

EVIDENCE-BASED CARE SHEET

New Dietary Guidelines: United States of America

What We Know

- › The Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) are produced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through a multi-year, multi-stage process that involves guidance and support from health and nutrition experts. The DGA, now in its ninth edition, has been updated every 5 years since 1980 to serve as the nation's overarching nutrition policy and provide guidance about nutrition to the public and health professionals. The current edition of the DGA was released in December 2020 and consists of four overarching guidelines: ⁽⁸⁾
 - Follow a healthy dietary pattern at every life stage ^(1,8)
 - This guideline emphasizes the importance of establishing healthy dietary patterns across the stages of life—infancy, toddlerhood, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, pregnancy, lactation, and older adulthood
 - Customize and enjoy food and beverage choices to reflect personal preferences, cultural traditions, and budgetary considerations ^(1,8)
 - This guideline focuses on customizing food choices that meet dietary needs and personal preferences and represent diverse cultures
 - Focus on meeting food-group needs with nutrient-dense foods and beverages, and stay within calorie limits ^(1,8)
 - This guideline centers on the importance of including nutrient-dense foods and beverages across all food groups
 - Limit foods and beverages higher in added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium, and limit alcoholic beverages ^(1,8)
 - This guideline provides dietary parameters for limiting added sugars, saturated fat, sodium, and alcoholic beverages
- › The MyPlate Plan, created by the United States Department of Agriculture, provides day-to-day advice and can be adapted to consider food preferences, budgetary constraints, and cultural factors and traditions. The goal of the plan is to make recommendations over the course of a day for healthy food options ^(4,8)
 - Half of a mealtime plate should consist of fruits and vegetables, preferably whole fruits and a variety of vegetables
 - One fourth of a mealtime plate should be sources of whole grains
 - One fourth of a mealtime plate should be sources of protein
 - Dairy intake should include low-fat or fat-free milk or yogurt (or lactose-free dairy or fortified soy versions)
 - Food and beverage choices should have less added sugars, sodium, and saturated fat
- › Literature shows that adherence to dietary guidelines remains a challenge, since many Americans are not following the DGA. Factors such as socioeconomic status, access to food, dietary habits, individual preferences, and cultural influences can impact adherence to a healthy diet ^(2,3)
 - In a study comparing adherence to national dietary guidelines across countries, 40% of the population in both high-income and low-middle-income brackets do not adhere to their country's dietary guidelines. Grains and dairy were consumed in lower than recommended amounts regardless of income status. Consumption of fruits

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and vegetables had the highest compliance. The higher-income countries had higher consumption of foods not necessary to meet nutritional requirements, such as desserts and processed and high-fat foods. Researchers recommend that dietary guidelines should consider socioeconomic status if compliance is to improve⁽²⁾

