



## MyPyramid 2005

USDA's Revised Food Guidance System

### Summary

USDA has released the new food guidance system, **MyPyramid**, to replace the Food Guide Pyramid. MyPyramid includes a new symbol (a pyramid graphic and a slogan) and an interactive website. Instead of the horizontal bands in the pyramid, however, the new pyramid is sliced vertically into six colored sections. Different widths show the *proportion* (not number of servings) of each food group -- grains, vegetables, fruits, oils, dairy, meat, and beans -- you should eat daily. The symbol is meant to represent making healthy food choices, being active, and accomplishing both things by taking small steps. The interactive website provides in-depth information and customization to meet the varying needs of individuals. The site also provides resources for professionals working with the public.

### Background

The original Food Guide Pyramid was released in 1992. To update the pyramid, USDA incorporated newer science, and current nutrition and physical activity recommendations. The recommendations included both the new Dietary Reference Intakes (DRI's) and the 2005 US Dietary Guidelines. USDA also updated food composition data and analyzed more current information on patterns of food consumption. With all of this information, USDA developed new *daily food intake patterns*. These patterns are amounts of food from the various food groups (e.g. milk, vegetables, etc.) and subgroups (e.g. within milk: milk or yogurt; within vegetables: dark green vegetables, starchy vegetables) that meet current recommendations at different calorie levels. USDA developed patterns for 12 calorie levels, ranging from 1000-3200 calories. These patterns were published in the 2005 US Dietary Guidelines, and provide the technical basis for the new pyramid. There are changes from the old Food Guide Pyramid, and these are summarized in the new guidelines. A summary of the US Dietary Guidelines and links to the guidelines are located at: [www.fooddomain.msu.edu/pdfs/2005DietaryGuidelines.PDF](http://www.fooddomain.msu.edu/pdfs/2005DietaryGuidelines.PDF)

The changes places more emphasis on fruits and vegetables, less emphasis on grains (with more focus on those grains being whole grains), and includes physical activity.

To try and increase consumer adherence to the food guide system, USDA created a system of tools that provides more specific, consumer-friendly advice to foster behavioral changes. The new symbol and the system of tools were developed and revised following consumer research. USDA would like the system to be delivered through multiple channels (e.g., print, internet, and media) that connect with the individual and tailor information to their needs. Future plans include the phased development of tools targeted for various audiences, such as a pyramid for children.

## Resources available

The website ([www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov)) contains a number of tools and resources. Tools are available for the public to customize MyPyramid for themselves, while other resources are targeted to educators to assist them in using MyPyramid with consumers. The organization of the website requires some exploration to locate the resources.

### Consumer resources

Tools for use by the public include: My Pyramid Plan, My Pyramid Tracker, Inside the Pyramid, and Tips & Resources. My Pyramid Plan and My Pyramid Tracker are the interactive tools. Much of the information given on these pages is available in a format for printing, and links are provided within the web pages for the handouts which are summarized in the educator resources section.

- *MyPyramid Plan* – provides a quick estimate of what and how much food a person should eat from the different food groups by entering age, gender and activity level. The estimate provided to the consumer will be one of twelve calorie levels, and the dietary pattern that will meet recommendations for that calorie level. The twelve calorie levels range from 1000-3200 calories.  
[www.mypyramid.gov/mypyramid/index.aspx](http://www.mypyramid.gov/mypyramid/index.aspx)
- *MyPyramid Tracker* – provides more detailed information on diet quality and physical activity status by comparing a day's worth of foods entered by the consumer with current nutrition guidance. Relevant nutrition and physical activity messages are tailored to someone's desire to maintain current weight or to lose weight. Consumers can save their information and enter new foods for on-going tracking.  
[www.mypyramidtracker.gov](http://www.mypyramidtracker.gov)
- *Inside MyPyramid* – provides in-depth information for every food group, including recommended daily amounts in commonly used measures, like cups and ounces, with examples and everyday tips. This section also includes recommendations for choosing healthy oils, discretionary calories (e.g. added sugars and fats) and physical activity.  
[www.pyramid.gov/pyramid](http://www.pyramid.gov/pyramid)
- *Tips & Resources* – provides tips and resources that include downloadable suggestions on all the food groups and physical activity, tips for particular circumstances like eating out and vegetarian meals, a sample menu, and other resources.  
[www.mypyramid.gov/tips\\_resources](http://www.mypyramid.gov/tips_resources)

## Educator resources

There are a number of materials to help educators use MyPyramid with their target audiences. These materials include both documents for educators and handouts that educators can use with consumers.

