity from your food calories/energy intake. Use of this tool helps you better understand your energy balance status and enhances the link between good nutrition and regular physical activity. Keep track of your energy balance history and view it up to one year. MyPyramid Tracker translates the principles of the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and other nutrition standards developed by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services. Click [here](#) for a **NEW** tutorial on MyPyramid Tracker.





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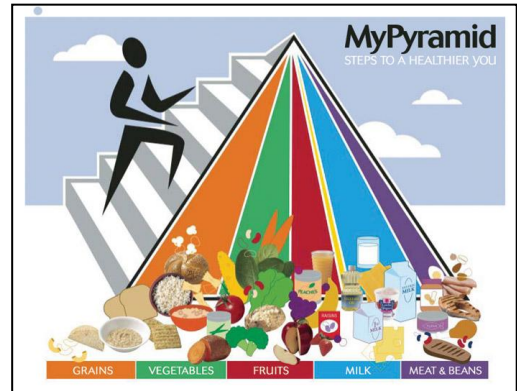


MyFoodpedia Is a link for Quick access to food info – food groups, calories & comparisons.

Every day, we are faced with an abundance of food and nutrition information and choices. Whether it's maintaining a healthful diet while eating at your favorite restaurant, navigating the shelves at your local grocery store or fueling up for an upcoming 5K run, making the right food and nutrition choices is a necessary part of everyone's daily life.

Click the link below to learn more about food and nutrition as well as Eating Right for health and life:

- [Eating Out](#)
- [Savvy Food Shopping](#)
- [Vegetarian Lifestyle](#)
- [Healthful Vegetarian Meal Ideas](#)
- [Food Sources of Important Nutrients](#)
- [Vegetarian Glossary of Terms](#)
- [Vitamins and Nutrients](#)
- [Nutrition Facts Panel](#)
- [Sports Nutrition](#)
- [Dietary Supplements](#)
- [Eat Right Nutrition Tips](#)



The Basics of the Nutrition Facts Panel

The following is a quick guide to reading the Nutrition Facts Panel.

Start with the Serving Size

- Look here for both the serving size (the amount for one serving) and the number of servings in the package.
- Compare your *portion* size (the amount you actually eat) to the *serving* size listed on the panel. If the serving size is one cup and you eat two cups, you are getting twice the calories, fat and other nutrients listed on the label.

Check Out the Total Calories and Fat

- Find out how many calories are in a single serving and the number of calories from fat. It's smart to cut back on calories and fat if you are watching your weight.

Let the Percent Daily Values Be Your Guide

Use percent Daily Values (DV) to help evaluate how a particular food fits into your daily meal plan:

- Daily Values are average levels of nutrients for a person eating 2,000 calories a day. A food item with a 5 percent DV of fat provides 5 percent of the total fat that a person consuming 2,000 calories a day should eat.
- Percent DV are for the entire day, not just one meal or snack
- You may need more or less than 2,000 calories per day. For some nutrients you may need more or less than 100 percent DV.

The High and Low of Daily Values

- 5 percent or less is low. Aim low in total fat, saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol and sodium.
- 20 percent or more is high. Aim high in vitamins, minerals and fiber.

Limit Fat, Cholesterol and Sodium

Eating less fat, cholesterol and sodium may help reduce your risk for heart disease, high blood pressure and cancer.

- Total fat includes saturated, polyunsaturated, monounsaturated and trans fat. Limit to 100 percent DV or less per day.
- Saturated fat and trans fat are linked to an increased risk of heart disease.
- High levels of sodium can add up to high blood pressure.
- Remember to aim for low percentage DV of these nutrients.

Get Enough Vitamins, Minerals and Fiber

- Eat more fiber, vitamins A and C, calcium and iron to maintain good health and help reduce your risk of certain health problems such as osteoporosis and anemia.
- Choose more fruits and vegetables to get more of these nutrients.
- Remember to aim high for percentage DV of these nutrients.