- In a study of recent trends in the diet quality of U.S. youth based on adherence to the DGA, results demonstrated that although increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and dairy products was found, there was also an increased in sodium consumption, which may be related to increased consumption of processed foods⁽³⁾
- › In comparing the 2020 DGA with the 2015 DGA, many recommendations were carried over; however, the 2020–2025 DGA incorporates some changes based on evolving scientific knowledge
 - The 2020 DGA is the first to recognize that the prevalence among Americans of diet-related chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, obesity, type 2 diabetes, and some forms of cancer, pose a major health risk⁽⁸⁾
 - The 2020 DGA emphasizes eating patterns. Research shows that patterns include various combinations of nutrients that vary over time, and the assessment of a dietary pattern should consider the whole rather than the consumption of individual foods⁽⁸⁾
 - The 2020 DGA takes a lifespan approach that encourages healthy eating at every life stage, from infancy to adulthood⁽⁸⁾
- › The 2020–2025 DGA were developed based on scientific evidence and medical knowledge and incorporated a new stage process for development⁽⁸⁾
 - Stage 1—Identify topics and supporting scientific questions needed for areas of expertise
 - Stage 2—Appoint a dietary guidelines committee to review scientific evidence to support recommendations. The committee represents a mix of experts, such as scientists, practitioners, and epidemiologists
 - Stage 3—Nutrition scientists write, review, and revise the 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines
 - Stage 4—Implement the dietary guidelines through government programs such as food assistance and meal programs, education programs on nutrition, menu planning, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children. The guidelines provide the framework for use in private settings, health care, educational institutions, agricultural providers, and food manufacturers⁽⁸⁾
- › A healthy eating pattern is recommended in the 2020–2025 DGA. Key recommendations about nutrients and dietary patterns are highlighted according to life stage⁽⁸⁾
 - Infants should be fed human milk for the first 6 months of life when possible. An alternative is iron-fortified formula. At 6 months, infants should move to nutrient-dense foods that are rich in iron and zinc
 - From 12 months through adulthood, a healthy dietary pattern should consist of nutrient-dense foods within daily calorie limits^(4,8)
 - A variety of vegetables, to include dark green vegetables, red and orange vegetables, beans, lentils, and other starchy vegetables
 - Whole fruits
 - Grains, preferably whole grains
 - Dairy, including yogurt, cheese, low-fat or fat-free milk, or lactose-free and soy milks
 - Protein, including lean meats, eggs, poultry, seafood, beans, peas, lentils, nuts, seeds, and soy products
 - Oils, including vegetable oils and oils in food such as nuts and seafood
 - Limit added sugars, saturated fats, and sodium in food and beverage choices
 - Added sugars—less than 10% of daily calories for ages 2 and older. Avoid added sugars prior to age 2
 - Saturated fat—less than 10% of daily calories
 - Sodium—less than 2300 milligrams per day and even less for children under 14 years of age
 - Alcoholic beverages—fewer than 2 drinks a day for men and 1 drink or fewer a day for women. Pregnant women should not consume alcohol
 - Caffeine—the 2020–2025 DGA discusses that according to the U.S. FDA, 400 mg of caffeine per day for adults, not including pregnant women, has not been associated with harmful effects⁽⁶⁾
- › The 2020–2025 DGA emphasizes that evidence demonstrates that healthy eating can reduce the risk of obesity, chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes, and lower risk for breast, colon, and rectal cancers. Healthy eating patterns promote bone health, cognitive development, healthy BMI, and adequate folate levels in women⁽⁸⁾

- Healthy vegetarian and Mediterranean-type dietary patterns according to each life stage from 23 month of age to adulthood are provided in the new guidelines. The scientific report of the 2020 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC) emphasizes the importance of dietary guidelines that address life stages, such as pregnancy, adolescence, and adulthood, since each stage of life has unique dietary requirements⁽⁷⁾
- › According to the 2020 DGAC, dietary patterns should identify both healthy options and foods that should be limited. A quality dietary pattern promotes health, improves energy, meets nutritional requirements, and helps reduce the risk of diet-related chronic health conditions⁽⁷⁾
- In addition to evaluating the sustainability of recommended healthy dietary patterns, the DGAC recommends that socioeconomic influences affecting access to food and individual dietary behavior should be considered⁽⁷⁾
- The 2020 DGAC report does not specifically address dietary patterns based on sustainability outcomes, as had been done in previous versions⁽⁵⁾

What We Can Do

- › Learn about the 2020–2025 DGA and available tools and resources at MyPlate so we can accurately assess our patients' characteristics and health education needs; share this information with our colleagues
- › A review of recommendations in the DGAC report may also be helpful in working with patients, consumers, and other health professionals

Related Guidelines

- › Additional guidance and resources can be found at <https://health.gov/our-work/food-nutrition/current-dietary-guidelines>
- › Tools and resources available for use with patients, clients, professionals, and others are available at <https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/resources>
- › MyPlate is a communication initiative designed to encourage individuals to adopt a healthy style of eating over their lifetime. Resources for consumers and for professional can be found at <https://www.myplate.gov/>. The MyPlate resources provide consumers and health professionals with guidance about food-group targets based on age, sex, height, weight, and level of physical activity⁽³⁾
- › See Healthy People 2030 Nutrition and Weight Status objectives at <https://health.gov/healthypeople>.

Coding Matrix

References are rated using the following codes, listed in order of strength:

M Published meta-analysis	RV Published review of the literature	PP Policies, procedures, protocols
SR Published systematic or integrative literature review	RU Published research utilization report	X Practice exemplars, stories, opinions
RCT Published research (randomized controlled trial)	QI Published quality improvement report	GI General or background information/texts/reports
R Published research (not randomized controlled trial)	L Legislation	U Unpublished research, reviews, poster presentations or other such materials
C Case histories, case studies	PGR Published government report	CP Conference proceedings, abstracts, presentation
G Published guidelines	PFR Published funded report	

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