

New U.S. Dietary Guidelines

Based on the most recent science, the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans were released at the beginning of 2016. Before you say, “here we go again,” let’s take a closer look. The guidelines may sound familiar, but there are some differences from years past.¹

Overall guidelines. For the most part, these guidelines don’t advise you about how much to eat of different foods, such as vegetables or meat. Instead, they focus on helping you fit healthy eating into their own unique lifestyle. To that end, they provide three examples of healthy eating plans: a healthy American diet, a Mediterranean-style diet, and a vegetarian diet.

What these three types of diets share is an emphasis on more plant-based foods, healthy fats, and whole grains. The guidelines also suggest making meals and snacks from scratch. That helps avoid the common pitfalls of processed foods, such as high levels of salt and sugar.

Overall, a healthy eating pattern includes:

- Any vegetable, but preferably a wide variety
- Fruits, especially whole ones
- Grains—with at least half being whole grains
- Fat-free or low-fat dairy
- A variety of protein sources, including seafood, lean meat, poultry, eggs, beans, peas, nuts, seeds, and soy products
- Oils¹

Specific guidelines. The last set of guidelines came out in 2010. They simply advised people to reduce their intake of added sugars, without giving numbers. The newest guidelines, however, are more specific. They suggest you limit added sugars to fewer than 10 percent of your daily calories. Right now, added sugars account for more than 13 percent of Americans’ daily calories.¹

Soft drinks, fruit drinks, sweetened coffee or tea, flavored waters, and alcoholic beverages account for nearly 50 percent of all added sugars we consume. A recent study

revealed that people who drink sugary drinks daily tend to put on more deep belly fat over time.² That's the kind of fat that surrounds vital organs and is linked to type 2 diabetes and heart disease. Other sources of added sugars are snacks and sweets, as well as foods like bread and prepared meals.

The new guidelines also suggest that you limit saturated fats to no more than 10 percent of your daily calories. That's a goal that fewer than a third of Americans meet. Sadly, these fats can increase levels of bad cholesterol, and your risk of stroke and heart disease.⁴ About a third of saturated fat comes from prepared foods containing cheese or meat—foods like burgers, tacos, and pizza—as well as dairy products, snacks, and sweets.¹

Finally, the guidelines advise eating fewer than 2,300 milligrams per day of salt—a little less than a teaspoon. That's a guideline that nearly all Americans are failing to meet. But it's not something to ignore. That's because too much salt can increase blood pressure, which also increases risks of heart disease and stroke.³

Don't know where to begin? Stop by and we'll have a chat. I can offer you a tip or two!

Nothing herein constitutes medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, or is a substitute for professional advice. You should always seek the advice of your physician or other medical professional if you have questions or concerns about a medical condition.

Sources:

1. HealthDay: "New U.S. Dietary Guidelines: Limit Sugar and Salt, Boost Fruit and Veggie Intake." Available at: https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/news/fullstory_156575.html Accessed 1-29-16.
2. HealthDay: "Sugary Drinks Tied to Increase in Deep Belly Fat." Available at: https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/news/fullstory_156625.html Accessed 1-29-16.
3. HealthDay: "Americans Still Consume Too Much Salt: CDC." Available at: https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/news/fullstory_156574.html Accessed 1-29-16.
4. AHA: "Saturated Fats: Available at: http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/HealthyEating/Nutrition/Saturated-Fats_UCM_301110_Article.jsp#.VqveillERUs Accessed 1-29-16.