

Healthy Dietary Patterns

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Introduction

The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025* expresses it is never too early or late to follow healthy dietary patterns. A dietary pattern is the combination of foods and beverages that are commonly consumed throughout an individual's day. The dietary pattern more? directly impacts an individual's health status compared to the individual consumption of foods. The importance of a healthy dietary pattern can be seen today since 60% of adults have one or more diet-related chronic diseases. In addition, the average American scored a 58 out of 100 on the Healthy Eating Index in the past ten years (1), indicating that there is room for dietary improvement.

What is a Healthy Dietary Pattern?

A healthy dietary pattern is defined by:

- Nutrient-dense food and beverage consumption from various food groups,
- Adherence to recommended amounts of added sugars, saturated fats and alcohol, and
- Portions consumed in recommended amounts within a calorie limit.

The *Dietary Guidelines* are meant to provide a framework to create healthy dietary patterns that can be customized

to the individual. Achieving a healthy dietary pattern at each stage of life can prepare an individual for the next stage of life. Establishing a healthy dietary pattern early can positively impact an individual's health status by reducing disease risk (1).

Recommended Portions for Healthy Dietary Patterns

An example of a healthy dietary pattern can be seen with the Mediterranean Diet, which includes consumption of a variety of vegetables, fruits, protein and grains. This diet recommends limited intake of red meat and moderating intake of dairy products. There is an emphasis on healthy fats along with consumption of protein from beans, lentils, peas and nuts. The table below is based on a 2,000-calorie daily intake and shows a general U.S. healthy dietary pattern. The number of calories an individual needs depends on age, sex, height, weight and physical activity (1).

How to Consume a Healthy Dietary Pattern

The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* is presented as a framework that can be customized to each individual to represent the diverse culture of Americans. The recommendations create a framework with food groups instead of individual foods to allow for customization of a healthy dietary pattern. To create a healthy dietary pattern, an

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Vegetables	2 ½ cups/day
Fruits	2 cups /day
Grains	6 oz/day
Dairy	3 cups/day
Protein	5 ½ oz/day
Oils	27 grams/day
Limit on Calories for Other Consumption	240 kcal/day
Added Sugars	Less than 10% of calories per day
Saturated Fats	Less than 10% calories per day
Alcohol	2 or fewer drinks per day for men 1 or fewer drinks per day for women

individual should start with personal preferences, incorporate cultural traditions and consider budget. It is important to intertwine family preferences into daily dietary patterns to you are consuming ensure nutrient-dense foods and you enjoy eating. The framework allows incorporation of cultural foods with spices and herbs that help to reduce added sugars, saturated fats and sodium. The *Dietary Guidelines* framework also allows for a healthy dietary pattern to be budgeted by using strategies such as advanced planning, regional and seasonal food availability and using fresh, frozen and canned products (1).

Where are Added Sugars Found?

Added sugars can be found in a product’s ingredient list under sucrose or dextrose. Added sugars are frequently found in processed foods but can also come from syrups and honey. Naturally occurring sugars such as the sugar found in fruit are not classified as added sugars. Added sugars can be found in foods like sugar-sweetened beverages, coffee, sandwiches, higher fat milk and yogurt, breakfast cereals and candy (2).

A nutrition label includes total sugars and added sugars. Added sugars are displayed in grams and with the daily value percent (DV%). Nutrition labels state the word “includes” before the grams of added sugars under the row for grams of total sugars.

Total sugars include natural sugars in products and added sugars. The differentiation allows a con-

sumer to understand how many grams of the product is natural or added sugars. The percent daily value is found to the right of the added sugars row. A product with 5% or less daily value of added sugars is a low source of added sugar. A product with 20% daily value or more of added sugars is a high source of added sugars (2).

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size	1 cup (68g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	370
<small>% Daily Value*</small>	
Total Fat 5g	7%
Saturated Fat 1g	3%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 150mg	6%
Total Carbohydrate 48g	15%
Dietary Fiber 5g	14%
Total Sugars 13g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 12g	
Vit. D 2mcg 10% • Calcium 210mg 20%	
Zinc 7mg 50% • Biotin 300mcg 100%	
<small>* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.</small>	

Added sugars have no nutrient value but can be consumed in small amounts to attain food group recommendations. It is important to limit intake of added sugars as overconsumption can lead to chronic diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease. Foods with high added sugars often add no other nutritional value. Risk factors associated with an increased intake of added sugar include weight gain and increased triglycerides, which can lead to heart disease, diabetes and other diet-related chronic diseases (3).

Tips to Reduce Added Sugars in the Diet

- Choose water or flavored waters instead of sugar-sweetened beverages
 - For a healthy dietary pattern, three cups of dairy can also be consumed instead of sugary drinks.
- Read nutrition labels on breakfast cereals and granola bars that could contain a high amount of added sugars.
- Choose fresh fruit instead of products with a high amount of added sugars such as cookies, cakes or pies. This can also be helpful in creating a healthy dietary pattern.
- Nutrient-dense foods such as carrots and hummus or low-calorie yogurt can help avoid added sugars and add variety to a healthy dietary pattern (3).

References

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