

# The Basics

## Dietary Guidelines for Americans

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans (*Dietary Guidelines*) are the basis for federal nutrition policy. They are used as a resource to make nutrition recommendations for federal programs, such as the CACFP. The *Dietary Guidelines* combine the evidence from current research on nutrition to make recommendations for a pattern of eating that can be adopted by healthy Americans over 2 years of age. They also provide advice how good dietary habits can promote health and reduce risk for major chronic diseases. These guidelines are published every five years. The 2010 *Dietary Guidelines* can be found at [www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines](http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines).

Some of the key messages in the 2010 edition include:

### Balance Calories to Manage Weight:

- Throughout life, prevent and/or reduce overweight and obesity through improved eating, more physical activity and less sedentary behaviors such as TV watching and computer games.

### Foods and Food Components to Reduce:

- Reduce daily sodium intake to less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) for some adults. Children ages 3-8 may need only 1,000 to 1,200 mg per day.
- Consume less than 10% of calories from saturated fats, often found in animal fats and other solid fats, such as butter.
- Keep *trans* fat consumption as low as possible by limiting partially hydrogenated oils, such as in margarine and processed foods.
- Reduce the intake of calories from saturated and *trans* fats and added sugars.
- Limit sweet and high fat foods made with solid fats, added sugars and sodium such as cookies, donuts and other pastries.

### Foods and Nutrients to Increase

- More fruits and vegetables, especially dark green, red and orange vegetables.
- More whole grains; at least half of all grains should be whole grains.
- More fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products.
- More fish and seafood.
- Use vegetable oils, such as olive and canola oils, in place of solid fats more often.

The *Dietary Guidelines* encourage consuming nutrient dense foods, such as colorful produce and whole grains. Most nutrient needs should be met through consuming foods. Dietary supplements might be recommended in some cases, but they cannot replace a healthful diet.

## Dietary Fats

Several of the Eat Smart Guidelines for Child Care relate to fat in the diet. Here are some general facts:

- Not all fats are bad, when used in moderation. They supply energy and aid in the absorption of the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, and K and carotenoids.
- The kind of fat we eat is important. Most of the fat we eat should be polyunsaturated or monounsaturated, such as nuts, fish, and olive and canola oils.
- Children who eat diets high in saturated and *trans* fats can be at risk of high blood cholesterol and high blood pressure, just like adults. Saturated and *trans* fats are found in foods such as meat, dairy products, butter, margarine, pastries, creamy salad dressings, and many processed foods.



## Sodium

Most Americans consume more sodium than recommended. Most of our sodium intake comes from salt. The Nutrition Facts Panel on food labels list sodium content. Foods that are low in sodium (less than 140 mg or 5 percent of the Daily Value [DV]) are low in salt. Eating too much salt is associated with high blood pressure. High blood pressure can lead to heart disease, stroke, and kidney disease.

### Sodium Facts

- On average, the natural sodium content of food accounts for only about 10 percent of total sodium intake. Salt added at the table or while cooking provides only another 5 to 10 percent of total intake.
- Most of the sodium Americans consume (about 75 percent) comes from salt added to foods during processing. Foods served in restaurants and processed foods, such as canned and frozen foods, often have a lot of sodium.
- The sodium content of food can vary by several hundred milligrams in similar foods. For example, the sodium content in regular tomato soup may be 700 mg per cup in one brand and 1,100 mg per cup in another brand.

### Tips for Reducing Sodium

- Read the Nutrition Facts labels; compare sodium content of foods, and buy the lower sodium brand.
- Choose more fresh foods and fewer processed foods. (*From 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*)

## Dietary Fiber

Dietary fiber is the part of plants and grains we eat that remain undigested. Fiber passes mostly unchanged through the digestive tract and has many health benefits. To achieve the greatest benefit, proper hydration is key. A high fiber diet helps to:

- Prevent constipation when a person is well-hydrated
- Lower the risk of some digestive problems
- Lower blood cholesterol levels
- Control blood sugar levels
- Promote a healthy weight

### Finding Fiber

- Fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes are the best fiber sources for our diets and for our bodies.
- Milk, meat and eggs do not have fiber.
- Removing seeds, peels or hulls decreases the fiber from fruits and vegetables.
- Refined or processed foods — such as fruit juice, white bread and pasta and non-whole-grain cereals — are lower in fiber and other vital nutrients.
- To find the amount of fiber in foods, check the Nutrition Facts Panel on the food label. “Dietary Fiber” will be listed under carbohydrates.

Some food packages may have statements that help identify products that are sources of fiber. The following terms describe products that have a higher fiber content:

Term	Meaning
High fiber	The item has 5 g or more fiber per serving
Good source of fiber	The item has 2.5 to 4.9 grams of fiber per serving
More or added fiber	The item has at least 2.5g more fiber per serving than before fiber was added

The Dietary Guidelines recommend that all age levels eat 14 grams of fiber per 1000 calories. Most Americans, especially children, are not meeting these recommendations.

Age	g/day Fiber
1-3 years	19
4-8 years	25
9-13 years Females/Males	26 / 31

