



## 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans Messaging Overview

### SUMMARY HIGHLIGHTS & KEY MESSAGING

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#### **Dietary Guidelines Overview**

*The newly released 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans provide recommendations on what Americans should eat and drink to promote health and help prevent chronic diseases. They also serve as the basis for federal nutrition programs. Using current science, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services update the Dietary Guidelines every five years.*

- The foods and beverages that people eat have a profound impact on their health. The scientific connection between food and health is well-documented, with substantial evidence showing that healthy dietary patterns can help people achieve and maintain good health and reduce the risk of chronic diseases in all life stages.
- A fundamental principle of the Dietary Guidelines is that everyone, no matter their age, race, ethnicity, economic circumstances or health status, can benefit from shifting food and beverage choices to better support healthy dietary patterns.
- The Dietary Guidelines are an important tool for health professionals, policymakers and many other professionals, and they are part of a complex, comprehensive approach to promote health and reduce chronic disease risk.

#### **Dairy's Role in a Healthy Eating Pattern**

*The updated Dietary Guidelines reinforce the important role of dairy foods like milk, cheese and yogurt in supporting the health and well-being of people across their life span. Dairy foods offer a unique package of nutrients that would otherwise be underconsumed in the American diet.*

- Dairy continues to be recognized as a distinct food group, with consistent daily servings as previously recommended in the Dietary Guidelines.
- Three servings of dairy foods are recommended in the 2,000-calorie Healthy U.S.-Style and Healthy Vegetarian dietary patterns for Americans 9 years and older. Two servings are recommended as part of the 2,000-calorie Healthy Mediterranean-Style Dietary Pattern for American adults (ages 19+).
- Evidence continues to show that dairy foods like milk, yogurt and cheese offer a unique package of nutrients that work together to provide multiple health benefits, including optimal growth and development in children and reduced risk of developing chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes and heart disease. The wide variety of milk and dairy foods available provides many options to meet personal needs, tastes and preferences.



- Most Americans are not consuming enough dairy to meet their nutritional needs. Dairy foods continue to be affirmed as a source of three of the four nutrients of public health concern, specifically potassium, calcium and vitamin D, as well as iodine for pregnant women.
- The dairy food group includes milk, yogurt, cheese, milk-based desserts and fortified soy milk and yogurt. Other plant-based products are not included within the food group because their nutrient compositions are not equivalent to dairy.
- Milk, yogurt and cheese are important for children's health, growth and development and are included in the first-ever healthy eating patterns recommended for infants and toddlers.
- Dairy serving recommendations for pregnant and lactating women do not differ from other adults, but the Dietary Guidelines emphasize the importance of meeting these recommendations to ensure adequate choline intake—a nutrient found in dairy whose needs may rise during pregnancy and lactation.
- When viewed holistically, dairy foods provide health benefits greater than the sum of their individual nutrients and can support overall good health.

## **Dietary Patterns**

*Nutrition science has evolved to place more emphasis on the quality of foods and beverages consumed over time—such as over the course of a day or week—rather than any specific meal or single eating occasion. Eating patterns over time may be a better predictor of overall health status and disease risk than individual foods or nutrients because people consume food and beverages in combination to create a dietary pattern.*

- A dietary pattern is the combination of foods and beverages that makes up an individual's complete dietary intake over time. An eating pattern may better predict overall health status and disease risk than focusing on individual foods or nutrients.
- Nutrients and foods are not consumed in isolation. Instead, they work synergistically to affect health. That is why educating and encouraging people to develop a healthy dietary pattern is important and considered a better predictor of health outcomes.
- A healthy dietary pattern can benefit all individuals regardless of age, race, ethnicity or current health status. The Dietary Guidelines are a framework that can be customized to individual needs and preferences and adapted to the food choices of the diverse cultures in the United States.
- Consistent evidence shows that a healthy eating pattern is associated with beneficial outcomes for all-cause mortality, cardiovascular disease, overweight and obesity, type 2 diabetes, bone health and certain types of cancer (breast and colorectal).



- Throughout the country and world, the consequences of COVID-19 have led to significant increases in food insecurity and hunger, further increasing susceptibility to both infectious and diet-related chronic diseases. These parallel epidemics emphasize the critical importance of improving dietary patterns.

