

Highlights of 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

The latest edition of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans was released at the veeeeeeery end of 2020. Here is an overview to help you navigate everything you need to know! The Dietary Guidelines are updated every 5 years by a team of experts.

2 Highlights for 2020-2025:

1. The link between health and what we eat has been well-documented.
2. The goals of the guidelines are to offer recommendations about eating patterns that "promote health, reduce risk of chronic disease, and meet nutrient needs."

3 Guiding Principles

1. Chronic diseases related to diet (diabetes, heart disease, obesity, etc) are a serious public health issue. "Just about everyone, no matter their health status, can benefit from shifting food and beverage choices to better support healthy dietary patterns."
2. Since nutrients and even foods aren't exactly consumed in isolation, it makes sense to look at overall dietary patterns.
3. This approach should incorporate information for the entire lifespan.

4 Strategies to Focus on for Optimal Health

1. Choose a healthful eating pattern at each life stage.
2. Select nutrient-dense foods and use them to build an eating pattern that works for your cultural background, budget, and preferences.
3. Choose nutrient-dense foods to meet your calorie needs, then stay within those needs (don't eat excess calories).
4. Limit saturated fats, added sugars, alcohol, and sodium.

2 Important Terms

1. **Dietary Patterns:** These are the combination of all the drinks and foods a person consumes over time. It could be a general custom or a description of various food groupings.
2. **Nutrient-Dense:** These foods and drinks offer "health-promoting components" like vitamins and minerals in meaningful amounts while staying low in unhealthy elements like saturated fat and added sugars.

4 Steps to increase diet quality

1. Replace red and processed meats with plant sources of protein such as legumes (lentils, split peas, chickpeas and other dried beans and peas) and nuts
2. Choose foods with ingredients you recognize as food instead of ingredients that sound like they were manufactured in a chemistry lab (since they probably are).
3. Reach for fresh fruits and vegetables for snacks instead of pre-packaged snacks.
4. Cook meals from scratch when you can.