### ✓ Documents for educators

- *Getting Started* – a brief overview of MyPyramid to assist educators in using the tool with consumers (2 pages).  
[www.mypyramid.gov/downloads/MyPyramid\\_Getting\\_Started.pdf](http://www.mypyramid.gov/downloads/MyPyramid_Getting_Started.pdf)
- *Anatomy of MyPyramid* – a one-pager that explains how the parts of the symbol can be used to illustrate the broad themes of MyPyramid (\*see below for the symbol and themes.)  
[www.mypyramid.gov/downloads/MyPyramid\\_Anatomy.pdf](http://www.mypyramid.gov/downloads/MyPyramid_Anatomy.pdf)
- *Education Framework* – a framework of ideas that can be used to develop consumer messages (19 pages). The information is organized by topics areas which include the calories and physical activities, the food groups, and food safety. Each topic area includes:
  - **What** actions should be taken for a healthy diet,
  - **How** these actions can be implemented, and
  - **Why** this action is important for health (the key benefits).[www.mypyramid.gov/downloads/MyPyramid\\_education\\_framework.pdf](http://www.mypyramid.gov/downloads/MyPyramid_education_framework.pdf)
- *Food Intake Pattern Calorie Levels* – a one-page listing of calorie levels for people by age, gender and activity level.  
[www.mypyramid.gov/downloads/MyPyramid\\_Calorie\\_Levels.pdf](http://www.mypyramid.gov/downloads/MyPyramid_Calorie_Levels.pdf)
- *MyPyramid Food Intake Patterns* – a two-page summary of the types and amounts of foods to eat for 12 different calorie levels (1000-3200 calories).  
[www.mypyramid.gov/downloads/MyPyramid\\_Food\\_Intake\\_Patterns.pdf](http://www.mypyramid.gov/downloads/MyPyramid_Food_Intake_Patterns.pdf)
- *Graphics* – the MyPyramid symbol is available to be downloaded in color, half-tone and black and white. File formats are JPEG and high resolution Tiff. The MyPyramid symbol and pictures of the food groups are also available as EPS, which requires a graphics program such as Adobe Illustrator to use.  
[www.mypyramid.gov/professionals/graphics\\_resources.html](http://www.mypyramid.gov/professionals/graphics_resources.html)

✓ Handouts

- *Sample Menu* – a 2000 calorie/day, one week sample menu that incorporates the recommendations of the food guidance system. This is a three-page, color document.  
[www.mypyramid.gov/downloads/sample\\_menu.pdf](http://www.mypyramid.gov/downloads/sample_menu.pdf)
- *Mini Poster* – a poster that includes the pyramid graphic and, key messages for each of the food groups, amounts of food for a 2000 calorie diet, and messages on activity and discretionary calories.  
[www.mypyramid.gov/downloads/MiniPoster.pdf](http://www.mypyramid.gov/downloads/MiniPoster.pdf)
- *MyPyramid Results Downloads* – individual food group recommendations for each of the 12 calorie levels (1000-3200 calories), provided as one-page color handouts.  
[www.mypyramid.gov/professionals/results\\_downld.html](http://www.mypyramid.gov/professionals/results_downld.html)
- *Food Tracking Worksheet* – a worksheet to help individual track food and activity choices each day, provided as one-page color handouts specific to each of the 12 individual calorie levels.  
[www.mypyramid.gov/professionals/food\\_tracking\\_wksht.html](http://www.mypyramid.gov/professionals/food_tracking_wksht.html)

✓ Website links

University of Illinois Extension has developed one-page handouts with key messages about the food groups, weight and physical activity and limiting fat/sugar/salt, as well as a one- and two-pager on food safety. These are available at:

<http://web.aces.uiuc.edu/wellnessways/mconnors/index.html>

To order materials from a commercial site (not available yet from USDA).

[www.foodandhealth.com](http://www.foodandhealth.com)

## MyPyramid Themes



The broad themes encompassed by MyPyramid are:

- *Personalization*, demonstrated by the MyPyramid Web site. To find a personalized recommendation of the kinds and amounts of food to eat each day, individuals can use the website's interactive tools. Educators can also use the site to develop materials specific to their target audience.
- *Gradual improvement*, encouraged by the slogan, "Steps to a Healthier You." It suggests that individuals can benefit from taking small steps to improve their diet and lifestyle each day.
- *Physical activity*, represented by the steps and the person climbing them, as a reminder of the importance of daily physical activity.
- *Variety*, symbolized by the six color bands representing the five food groups of MyPyramid and oils. Foods from all groups are needed each day for good health.
  - *Orange* - grains
  - *Green* - vegetables
  - *Red* - fruits
  - *Yellow* - oils
  - *Blue* - milk
  - *Purple* - meat & beans
- *Moderation*, represented by the narrowing of each food group from bottom to top. The wider base stands for foods with little or no solid fats, added sugars, or caloric sweeteners. These should be selected more often to get the most nutrition from calories consumed. An example would be potatoes, where a baked potato is at the bottom of the vegetable band, and French fries (with their added fat) are at the top of the vegetable band.
- *Proportionality*, shown by the different widths of the food group bands. The widths suggest how much food a person should choose from each group. The widths are just a general guide, not exact proportions. The website provides tools to tailor the amounts for the individual.