

MyPyramid: Steps to a Healthier You USDA's Food Guidance System

The USDA's food guidance system (MyPyramid) is based on the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. MyPyramid was developed to carry the messages of the dietary guidelines and to make Americans aware of the important health benefits of small and simple improvements in nutrition, physical activity and lifestyle behavior. It is a personalized approach designed to remind us to make healthy food choices and be active every day.



Understanding MyPyramid

Personalization

- Each triangle represents a food group.
- How much of each food group you should eat depends on your age, gender and activity level...basically how many calories you need for a healthy weight.
- There are 12 calorie levels for males and females ages 2-76+, with activity levels of sedentary, moderately active and active.
- See the Estimated Daily Calorie Needs section for an estimate of your calorie needs and the Food Intake Pattern section for the amount of food from each food group that is right for you.

Physical Activity

- The person climbing the steps on the MyPyramid represents you being active.
- This is the first time the USDA Food Guidance includes recommendations for physical activity.

Moderation

- Food group triangles are wider at bottom.
- Wider base represents foods with little or no solid fat or added sugar.
- Narrow top represents foods within each food group that contain more solid fat and added sugar. The more active you are, the more of these foods you can have.



For example: At the base would be plain steamed broccoli. Moving up might be broccoli with lemon juice and olive oil, then broccoli with cheese sauce, and finally at the top, deep fried, breaded broccoli with cheese sauce.

Proportionality

- Shown by the different widths of the food group bands.
- The widths suggest how much food a person should choose from each group.
- This is a general guide. How much you need depends on your calorie needs.

Variety

- MyPyramid includes six color bands representing the five food groups and oils.
- This shows that foods from all groups are needed each day for good health.

Gradual Improvement

- “Steps to a Healthier You” suggests that people can benefit from taking small steps to improve their diet and lifestyle each day.



MyPyramid Key Recommendations

Grains

- Eat at least 3 ounces of whole-grain cereals, breads, crackers, rice or pasta every day.
- One ounce is 1 slice of bread, 1 cup of breakfast cereal or 1/2 cup of cooked rice, cereal or pasta.

Vegetables

- Eat more dark-green veggies like broccoli, spinach and other dark leafy greens.
- Eat more orange vegetables like carrots and sweet potatoes.
- Eat more dry beans and peas like pinto beans, kidney beans and lentils.
- In general, 1 cup of raw or cooked vegetables or vegetable juice, or 2 cups of raw leafy greens can be considered as 1 cup from the vegetable group.



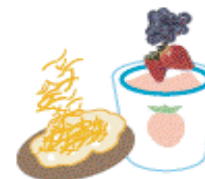
Fruits

- Eat a variety of fruit.
- Choose fresh, frozen, canned or dried fruit.

- Go easy on the fruit juices.
- In general, 1 cup of fruit or 100% fruit juice or 1/2 cup of dried fruit can be considered as 1 cup from the fruit group.

Milk

- Go low-fat or fat-free when you choose milk, yogurt and other milk products.
- If you don't or can't drink milk, choose lactose-free products or other calcium sources like fortified foods and beverages.
- In general, 1 cup of milk or yogurt, 1 1/2 ounces of natural cheese or 2 ounces of processed cheese can be considered as 1 cup from the milk group.



Meat and Beans

- Choose low-fat or lean meats and poultry.
- Bake it, broil it or grill it.
- Vary your protein routine – choose more fish, beans, peas, nuts and seeds.
- In general, 1 ounce of meat, poultry or fish, 1/2 cup cooked dry beans, 1 egg, 1 tablespoon of peanut butter or 1/2 ounce of nuts or seeds can be considered as 1 ounce equivalent from the meat and beans group.



Oils

- Most of the fats you eat should be polyunsaturated (PUFA) or monounsaturated (MUFA) fats.
 - Oils are the major source of MUFAs and PUFAs in the diet.
 - PUFAs contain some fatty acids that are necessary for health—called “essential fatty acids.”
- The MUFAs and PUFAs found in fish, nuts, and vegetable oils do not raise LDL (“bad”) cholesterol levels in the blood.
- In addition to the essential fatty acids they contain, oils are the major source of vitamin E in typical American diets.



