

2020-2025 DIETARY GUIDELINES FOR AMERICANS

MAKE EVERY BITE COUNT

Background

The goal of the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) (DGA) is to provide nutrition guidance that can improve the health of Americans by helping people choose healthy and enjoyable foods and beverages. It is jointly published by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture (USDA) and Health and Human Services (HHS) every five years, and provides science-based recommendations designed to foster healthy dietary patterns for Americans. The guidelines are intended for use by healthcare professionals, nutritionists, and policy makers for outreach to the general public through nutrition education material. It provides the nutritional foundation for all U.S. federal nutrition food programs and policies. The DGA is developed to help *all* Americans benefit from healthy dietary patterns, including those who are healthy, those who at risk for diet-related diseases, and those living with one or more of these diet-related diseases.

What's New

New this time is nutritional guidance for birth to 24 months, pregnant and lactating women, as well as a focus on nutritional guidance based on lifespan. This lifespan approach encourages healthy dietary patterns from infancy through older adulthood. There is also a greater emphasis on dietary patterns and flexibility based on lifestyle, culture and income level. The core of the DGA is health promotion and disease prevention.

Four Overarching 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines

- *Follow a healthy dietary pattern at every life stage.* It is never too early or never too late to eat healthfully.
- *Customize and enjoy **nutrient-dense** food and beverage choices to reflect personal preferences, cultural traditions, and budgetary considerations.* This mentions food groups including vegetables, fruits, protein foods, grains, dairy, and oils.
- *Focus on meeting food group needs with **nutrient-dense foods** and beverages, and stay within calorie limits.*
- *Limit foods and beverages higher in added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium, and limit alcoholic beverages.* The guidelines frequently mention that a healthy dietary pattern doesn't have much room for extra added sugars, saturated fat, or sodium—or for alcoholic beverages. They also set these limits:
 - **Added sugars**—Less than 10 percent of calories per day starting at age 2. Avoid foods and beverages with added sugars for those younger than age 2.
 - **Saturated fat**—Less than 10 percent of calories per day starting at age 2.
 - **Sodium**—Less than 2,300 milligrams per day—and even less for children younger than age 14.
 - **Alcoholic beverages**—Adults of legal drinking age who choose to drink alcohol should limit intake to 2 drinks or less in a day for men and 1 drink or less in a day for women. Pregnant women should avoid alcohol.

Three Main Dietary Pattern Principles

- Meet nutritional needs primarily from foods and beverages.
- Choose a variety of options from each food group.
- Pay attention to portion size.

Other Key Recommendations

Sweeteners

Replacing added sugars with low- and no-calorie sweeteners may reduce calorie intake in the short-term and aid in weight management, yet questions remain about their effectiveness as a long-term weight management strategy. Low and no-calorie sweeteners are not recommended for children younger than 2

Beverages

Beverages that are calorie-free—especially water—or that contribute beneficial nutrients, such as fat-free and low-fat milk and 100% juice, should be the primary beverages consumed by all ages. Beverages that contain no added sugars should be the primary choice for children and adolescents.

Saturated Fats, Trans Fats and Cholesterol

The US Healthy Dietary patterns are limited in trans-fat and low in dietary cholesterol.

Important Nutrients

Calcium, potassium, dietary fiber, and vitamin D are considered dietary components of public health concern for the general U.S. population because low intakes are associated with health concerns. Individuals should be encouraged to make shifts to increase the intake of vegetables, fruits, beans, whole grains, and dairy to move intakes of these under consumed dietary components closer to recommendations.

Infants and Toddlers

- If possible, exclusive breast milk feeding is recommended for about the first 6 months. If human milk is unavailable, infants should be fed an iron-fortified commercial infant formula, regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which are based on standards that ensure nutrient content and safety.
- Expressed human milk and prepared infant formula should be handled and stored safely (see “Proper Handling and Storage of Human Milk and Infant Formula”) – CDC reference can be found [here](#).
- Homemade infant formulas and those that are improperly and illegally imported into the United States without mandated FDA review and supervision should not be used.

Complementary Food

- Introduce infants to potentially allergenic foods along with other complementary foods.
- Encourage infants and toddlers to consume a variety of foods from all food groups.
- Include foods rich in iron and zinc, particularly for infants fed human milk.

Women Who Are Pregnant and Lactating

Women should meet their increased calorie and nutrient needs with nutrient-dense foods instead of with foods high in added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium. The nutrients of public health concern—calcium, vitamin D, potassium, and dietary fiber—apply to this life stage.

Older Adults

It is important that older adults drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration and aid in the digestion of food and absorption of nutrients. Older adults are at greater risk of malnutrition and chronic diseases. Maintaining a healthy diet and healthy weight will help support healthy aging. Older adults can improve dietary intake by increasing consumption of fruit, vegetables, whole grains, and dairy, while ensuring protein intake meets recommendations. Reducing intakes of added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium also will help older adults achieve recommendations, manage, and avoid chronic conditions.

Read the full Dietary Guidelines [here](#) and other [on-line material](#).