| Nutrition Facts | |
|--|---------------------------|
| Serving Size 1 cup (228g) | |
| Servings Per Container 2 | |
| Amount Per Serving | |
| Calories 250 | Calories from Fat 110 |
| % Daily Value* | |
| Total Fat 12g | 18% |
| Saturated Fat 3g | 15% |
| Trans Fat 1.5g | |
| Cholesterol 30mg | 10% |
| Sodium 470mg | 20% |
| Total Carbohydrate 31g | 10% |
| Dietary Fiber 0g | 0% |
| Sugars 5g | |
| Protein 5g | |
| Vitamin A | 4% |
| Vitamin C | 2% |
| Calcium | 20% |
| Iron | 4% |
| *Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs: | |
| | Calories: 2,000 2,500 |
| Total Fat | Less than 65g 80g |
| Sat Fat | Less than 20g 25g |
| Cholesterol | Less than 300mg 300mg |
| Sodium | Less than 2,400mg 2,400mg |
| Total Carbohydrate | 300g 375g |
| Dietary Fiber | 25g 30g |



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Additional Nutrients

You know about fat and calories, but it is important to also know the additional nutrients on the Nutrition Facts Panel.

- **Protein**
Most Americans eat more protein than they need, so a percentage Daily Value is not required on the label. Eat moderate portions of lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, low-fat milk, yogurt and cheese, plus beans, peanut butter and nuts.
- **Carbohydrates**
There are three types of carbohydrates: sugars, starches and fiber. Eat whole-grain breads, cereals, rice and pasta plus fruits and vegetables.
- **Sugars**
Simple carbohydrates or sugars occur naturally in foods such as fruit juice (fructose) or come from refined sources such as table sugar (sucrose) or corn syrup.

Check the Ingredient List

Foods with more than one ingredient must have an ingredient list on the label. Ingredients are listed in descending order by weight. Those in the largest amounts are listed first. This information is particularly helpful to individuals with food sensitivities, those who wish to avoid pork or shellfish or limit added sugars or people who prefer vegetarian eating.

FRESH, CANNED OR FROZEN? PRODUCE CAN BE ENJOYED ANYTIME

When it comes to buying fruits and vegetables, many factors play a role in which types consumers choose, including nutritional value. Are there significant differences among fresh, frozen, canned or dried? The American Dietetic Association says no matter what form they take, fruits and vegetables are good-for-you foods that can be enjoyed at any time.

"While fresh fruits and vegetables are recommended, this does not mean they are the only healthy option," says registered dietitian and ADA Spokesperson Ximena Jimenez. "Research shows frozen and canned foods can be as nutritious as fresh. In fact, since some nutrients in canned produce are more easily absorbed in the body, these can sometimes be better nutrition choices than fresh."

Fresh, canned or frozen, Jimenez offers ideas for getting the most from your fruits and vegetables, no matter what form your produce takes:

For canned fruits and vegetables:

- **Get the juice.** For canned fruit, look for descriptions on the label like 'packed in its own juices,' 'packed in fruit juice,' 'unsweetened' or 'in syrup.' Fruits packed in juices contain less added sugar and fewer calories than fruits packed in syrup.
- **Pinch the salt.** If you are cutting back on sodium, look for descriptions such as "no salt added" and "reduced sodium" on the labels of canned vegetables.
- **Savor the flavor.** Use canned fruits and vegetables immediately after opening for maximum flavor and nutritional value. Handle leftovers as you would any perishable food. Remove them from the can, place in an airtight container and store in the refrigerator or freezer to retain taste and nutritional quality.

For frozen varieties:

- **Forgo the fat.** When buying frozen vegetables, control fat and calories by choosing plain vegetables or those made with low-fat sauces.
- **Check the label.** Frozen fruits come in both sweetened and unsweetened varieties, so make sure to check the label and choose unsweetened if you are limiting your sugar intake. Frozen fruit bars also make a nutritious snack, but read the label to learn if they're made with real fruit juice.

Dried fruits:

- **Pick the plain.** Dried fruit contains lots of fiber, vitamins A and C, potassium and folate, but also more calories per serving than fresh fruit because of natural and sometimes added sugar. Also, some dried fruits are preserved with sulfite, which can trigger allergic reactions. So read the package label to make sure your choice is in line with your healthful and safe eating plan.
- **Have a handful.** Dried fruit is a great portable snack. It can also jazz up salads, pancakes, bread recipes or a bowl of cereal.

For more tips on building your healthful diet from the ground up, during National Nutrition Month and all year long, visit www.eatright.org and click on "For the Public."

The information contained in this article is from: the American Dietetic Association and the United States Department of Agriculture.