Know the limits on fats, sugars and salt (sodium).

- ✓ Make most of your fat sources from fish, nuts and vegetable oils.
- ✓ Limit solid fats like butter, margarine, shortening and lard – and foods that contain these.
- ✓ Check the Nutrition Facts label to keep saturated fats, trans fats and sodium low.
- ✓ Choose food and beverages low in added sugars. Added sugars contribute calories with few, if any, nutrients.

Find your balance between food and physical activity.

- ✓ Be sure to stay within your calorie needs.
- ✓ To prevent chronic disease, you should be active at least 30 minutes most days of the week. This is above and beyond normal daily activity.
- ✓ To manage your weight and prevent unhealthy weight gain you need 60 minutes of activity on most days of the week.
- ✓ To lose weight or keep weight off, you need 60-90 minutes of exercise every day.
- ✓ Children and teenagers should be physically active for 60 minutes every day or most days.



Estimated Daily Calorie Needs

The following chart gives an estimate of individual calorie needs. The calorie range for each age/sex group is based on physical activity level, from sedentary to active.

	Calorie Range		
	Sedentary	—————>	Active
Children			
2-3 years	1,000	—————>	1,400
Females			
4-8 years	1,200	—————>	1,800
9-13 years	1,600	—————>	2,200
14-18 years	1,800	—————>	2,400
19-30 years	2,000	—————>	2,400
31-50 years	1,800	—————>	2,200
51+ years	1,600	—————>	2,200

Sedentary means a lifestyle that includes only the light physical activity associated with day-to-day life.

Active means a lifestyle that includes physical activity equivalent to walking more than 3 miles per day at 3 to 4 miles per hour, in addition to the light physical activity associated with typical day-to-day life.

	Calorie Range		
Males	Sedentary	—————>	Active
4-8 years	1,400	—————>	2,000
9-13 years	1,800	—————>	2,600
14-18 years	2,200	—————>	3,200
19-30 years	2,400	—————>	3,000
31-50 years	2,200	—————>	3,000
51+ years	2,000	—————>	2,800

Food Intake Patterns

The suggested amounts of food to consume from the basic food groups, subgroups and oils to meet recommended nutrient intakes at 12 different calorie levels. Nutrient and energy contributions from each group are calculated according to the nutrient-dense forms of foods in each group (e.g., lean meats and fat-free milk). The table also shows the discretionary calorie allowance that can be accommodated within each calorie level, in addition to the suggested amounts of nutrient-dense forms of foods in each group.

Daily Amount of Food From Each Group												
Calorie Level ¹	1,000	1,200	1,400	1,600	1,800	2,000	2,200	2,400	2,600	2,800	3,000	3,200
Fruits ²	1 cup	1 cup	1.5 cups	1.5 cup	1.5 cups	2 cups	2 cups	2 cups	2 cups	2.5 cups	2.5 cups	2.5 cups
Vegetables ³	1 cup	1.5 cups	1.5 cups	2 cups	2.5 cups	2.5 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3.5 cups	3.5 cups	4 cups	4 cups
Grains ⁴	3 oz–eq	4 oz–eq	5 oz–eq	5 oz–eq	6 oz–eq	6 oz–eq	7 oz–eq	8 oz–eq	9 oz–eq	10 oz–eq	10 oz–eq	10 oz–eq
Meat and Beans ⁵	2 oz–eq	3 oz–eq	4 oz–eq	5 oz–eq	5 oz–eq	5.5 oz–eq	6 oz–eq	6.5 oz–eq	6.5 oz–eq	7 oz–eq	7 oz–eq	7 oz–eq
Milk ⁶	2 cups	2 cups	2 cups	3 cups	3 cup	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups
Oils ⁷	3 tsp	4 tsp	4 tsp	5 tsp	5 tsp	6 tsp	6 tsp	7 tsp	8 tsp	8 tsp	10 tsp	11 tsp
Discretionary calorie allowance ⁸	165	171	171	132	195	267	290	362	410	426	512	648

¹**Calorie Levels** are set across a wide range to accommodate the needs of different individuals. “Estimated Daily Calorie Needs” can be used to help assign individuals to the food intake pattern at a particular calorie level.

