



## Dietary Guidelines 2010

Last week the federal government finally released the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Though they were running a little late with the report (it *is* 2011, after all), this latest edition of the dietary guidelines does a nice job of highlighting simple and realistic goals for improving health.

As required by law, the Dietary Guidelines have been published every 5 years since 1980. They are a joint effort between the U.S. Departments of Agriculture (USDA) and Health and Human Services (HHS). They are compiled by a committee of 13 experts in nutrition and health after two years of a rigorous evidenced-based review process, and are meant to help guide individual and policy decisions on food and health.

This year's committee came up with 23 *key recommendations* divided among four main categories. The first major category advises us to **balance calories to manage weight**. While mathematically this can become a pretty complex equation the idea is fairly simple: match calories used for energy with calories taken in as food or drink. Small changes can make a big difference, and our health as a nation could greatly improve if we made efforts to increase activity and decrease calories consumed.

The second set of recommendations highlights **food and food components to reduce**. This list may sound familiar: sodium (especially for adults 51 and older, African Americans, or those with hypertension, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease), saturated fats, cholesterol, *trans* fats, added sugars, and refined grains. Alcohol, if consumed, should be limited to one drink/day for women and two/day for men.

The largest set of recommendations endorses **foods and nutrients to increase**. I particularly liked the positive feel of this section, focusing on good food that we should eat more of. This list should not have many surprises either: fruits and vegetables (especially the dark-green, red, and orange ones!), beans and peas, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, and lean protein sources. This section went on to discuss nutrients of importance for the general public: potassium, fiber, calcium, and vitamin D. Advice for specific populations, such as women capable of becoming pregnant (get your iron and folate), are pregnant or breastfeeding (eat fish, but only the right types), and adults 50 years or older (ensure adequate vitamin B12) was also included.

Though not covered in previous versions, these guidelines also offered a fourth section on **building healthy eating patterns** and went on to recommend strategies for helping Americans make more healthy choices. The authors recognize that our environment promotes overconsumption of food and discourages physical activity: two pretty big hurdles to overcome. This is where policy decisions, such as making healthy food more affordable and readily available and supporting community physical activity choices can help to shape individual (and national) health.

Though the latest message has been tailored carefully to meet the needs of a changing nation the overall theme of the Dietary Guidelines 2010 is remarkably similar to its first release over 30 years ago: maintain calorie balance and focus on nutrient-dense foods. If you're interested in further information feel free to visit [www.dietaryguidelines.gov](http://www.dietaryguidelines.gov). Kentz Willis, M.S., is the University of Wyoming Extension Educator in Nutrition and Food Safety for Northeast Wyoming. He can be reached via email at [kwillis3@uwyo.edu](mailto:kwillis3@uwyo.edu).