



communicating Food for Health

Comments on the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

By James J. Kenney,
PhD, FACN

News stories on the recently-released 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (USDG) focused mainly on the new limits on added dietary sugar. Some news reports had headlines about dropping the prior limit on dietary cholesterol that did not really reflect the overall new USDG. For example:

- “Eggs and coffee get the all-clear in new dietary guidelines just issued by the U.S.,” proclaimed the *Los Angeles Times*.
- “Government revises Dietary Guidelines for Americans: Go ahead and have some eggs” suggested the *Washington Post*.

To its credit, the full *Washington Post* article did note the importance of limiting not just saturated fat but also cholesterol. But many people never heard or read more than the

headlines proclaiming that the new USDG proclaim dietary cholesterol no longer needs to be limited. This will certainly confuse Americans about how to eat. Overall these mostly-misleading headlines and reports may only add to the confusion about what nutrition research tell us most Americans are supposed to eat to reduce their risk of diet-promoted diseases. It will be up to responsible health professionals and especially RDNs to help their clients better understand what foods and food components they need to limit or consume more of to improve their health.

Where the 2015 USDG Fell Short

One step in the wrong direction was the decision of the 2015 USDG to drop the prior 2010 USDG recommendation to further limit dietary sodium intake (from 2300 to 1500mg daily) for those most likely to benefit. According to the 2010 USDG, older Americans (age

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51 or older) and those of any age who are African American or who already have hypertension, diabetes, and/or chronic kidney disease were informed that strong research from RCT proved this greater reduction in sodium intake from 2300 to 1500 mg/day lowers blood pressure significantly more. The failure of 2015 USDG to support the best data showing that reducing sodium from 2,300 mg down to 1,500 mg definitely helps to more effectively lower elevated blood pressure was a step in the wrong direction. However, the American Heart Association still advises all Americans to limit sodium to no more than 1500 mg per day (1). While the 2015 USDG recommends < 2300mg sodium for the general population, it does advise Americans with hypertension and prehypertension to limit sodium to 1500 mg daily.

Why drop any limit on dietary cholesterol? The prior 2010 USDG said to limit consumption of dietary cholesterol to <300 mg per day. Dropping this limit is being promoted as a big win for the meat, dairy, and especially egg in-

dustries. However, it must be noted that the 2015 USDG does not claim that an unlimited consumption of eggs and other cholesterol-rich foods is now okay. This statement from the 2015 USDG makes their position crystal clear:

“Key recommendation from the 2010 Dietary Guidelines to limit dietary cholesterol to 300mg per day is not included in the 2015 edition, but this change does not suggest that dietary cholesterol is no longer important to consider when building healthy eating patterns. As recommended by the IOM [Institute of Medicine], individuals should eat as little dietary cholesterol as possible while consuming a healthy eating pattern” (2).

Even so, it appears their decision to drop any specific upper limit for dietary cholesterol is still arguably a step in the wrong direction as it garnered so many misleading headlines. Long ago RCTs have demonstrated that total-C, LDL-C, and nonHDL-C levels all increase as dietary cholesterol increases from zero to 300mg. And serum cholesterol levels continue to increase even more as di-

etary cholesterol increases above 300 mg/day. In general, most foods that are higher in dietary cholesterol, such as fatty meats and dairy products (except for nonfat), are also higher in saturated fat. Strong evidence, including that from randomized controlled trials, has shown that eating patterns that reduce both dietary cholesterol and saturated fat reduce levels of atherogenic cholesterol-rich, apoB-containing lipoproteins (best reflected by nonHDL-C in standard blood lipid tests) that promote atherosclerosis and increase risk of coronary artery disease.

The USDG does recommend that we eat lean meats and poultry, and notes that eating less meat, including processed meat and processed poultry, has been linked to a lower risk of heart disease. But it doesn't offer any specific limits on the amount of red and processed meats. Instead the 2015 USDG say processed meats and processed poultry are okay as long as their intake is not sufficient to cause the...

(Continued at <https://foodandhealth.com/comments-2015-2020-usdg/>)

Nutrition Month Display Ideas

Want to engage your audience when it comes to vital health and nutrition topics? A Nutrition Month display could be the perfect answer. The Nutrition Month theme this year is “Savor the Flavor of Eating Right,” which lends itself really well to a variety of amazing displays.

Will you make one this year? If you do, check out this list of things I’ve learned from setting up tons of displays...

- **Don’t Skimp on Visuals.** Visuals will be your “make or break” when it comes to participant engagement. With a colorful, intriguing display, you can pique people’s interest and bring them over to learn more. Once they’re engaged, you can delve further into the information you’re trying to communicate. Posters and banners are a

fun way to keep the visual game alive while offering the lessons that are closest to your heart.

- **Use Color Wisely.** What will be the most likely to resonate with your audience? A monochrome display with a splash of color at the most interesting points? An artistic display with lots of photos? A colorful, whimsical arrangement? Tailor your strategy to fit your clients and their preferences.
- **Consider a Question.** Most displays have a title or theme of some kind. Consider incorporating a question into this main section of your display. Questions can help you engage your audience from afar. You want to ask something that people genuinely want to know the answer to. Skip a dull title like “Saturated Fats” and instead ask a question like “What are Saturated Fats Doing to YOUR Heart?”

People are more interested when there is a tangible link to their own self interest. “Is Chocolate a Health Food?” is another fun question because people genuinely want to know whether the answer is yes.

- **Add Detail Where It Fits.** Once people have been drawn to your display, it’s time to strengthen the point you’re trying to make. What will support your case? Now that you have their attention, it’s time to teach those key lessons! Handouts, recipes, and scientific studies are all great resources for this section. Just make sure they don’t take up too much space — you still want your display to be eye-catching. Don’t overwhelm people with fine print.

Those are just a few ideas to get you started! How will you craft your next display?

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P.O. Box 271108, Louisville, CO 80027
Phone: 800-462-2352 Fax: 800-433-7435
<http://communicatingfoodforhealth.com>

Executive Editor

Judy Doherty, PC II

Contributing Writers

James J. Kenney, PhD, FACN
Jill Weisenberger, MS, RD, CDE
Victoria Shanta Retelny, RD, LD
Lynn Grieger, RD, CDE, CPT
Stephanie Ronco

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Mail to Food and Health Communications, Inc.

P.O. Box 271108, Louisville, CO 80027;

Phone: 800-462-2352; Fax: 800-433-7435; orders@foodandhealth.com

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