²**Fruit Group** includes all fresh, frozen, canned and dried fruits and fruit juices. In general, 1 cup of fruit or 100% fruit juice, or 1/2 cup of dried fruit can be considered as 1 cup from the fruit group.

³**Vegetable Group** includes all fresh, frozen, canned and dried vegetables and vegetable juices. In general, 1 cup of raw or cooked vegetables or vegetable juice, or 2 cups of raw leafy greens can be considered as 1 cup from the vegetable group.

Vegetable Subgroup Amounts Are Per Week												
Calorie Level	1,000	1,200	1,400	1,600	1,800	2,000	2,200	2,400	2,600	2,800	3,000	3,200
Dark green veg.	1 c/wk	1.5 c/wk	1.5 c/wk	2 c/wk	3 c/wk	3 c/wk	3 c/wk	3 c/wk	3 c/wk	3 c/wk	3 c/wk	3 c/wk
Orange veg.	.5 c/wk	1 c/wk	1 c/wk	1.5 c/wk	2 c/wk	2 c/wk	2 c/wk	2 c/wk	2.5 c/wk	2.5 c/wk	2.5 c/wk	2.5 c/wk
Legumes	.5 c/wk	1 c/wk	1 c/wk	2.5 c/wk	3 c/wk	3 c/wk	3 c/wk	3 c/wk	3.5 c/wk	3.5 c/wk	3.5 c/wk	3.5 c/wk
Starchy veg.	1.5 c/wk	2.5 c/wk	2.5 c/wk	2.5 c/wk	3 c/wk	3 c/wk	6 c/wk	6 c/wk	7 c/wk	7 c/wk	9 c/wk	9 c/wk
Other veg.	3.5 c/wk	4.5 c/wk	4.5 c/wk	5.5 c/wk	6.5 c/wk	6.5 c/wk	7 c/wk	7 c/wk	8.5 c/wk	8.5 c/wk	10 c/wk	10 c/wk

- ⁴**Grains Group** includes all foods made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley, such as bread, pasta, oatmeal, breakfast cereals, tortillas, and grits. In general, 1 slice of bread, 1 cup of ready-to-eat cereal, or 1/2 cup of cooked rice, pasta, or cooked cereal can be considered as 1 ounce equivalent from the grains group. **At least half of all grains consumed should be whole grains.**
- ⁵**Meat & Beans Group** in general, 1 ounce of lean meat, poultry, or fish, 1 egg, 1 tablespoon peanut butter, 1/4 cup cooked dry beans, or 1/2 ounce of nuts or seeds can be considered as 1 ounce equivalent from the meat and beans group.
- ⁶**Milk Group** includes all fluid milk products and foods made from milk that retain their calcium content, such as yogurt and cheese. Foods made from milk that have little to no calcium, such as cream cheese, cream, and butter, are not part of the group. Most milk group choices should be fat-free or low-fat. In general, 1 cup of milk or yogurt, 1 1/2 ounces of natural cheese, or 2 ounces of processed cheese can be considered as 1 cup from the milk group.
- ⁷**Oils** include fats from many different plants and from fish that are liquid at room temperature, such as canola, corn, olive, soybean, and sunflower oil. Some foods are naturally high in oils, like nuts, olives, some fish, and avocados. Foods that are mainly oil include mayonnaise, certain salad dressings, and soft margarine.
- ⁸**Discretionary Calorie Allowance** is the remaining amount of calories in a food intake pattern after accounting for the calories needed for all food groups—using forms of foods that are fat-free or low-fat and with no added sugars.

Visit MyPyramid.gov for more information.