

## Living Well and Recognizing National Nutrition Month

Develop an eating plan for lifelong health. Too often people adopt the latest food fad rather than focusing on overall health for themselves. Get back to the basics and use recommended dietary guidelines and [MyPyramid.gov](http://MyPyramid.gov) as your guide to healthy eating. MyPyramid replaces the Food Guide Pyramid introduced in 1992. MyPyramid is part of an overall food guidance system that emphasizes the need for a more individualized approach to improving diet and lifestyle. It incorporates recommendations from the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, released by the US Department of Agriculture and US Department of Health and Human Services in January 2005. The new food guidance system utilizes interactive technology found on [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov). The interactive activities make it easy for individuals to enter their age, gender and physical activity level to obtain a more personalized recommendation on their daily calorie level based on the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The website features many resources and worksheets that can prove beneficial to use. There is also a child-friendly version on MyPyramid for teachers and children ages six to eleven. This version can be found at [www.mypyramid.gov/kids](http://www.mypyramid.gov/kids).

Choose foods sensibly by looking at the big picture. A single food or meal doesn't make or break a healthful diet. When consumed in moderation in the appropriate portion size, all foods can fit into a healthful diet. A healthful diet emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products; includes lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts; and is low in saturated fats, *trans* fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars. Keep a bowl of whole fruit on the table, counter, or in the refrigerator. Refrigerate cut-up fruit to store for later. Consider convenience when shopping. Buy pre-cut packages of fruit (such as melon or pineapple chunks) for a healthy snack in seconds. Choose packaged fruits that do not have added sugars. Buy fresh vegetables in season. They cost less and are likely to be at their peak flavor. Stock up on frozen vegetables for quick and easy cooking in the microwave. To eat more whole grains, substitute a whole-grain product for a refined product – such as eating whole-wheat bread instead of white bread or brown rice instead of white rice. It's important to substitute the whole-grain product for the refined one, rather than adding the whole-grain product.

Learn how to spot a food fad. Unreasonable or exaggerated claims that eating (or not eating) specific foods, nutrient supplements or combinations of foods may cure disease or offer quick weight loss are key features of fad diets.

Find your balance between food and physical activity. Regular physical activity is important for your overall health and fitness, plus it helps control body weight, promotes a feeling of well-being and reduces the risk of chronic diseases. Choose activities that you enjoy and can do regularly. Fitting activity into a daily routine can be easy—such as taking a brisk 10 minute walk to and from the parking lot, bus stop, or subway station. Or, join an exercise class. Keep it interesting by trying something different on alternate days. What's important is to be active most days of the week and make it part of daily routine. For example, to reach a 30-minute goal for the day, walk the dog for 10 minutes before and after work, and add a 10 minute walk at lunchtime. Or, swim 3 times a week and take a yoga class on the other days. Make sure to do at least 10 minutes of the activity at a time, shorter bursts of activity will not have the same health benefits. To be ready anytime, keep some comfortable clothes and a pair of walking or running shoes in the car and at the office.