



Messaging topic: Healthy Eating Patterns
To respond to: "Free from" dieting fads
Date developed: March 5, 2019

Healthy Eating Patterns Overview:

There is more than one way to eat healthfully and everyone has a preferred eating style. Healthy eating patterns encompass all food and beverage choices over time, providing an adaptable, personalized framework tailored to individual preferences, culture, traditions and budget. Choose a variety of nutrient-dense foods from the food groups – Dairy, Vegetables, Fruits, Grains and Protein – to build healthy eating patterns that aid in optimal growth and development and reduce the risk of chronic disease.

Key Messages

- “All five food groups are important. They all provide a variety of important nutrients that make up healthy eating styles. This means there’s no need to eliminate food groups or conform to a single eating style – there is flexibility through moderation, variety and balance to enjoy foods and eat well.” *2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*
- Vegan diets, which eliminate all animal foods including dairy and meat, tend to fall short in nutrients like calcium, vitamins D and B-12, iron, zinc, iodine and omega-3 fatty acids. These nutrients are essential for children’s optimal physical and cognitive growth and development.
- Milk and dairy foods play an important role in healthy eating patterns.
- Scientific research confirms that milk, yogurt and cheese offer a unique package of nutrients – including calcium, vitamin D, potassium, protein and much more – that work together to provide multiple health benefits, including optimal growth and development in children and reduced risk of chronic diseases.
- All three eating patterns recommended by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (Healthy U.S.-Style Eating Pattern, Healthy Vegetarian Eating Pattern and Healthy Mediterranean-Style Eating Pattern) recommend two to three servings of low-fat and fat-free dairy because milk, yogurt and cheese provide important nutrients for health.
- Dairy foods offer health attributes that are different from plant-based and other animal source foods, playing an integral role in supporting overall health.
- Dairy milk is rich in nutrients such as potassium, calcium and phosphorus that kids and adults need for good health.
- Specific nutrients found in highly fortified foods or supplements do not have as much impact as a balanced eating pattern. A mix of foods eaten together from food groups



such as dairy, vegetables and fruits have greater impact than the sum of their parts.

- Consuming more of the under-consumed food groups, including Dairy, Vegetables and Fruits, can help close nutrient gaps that exist among Americans of all ages.
- There is a growing body of evidence that links the consumption of milk and dairy foods to a wide range of health benefits, from well-studied associations such as controlling blood pressure and improving bone health to newer associations such as reducing the risk of diabetes and heart disease.¹
- Studies that examine whole foods like milk, cheese, yogurt and other fermented dairy food suggest that many nutrients work in synergy to contribute to more favorable health outcomes compared to the results in single-nutrient studies.
- The combination of nutrients and their unique interactions in milk, yogurt and cheese enhances the quality of eating patterns and contributes to optimal health.
- Milk and many dairy foods are heart-healthy.
- Studies show that adults who consume dairy foods, such as milk, yogurt and cheese, are less likely to have heart disease, type 2 diabetes or high blood pressure.
- Consuming the recommended servings from the dairy food group is linked to improved bone health and may reduce the risk of osteoporosis.
- From whole to fat-free to lactose-free, all dairy milk is rich in nutrients and play a role in optimal health.

¹ *Scientific Report of the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee*. Health.gov.
<https://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015-scientific-report/>. Updated May 22, 2018. Accessed May 22, 2018.