

# Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025: A Summary

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## Introduction

Every five years the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Health and Human Services (HHS) update the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA). The DGA is developed to help all Americans and is based on scientific evidence of health-promoting diets in people who represent the general U.S. population, including those who are healthy, those at risk for diet-related diseases and those living with these diseases (1).

There are four overarching nutritional guidelines in the 2020-2025 DGA (1):

1. Follow a healthy dietary pattern at every life stage.
2. Customize and enjoy nutrient-dense food and beverage choices to reflect personal preferences, cultural traditions and budgetary considerations.
3. Focus on meeting food group needs with nutrient-dense foods and beverages and stay within calorie limits.
4. Limit foods and beverages higher in added sugars, saturated fat and sodium. Limit alcoholic beverages.

For the first time since 1985, the DGA encourage healthy dietary patterns throughout the lifespan from infancy to late adulthood. The guidelines also include information on pregnancy and lactation (1).

## What's new in the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans?

There are two updates with the 2020-2025 DGA (1):

1. New recommendations for healthy dietary patterns throughout the lifespan.
2. A focus on "making every bite count."

For the first time, the DGA features key recommendations for infants and toddlers to ensure that every bite counts. These include:

- For the first six months of life, feed infants human milk. This should be continued up to the first month of life.
  - If human milk is unavailable, use iron-fortified formula and supplemental vitamin D.
- After six months, introduce potentially allergic foods such as peanuts, eggs, and cow milk products, along with complementary foods, to reduce the risk of food allergy.
- Avoid food and beverages with added sugars, saturated fat and sodium (2).

The DGA also includes recommendations for pregnant and lactating women. Women who are pregnant or lactating are consuming too few whole grains and vegetables, while overconsuming meat, poultry, eggs and refined grains. Women who are pregnant should consume:

- Folic acid up to one month before pregnancy and continue through

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- two months of pregnancy,
- Iron for fetal development,
- Iodine for neurological development of the fetus, and
- Choline for the development of the child's brain and spinal cord.

Pregnant women should avoid alcohol. One in 10 pregnant women report consuming alcohol in the last month (3).

## “Make Every Bite Count”

The second change to the DGA is the emphasis on making every bite count. This means following four principles to create a healthy lifestyle, which include (1, 4):

- Choose foods rich in nutrients.
- Create a consistent pattern of healthy eating, not just healthy choices here and there.
- Meet nutritional needs primarily from foods and beverages.
- Choose a variety of options from each food group.
- Pay attention to portion size.

## What has stayed the same?

The DGA continues to focus on healthy food patterns and understands food patterns will vary throughout various stages of life. Overall, it is important to focus on nutrient-dense foods while staying within a calorie limit. This can be done by maintaining portion control along with consuming various foods.

Recommendations in the guidelines use food groups to create a framework for healthy eating. This framework allows individuals to make their own choices based on their needs and preferences. Within this framework, people should focus on nutrient dense foods rich in vitamins and minerals and which contain little or no added sugars, saturated fat or sodium. A healthy dietary pattern contains vegetables of all types, fruit, grains, dairy, protein and oils (5).

A person's caloric needs should be mostly met through nutrient-dense foods, leaving little room for added sugar, saturated fat or sodium. Some of these nutrients can be consumed to meet food group recommendations. It is recommended that (1,6):

- Less than 10 percent of calories per day should come from added sugars and saturated fats.
- Less than 2,300 milligrams of sodium should be consumed per day and less for children 14 and younger.
- Women should consume no more than one alcoholic beverage a day; men should consume no more than two alcoholic beverages a day. (6).

## References

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