## **Diet Quality**

*Focusing on a variety of nutrient-dense foods, while being mindful of portion sizes, should be the foundation of any eating pattern. Eating patterns that are associated with beneficial health outcomes include a higher intake of whole and minimally processed foods, as well as lower consumption of processed meats, sugar-sweetened foods and drinks, and refined grains.*

- Evidence continues to show that diet quality is low for many children and families in California and across the United States. Today, more than half of adults have one or more diet-related chronic diseases.
- The Dietary Guidelines define nutrient-dense foods and beverages as those that provide vitamins, minerals and other health-promoting components and have little added sugars, saturated fat and sodium.
- Vegetables, fruits, whole grains, seafood, eggs, beans, peas, lentils, unsalted nuts and seeds, fat-free and low-fat dairy products, and lean meats and poultry—when prepared with no or little added sugars, saturated fat and sodium— are nutrient-dense foods.

## **Life Stages**

*The Dietary Guidelines acknowledge the importance of healthy eating across the life span by tailoring recommendations to address five key life stages from infancy to older adulthood. This is the first time the Dietary Guidelines includes recommendations for healthy eating patterns for infants and toddlers ages birth to 24 months.*

- This edition of the Dietary Guidelines highlights the importance of encouraging healthy dietary patterns at five life stages: infancy and toddlerhood, childhood and adolescence, adulthood, pregnancy and lactation, and older adulthood.
- The science shows it is never too late to start and maintain a healthy dietary pattern, which can yield health benefits in the short term and cumulatively over years.
- At every life stage—infancy and toddlerhood, childhood and adolescence, adulthood, pregnancy and lactation, and older adulthood—it is never too early or too late to eat healthfully.
- For the first time, the Dietary Guidelines recommends healthy eating patterns for infants and toddlers from birth to 24 months. This life stage is especially important as early food preferences influence food and beverage choices later in life.



## **Collaborative Strategies to Support Healthy Eating**

*The 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans serve as a catalyst to spark collaborative action, nutrition policy and educational efforts, which can increase access to healthful foods and beverages and support adoption of healthy eating patterns for all ages and in all places where people live, learn, work, play and gather.*

- Supporting access to nutrition education and nutrient-dense foods, including milk and dairy, will be critical to ensuring children are supported to grow healthfully and reach their full potential.
- Comprehensive, coordinated strategies built on the science-based foundation of the Dietary Guidelines—and a commitment to drive these strategies over time across sectors and settings—can help all Americans consume healthy dietary patterns, achieve and maintain good health, and reduce the risk of chronic diseases.
- Although individuals ultimately decide what and how much to consume, their personal relationships, environments and other factors such as access to healthy and affordable food strongly influence their food and beverage choices.
- Health professionals, communities, businesses, industries, organizations, governments and other segments of society all play a role in supporting individuals and families in making choices that align with the Dietary Guidelines and in ensuring that all people have access to a healthy and affordable food supply.
- Federal programs that support families in choosing a healthy diet and improving access to healthy food are important resources and are highlighted throughout the Dietary Guidelines.

## **Future Research Directions**

*The Dietary Guidelines are a reflection of the current body of evidence on a variety of health topics and are an important tool for the next five years. Nutrition science is continuously evolving and expanding the understanding of nutrition. Dairy Council of California is proud to track, aggregate and elevate important nutrition research and trends as they emerge and share insights learned with its partners.*

- More research is encouraged that will look at various functional aspects of healthy eating patterns such as foods associated with boosting immunity and gut health, which presents an important opportunity for dairy foods.
- Despite growing scientific evidence showing beneficial or neutral effects of dairy on chronic disease risk at all fat levels, the Dietary Guidelines does not recommend consumption of high-fat dairy foods. The 2020 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee encouraged more research focused on the food matrix and its relationship to saturated fat and health outcomes. This would provide additional evidence that high-quality foods, like certain full-fat dairy foods, are distinguished as health-promoting.



For a high level overview of the 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommendations, including changes and specific recommendations related to milk and dairy foods, visit Dairy Council of California's [blog](#).

## **REFERENCE**

US Department of Agriculture and US Department of Health and Human Services. *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025*. 9th Edition. December 2020. Available at [DietaryGuidelines.gov](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov).