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WIC Worksite Wellness Newsletter

What to Eat: The Dietary Guidelines for Americans

In a world with so many diet and weight-loss philosophies it can be difficult to figure out exactly what we should be eating, not to mention how much of it. Luckily, there is a resource to do just that—the Dietary Guidelines for Americans—and the most recent version was just released this month.

Updated and released every five years, the Dietary Guidelines, provide specific recommendations on how much fat, protein, carbohydrates, and other nutrients people should get as well as which foods are the best choices to meet these recommendations. Many of us know about the Food Pyramid, which is a simplification of the Dietary Guidelines, but not all Americans are aware that a more in-depth resource is available.

Many of the recommendations are familiar: eat more fruits, vegetables and whole grains; eat more fat-free and low-fat dairy; eat less junk and fast food. However, the 2010 Dietary Guidelines differ from past versions in that a primary recommendation is to simply eat less. The report recognizes the obesity epidemic and high prevalence of chronic diet-related diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease.

Data show that Americans consume too many calories—and too many of the wrong kinds of foods. Fewer than 10% of Americans meet the daily recommendations for fruits and

vegetables and 30% of their calories come from foods that are labeled "SoFAS" (solid fats and added sugars). The Dietary Guidelines hone in on these sources of empty calories and recommends limiting consumption of them. Individuals' diets should mostly consist of nutrient-dense foods.

Another new message is to eat more seafood, particularly in the place of some meat and poultry. Seafood is low in saturated fat and many types of fish are good sources of heart healthy omega-3 fatty acids, while red meat in particular is high in saturated fat and frequent consumption may increase risk of developing heart disease or colon cancer.

Sodium also gets more attention in the 2010 Dietary Guidelines than in past versions. Less than 2,300mg per day is recommended for the average person. However, African-Americans, individuals over 51, and anyone with diabetes, high blood pressure or chronic kidney disease should limit intake to no more than 1,500mg.

The Dietary Guidelines don't stop at consumption, they also

address what happens to those calories; an important message is to balance energy intake with energy expended. In other words, EXERCISE! You don't want to consume more calories than



you will burn throughout the day. Maintaining calorie balance helps one stay at a healthy weight.

The Dietary Guidelines are a great resource for individuals, government agencies, and the food industry alike and the report recognizes that the food environment is a critical component in ensuring that people are able to maintain a healthy diet.

Check out the Dietary Guidelines for ways to improve your diet.

For more on this topic:

Dietary Guidelines Urge Less Soda and Smaller Meals (2011, January 31). New York Times. Accessed January 31, 2011 at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/01/business/01food.html>

Kimmons J, Gillespie C, Seymour J, Serdula M, Blanck HM. Fruit and vegetable intake among adolescents and adults in the United States: Percentage meeting individualized recommendations. *Journal of Medicine*. 2009; 11(1): 26.

New Dietary Guidelines: Cut Salt and Sugar, Eat More Fish (2011, January 2011). Time Healthland. Accessed February 1, 2011 at: <http://healthland.time.com/2011/01/31/new-dietary-guidelines-cut-salt-and-sugar-eat-more-fish/>

Rowe S, Alexander N, Almeida NG, Black R, Burns R, Bush L, Crawford P, Keim N, Kris-Etherton P, Weaver C. Translating the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010 to Bring about Real Behavior Change, *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*. 2011; 111(1): 28-39.

USDA. (2010, January). Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010. Accessed on February 1, 2011 from: <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/DGAs2010-DGACReport.htm>

Wright J, Wang C. Awareness of federal Dietary Guidance in persons aged 16 and older: Results from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2005-2006. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*. 2010; 111(2): 295-300.



Dietary Guideline Cliff Notes

- 1. Balance calorie intake and expenditure.** Remember that if you want to lose weight you have to burn more calories than you consume.
- 2. Reduce intake of calories from SoFAs (solid fats and added sugars).** This includes soda, sweets, and many common snack foods.
- 3. Spend more time being active and less time sitting on the sofa!**
- 4. Consume more whole grains.** Substitute whole grains in the place of refined grains.
- 5. Increase fruit & vegetable intake.** Dark leafy greens and other vibrantly colored vegetables and fruits are especially good picks.
- 6. Choose a variety of protein sources.** Include seafood, as well as lean meat, poultry, eggs and beans.
- 7. Increase intake of fat-free or low-fat dairy products.** Try to cut out or decrease intake of higher fat versions.
- 8. Reduce sodium intake to less than 2,300 mg.** This is the amount in 1 teaspoon of salt. Children, African Americans, individuals over 51, and those with diabetes, chronic kidney disease, or high blood pressure should limit intake to 1,500mg. Remember that salt is often added to packaged and restaurant foods.

SEND US YOUR IDEAS & QUESTIONS



We want to know what worksite wellness ideas are working for your agency. We also want to hear your questions and concerns about implementing worksite wellness. Share your agency's successes and/or questions by emailing us at:

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