

# Scientific Report of the 2020 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee

## What to expect in the final 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

### What is the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee Scientific Report?

Since 1980, every five years, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary of Agriculture and Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) release the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The goal of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) is to provide nutrition advice that can help improve the health of Americans by encouraging healthy food and beverage choices. The recently released Scientific Report from the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC) reviews the scientific literature around various nutrition and public health topics. The Report will serve as the scientific backing of the final Dietary Guidelines to be issued by the end of the year. This iteration of the Scientific Report recommends that the final Dietary Guidelines take into account the different nutritional considerations that exist for each life stage, including pregnancy, lactation, children under 2 years of age, childhood, and adulthood. The committee attempted, but was not able, to make dietary pattern recommendations for each of these groups.

### What does the 2020 DGAC Scientific Report Say?

What is new? What is the same?

#### ***Added Sugars***

The report recommends reducing added sugar to less than 6% of total energy in the diet for individuals 2 years of age and older (previously it was less than 10%) and avoiding foods and beverages with added sugars during the first 2 years of life, including all sugar sweetened beverages (SSBs). Beverages were highlighted among the top contributors of energy (13-16% across age groups) and added sugars (54% for adult females and 61% for adult males) in the diet.

Reducing the amount of added sugars in the diet, through either changes in consumer behavior or in how food is produced and sold, or through food policy, was noted as an achievable objective that could improve population health.

#### ***Dietary Fiber and Whole Grains***

Similar to past recommendations, Americans are encouraged to eat more fiber-rich foods. In addition, whole grains are strongly emphasized often over refined grains. Along with fruits and vegetables, whole grains were identified as one of the three foods fundamental to a healthy diet. Foods containing complex carbohydrates, which also tend to be high in dietary fiber, appear to be associated with more favorable changes in blood lipids, especially triglycerides, compared to foods containing refined carbohydrates.

#### ***Dietary Fats***

For adults and children (ages 2 years and older), dietary cholesterol and saturated fat intake should be as low as possible within a healthy dietary pattern, and saturated fat intake should be limited to less than 10% of total energy intake. This recommendation is consistent with the 2015 - 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The dietary pattern should replace food sources of saturated fat with food sources of polyunsaturated fats by substituting some animal-source foods, especially processed meats and certain dairy products, with sources of polyunsaturated fats, such as seafood, seeds, nuts, legumes, and appropriate vegetable oils.

#### ***Seafood***

Two or more servings of cooked seafood per week are recommended for ages 2 years and older to ensure intake of key nutrients and as part of an overall healthy dietary pattern; serving sizes vary based on age. Choices of fish and seafood with emphasis on species higher in omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids and with low methylmercury are advised, following Federal and local fish and seafood advisories. For those following dietary patterns that do not include seafood, regular intake of other foods high in omega-3 fatty acids, such as flaxseeds, walnuts, soy oil, algae and eggs that contain omega-3 fatty acids, is appropriate. The 2020-2025

Dietary Guidelines for Americans should contain information on amounts and types of seafood to consume as well as those to avoid based on the methylmercury content. Special emphasis should be made with regard to the birth to age 24 months age group and women who are pregnant or lactating.

### **Protein**

Across all age groups, protein intake is within recommended levels for most people; however, protein foods are consumed lower than recommended levels among one-third of infants, one-quarter of children, two-thirds of adolescent males, three-quarters of adolescent females, one-third of adult males, half of adult females (including women who are pregnant), and 10% of adults older than age 70.

### **Children under 2 Years of Age**

For the first time, the DGAC evaluated the science for the population under two years of age as well as conducted a review of diet and health issues in pregnancy and lactation. Due to a limited amount of data, the DGAC was unable to develop conclusions for many of the questions reviewed for this population. However, the strongest evidence found, though still observational studies, was that having ever been breastfed may reduce the risk of being overweight or obese, type 1 diabetes, and asthma, compared to never being breastfed. When it comes to introducing complementary foods, there is no difference in body weight when complementary foods are introduced between the ages of 4 and 5 months compared to approximately 6 months of age.

### **Sodium**

Sodium intake should continue to be reduced. The DGAC noted sodium is overconsumed, except by infants, with intakes of sodium generally ranging from 3,001 to 4,100 milligrams (mg) per day. According to the Report, the average American consumes 3,393 mg of sodium per day.

### **Alcoholic Beverages**

Men should consume no more than one alcoholic drink a day. This is a change from previous recommendations, which allowed men to have two drinks per day. The recommendation for women remains at one drink per day.

### **Dietary Patterns**

The 3 current USDA Food Patterns are the Healthy U.S.-Style Pattern, the Healthy Vegetarian Pattern, and the Healthy Mediterranean-Style Pattern. In these patterns and throughout the report plant-based diets are highly valued noting that healthy dietary patterns provide the majority of energy from plant-based foods, such as vegetables, fruits, legumes, whole grains, nuts and seeds; provide protein and fats from nutrient-rich food sources; and limit intakes of added sugars, solid fats, and sodium. Low carbohydrate diets were not addressed due to insufficient evidence.

Diet quality is higher in young children but tends to decline with age through childhood and into adolescence.

### **What do Americans not get enough of?**

Food components under-consumed by the entire population include dietary fiber, calcium, magnesium, potassium, choline, and vitamins A, C, D, E, and K. In addition to these nutrients, iron and folate (females of reproductive age), protein (adolescent girls and older adults), and vitamin B12 (older adults) are under-consumed among these specific population subgroups.

### **So what is next?**

The USDA and HHS are accepting written public comments on the Scientific Report through August 13, 2020. A public meeting will be held on August 11, 2020, during which oral comments can be presented to the agencies. The agencies will release the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans by the end of the year.

**Read the full DGAC Scientific Report [here](#).**