



# Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
[www.dietaryguidelines.gov](http://www.dietaryguidelines.gov)





## Key Recommendations

Individuals should meet the following recommendations as part of a healthy eating pattern and while staying within their calorie needs.

Increase vegetable and fruit intake.

Eat a variety of vegetables, especially dark-green and red and orange vegetables and beans and peas.

Consume at least half of all grains as whole grains. Increase whole-grain intake by replacing refined grains with whole grains.

Increase intake of fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products, such as milk, yogurt, cheese, or fortified soy beverages.<sup>58</sup>

Choose a variety of protein foods, which include seafood, lean meat and poultry, eggs, beans and peas, soy products, and unsalted nuts and seeds.

Increase the amount and variety of seafood consumed by choosing seafood in place of some meat and poultry.

Replace protein foods that are higher in solid fats with choices that are lower in solid fats and calories and/or are sources of oils.

Use oils to replace solid fats where possible.

Choose foods that provide more potassium, dietary fiber, calcium, and vitamin D, which are nutrients of concern in American diets. These foods include vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and milk and milk products.

## Recommendations for Specific Population Groups

### *Women capable of becoming pregnant*<sup>59</sup>

Choose foods that supply heme iron, which is more readily absorbed by the body, additional iron sources, and enhancers of iron absorption such as vitamin C-rich foods.

Consume 400 micrograms (mcg) per day of synthetic folic acid (from fortified foods and/or supplements) in addition to food forms of folate from a varied diet.<sup>60</sup>

### *Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding*<sup>59</sup>

Consume 8 to 12 ounces of seafood per week from a variety of seafood types.

Due to their methyl mercury content, limit white (albacore) tuna to 6 ounces per week and do not eat the following four types of fish: tilefish, shark, swordfish, and king mackerel.

If pregnant, take an iron supplement as recommended by an obstetrician or other health care provider.

### *Individuals ages 50 years and older*

Consume foods fortified with vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, such as fortified cereals, or dietary supplements.

58. Fortified soy beverages have been marketed as “soymilk,” a product name consumers could see in supermarkets and consumer materials. However, FDA’s regulations do not contain provisions for the use of the term soymilk. Therefore, in this document, the term “fortified soy beverage” includes products that may be marketed as soymilk.

59. Includes adolescent girls.

60. “Folic acid” is the synthetic form of the nutrient, whereas “folate” is the form found naturally in foods.

addition, individuals should choose unsalted nuts and seeds to help reduce sodium intake. Beans and peas, as discussed previously under **Vegetables and Fruits**, confer health benefits as sources of important nutrients such as dietary fiber.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

See **Chapter 5** for examples of how a variety of protein foods can be incorporated into eating patterns that can confer health benefits.

In recent years, moderate evidence has emerged about the health benefits of consuming seafood. Therefore, the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010*

includes a new quantitative recommendation for seafood intake. An intake of 8 or more ounces per week (less for young children), about 20% of total recommended intake of protein foods of a variety of seafood is recommended.<sup>67</sup> Additional information about seafood and the recommendations follows.

#### Seafood

Mean intake of seafood in the United States is approximately 3½ ounces per week, and increased intake is recommended. Seafood contributes a range of nutrients, notably the omega-3 fatty acids, eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). Moderate evidence shows that consumption of about 8 ounces<sup>68</sup> per week of a variety of seafood, which provide an average consumption of 250 mg per day of EPA and DHA, is associated with reduced cardiac deaths among individuals with and without pre-existing cardiovascular disease. Thus, this recommendation contributes to the prevention of heart disease. The recommendation is to consume seafood for the total package of benefits that seafood provides, including its EPA and DHA content.

Seafood choices can include those with higher and lower amounts of EPA and DHA, but, some choices with higher amounts should be included. Smaller amounts of seafood are recommended for children. (See Chapter 5 for specific information and recommendations.)

Moderate, consistent evidence shows that the health benefits from consuming a variety of seafood in the amounts recommended outweigh the health risks associated with methyl mercury, a heavy metal found in seafood in varying levels.<sup>69</sup> Benefits

are maximized with seafood higher in EPA and DHA but lower in methyl mercury. In addition, eating a variety of seafood, as opposed to just a few choices, is likely to reduce the amount of methyl mercury consumed from any one seafood type. Individuals who regularly consume more than the recommended amounts of seafood should choose a mix of seafood that emphasizes choices relatively low in methyl mercury. Appendix 11 lists common seafood varieties with the EPA+DHA and mercury content in a 4-ounce cooked portion. A total of 1,750 mg per week of EPA+DHA provides an average of 250 mg per day of these omega-3 fatty acids. Seafood varieties that are commonly consumed in the United States that are higher in EPA and DHA and lower in mercury include salmon, anchovies, herring, sardines, Pacific oysters, trout, and Atlantic and Pacific mackerel (*not* king mackerel, which is high in mercury).

In addition to the health benefits for the general public, the nutritional value of seafood is of particular importance during fetal growth and development, as well as in early infancy and childhood. Moderate evidence indicates that intake of omega-3 fatty acids, in particular DHA, from *at least* 8 ounces of seafood per week for women who are pregnant or breastfeeding is associated with improved infant health outcomes, such as visual and cognitive development. Therefore, it is recommended that women who are pregnant or breastfeeding consume at least 8 and up to 12 ounces<sup>68</sup> of a variety of seafood per week, from choices that are lower in methyl mercury. Obstetricians and pediatricians should provide guidance to women who are pregnant or breastfeeding to help them make healthy food choices that include seafood.

Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding should not eat four types of fish because they are high in methyl mercury. These are tilefish, shark, swordfish, and king mackerel (Appendix 11). Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding can eat all types of tuna, including white (albacore) and light canned tuna, but should limit white tuna to 6 ounces per week because it is higher in methyl mercury.

#### Oils

Fats with a high percentage of monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fatty acids are usually liquid at room temperature and are referred to as “oils” (see Figure

67. Protein foods recommendations for people who consume a vegetarian diet are described in Chapter 5.

68. Cooked, edible portion.

69. State and local advisories provide information to guide consumers who eat fish caught from local waters. This information can be found at [www.epa.gov/fishadvisories](http://www.epa.gov/fishadvisories). Accessed July 11, 2010.