



NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH

THE BEST PATH TO FITNESS AND HEALTH IS TO EAT HEALTHY FOR LIFE

Through National Nutrition Month, the American Dietetic Association promotes healthful eating by providing practical nutrition guidance and focusing attention on making informed food choices and developing sound physical activity habits.

Forget your old ideas about healthy eating. There is a different nutrition story now. This story, based on evidence from rigorous scientific studies, is not about denying yourself the foods you love or following a rigid diet plan. It's about choosing foods you like based on the latest nutritional science and your own particular health concerns.

Research done since the 1990s shows beyond all doubt that you can lower your risk for the most serious diseases of our time by following a healthy diet. Healthy eating, based on this science, can prevent possibly 80% of cases of heart disease and diabetes and help ward off hypertension, osteoporosis, and some forms of cancer.

We have known for many years that certain foods are healthy — especially fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Now we know why they are healthy. For the first time, scientists can point to specific nutrients and other substances in foods that fight disease, including vitamins, minerals, and plant chemicals. However, while “eat your vegetables” is a well-known refrain, it may surprise you to know that you should eat fat, too. That is right: Some of the healthiest foods are fats. Maligned for many years as the bane of a healthy diet, some types of fat — mainly those from most plants and fish — have been shown to keep arteries clear, hearts beating normally, and to inhibit some forms of cancer.

This mounting evidence triggered a wholesale revision of the U.S. government’s nutritional recommendations in 2002 with the introduction of the new dietary reference intakes for protein, carbohydrates, fats, and fiber. These guidelines shift the emphasis away from low-fat diets and instead urge people to eat unsaturated fats, vegetables, fruits, and whole grains and to exercise daily. In 2003, the World Health Organization concurred and urged people to reduce salt consumption. In addition, most recently, in 2005, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reworked its Dietary Guidelines for Americans to emphasize calorie control and exercise. The same year, the USDA revised its famous food pyramid to reflect the new emphasis on whole grains, healthy fats, and exercise.



Healthy Eating Pyramid

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.



**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE
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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.**

Simple Switches for Healthy Eating	
Instead of:	Try:
Butter, solid margarine, or lard	Olive oil, canola oil, or margarine without trans fats
Cream-based sauces	Tomato-based sauces
Corn flakes, Special K, or refined-grain cereal	Cheerios, Wheaties, or other whole-grain cereal
White pasta	Whole-wheat pasta
Smoked, cured, salted, or canned meat or fish	Fresh or frozen meat or fish, without added salt
Sugared soda or juice	Water or juice mixed with sparkling water
Fries or onion rings	Roasted vegetables
Dips high in saturated fats	Hummus, peanut butter, or seasoned low-fat yogurt
Cookies	Graham crackers or oatmeal cookies
Fried foods	Grilled, broiled, steamed, poached, or roasted foods
Skipping breakfast	Eating oatmeal, whole-grain breads, or bran cereals

[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. Use of this tool helps you better understand your energy balance status and enhances the link between good nutrition and regular physical activity. **You can also keep track of your energy balance history and view it up to one year.**

Everyone is encouraged to keep in mind these National Nutrition Month key messages to enjoy a healthy lifestyle:

- **Develop an eating plan for lifelong health.** Too often, people adopt the latest food fad rather than focusing on overall health. Get back to basics and use the new *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and *MyPyramid* as your guide to healthy eating.
- **Choose foods sensibly by looking at the big picture.** A single food or meal will not make or break a healthful diet. When consumed in moderation in appropriate portions, all foods can fit into a healthful diet.
- **Learn how to spot a food fad.** Unreasonable or exaggerated claims that eating (or not eating) specific foods, nutrient supplements or combinations of foods may cure disease or offer quick weight loss are key features of fad diets.
- **Find your balance between food and physical activity.** Regular physical activity is important for your overall health and fitness plus it helps control body weight, promotes a feeling of well-being, and reduces the risk of chronic diseases.

The information contained in this article is from: Healthy Eating: A guide to the new nutrition, a Special Health Report from Harvard Medical School, the American Dietetic Association and the United States Department of Agriculture.