

A Snapshot of Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA)

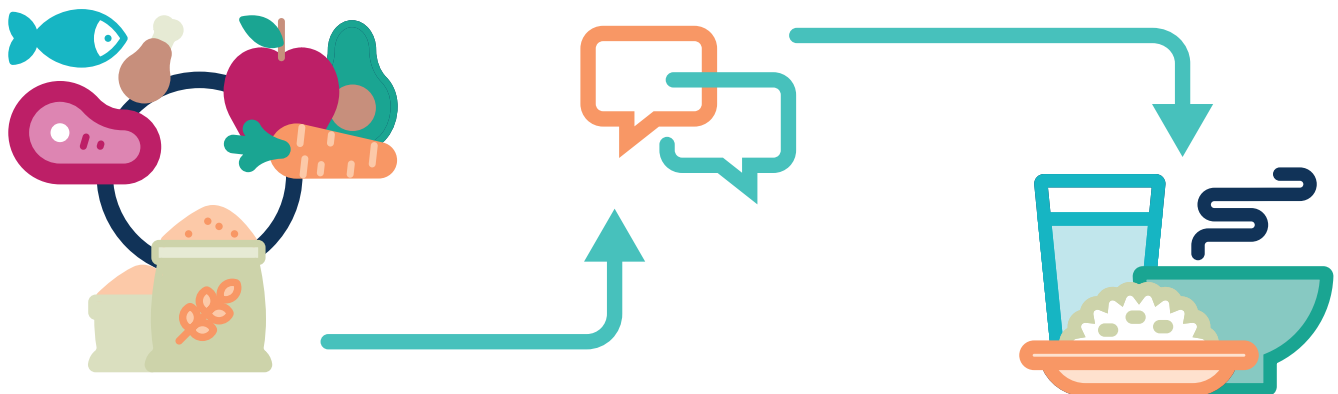
What foods should you eat? What foods should you limit? Where is more information needed?





The food and beverages you consume impact your health. The [Dietary Guidelines for Americans \(DGA\)](#), which have been published every five years since 1980, encourage a healthy dietary pattern at every life stage. They should be customized to reflect personal preferences, cultural traditions, and your budget. This resource provides a snapshot of the most recent changes to the DGA from the 2020–2025 DGA to the new 2025–2030 DGA, including which foods adults should eat to maintain health and reduce the risk of chronic disease, which foods should be limited based on a standard 2000-calorie diet, and what to do about conflicting guidance.





Why do the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) change? How are these changes communicated?

The DGA evolve based on new research related to food, people, and public health. A new DGA is typically released with a detailed explanation of the process, research, and evidence that add context to any changes from the previous DGA. This information helps healthcare professionals and nutrition programs, like school meals, put evidence-based recommendations into practice. The 2025–2030 DGA, released in January 2026, did not follow this process.



EAT	Is there a difference between the 2020 and 2025 DGA?	What You Need to Know and Do
 <p>Vegetables and Fruits</p>	<p>Both DGAs promote fruits and vegetables, as part of a healthy diet. While the serving recommendation is different between the two guidelines, overall, they both recommend making vegetables and fruits a large portion of your dietary patterns.</p>	<p>Continue to focus on nutrient-dense foods, including fruits and vegetables, as part of a healthy diet.</p> <p>Eat a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables in their original form. Wash them thoroughly before eating or cooking.</p> <p>Frozen, dried, or canned vegetables or fruits with no added sugars are also good options.</p>
 <p>Grains</p>	<p>The DGAs encourage consuming more whole grains over refined grains. However, the new DGAs decrease the recommended whole grain servings per day and do not include specific measurements, which can make terms like portions and serving size hard to interpret.</p>	<p>Whole grains, such as whole wheat bread, brown rice, oats, or quinoa, should make up at least half of the grains you eat each day.</p> <p>Prioritize fiber-rich, whole grains and eat fewer refined grains, like white bread, white rice, and most pastas, which have less fiber and fewer essential nutrients.</p>
 <p>Protein</p>	<p>The new DGA promote increased protein, but most Americans already meet or exceed these recommendations. The new DGA also promote animal protein—especially red meat—over plant-based protein, such as beans, peas, and lentils. Unlike plant-based protein, red meat is high in saturated fats and can be more expensive.</p>	<p>Protein is an important part of a balanced diet.</p> <p>Incorporate a variety of lean, protein-rich foods into your meals, with continued caution around processed or high-fat meats.</p>
 <p>Dairy</p>	<p>The new DGA recommend full-fat dairy while the 2020 DGA encouraged non- and low-fat milk. Research is mixed on how saturated fat in milk impacts health.*</p>	<p>Dairy* is an important source of essential vitamins and minerals, such as calcium, phosphorus, vitamins A and D, B vitamins, and protein. Whether you choose skim milk or whole milk, all varieties contain the same amount of these nutrients.</p> <p>Full-fat dairy does contain more saturated fat and calories than lower-fat varieties. Regardless of which type of milk you choose, it's important to make sure you limit saturated fat intake to no more than 10% of total daily calories.</p>

* If you are allergic to dairy proteins, cannot drink milk for other medical reasons, or follow a vegan diet, plant-based milk alternatives may be an appropriate dairy substitute. But, not all plant-based milks are the same, and many have lower nutrients than regular milk. Choose a product high in calcium and vitamin D, like soy milk, or consult your doctor or a dietitian to find the best variety to meet your nutritional needs.

LIMIT	Is there a difference between the 2020 and 2025 DGA?	What You Need to Know and Do
 <p>Highly Processed Foods and Added Sugars</p>	<p>Both DGAs encourage people to limit highly processed foods, particularly those with added sugars and excess sodium. However, the new DGA adds that all children under 10 years old should avoid all added sugars. The previous version had this limit for infants and toddlers up to 2 years old.</p>	<p>Avoid highly processed foods, like sodas, chips, and candy, that contain little or no real, natural ingredients.</p> <p>Limit added sugars, which provide high calories and no nutritional value. To identify added sugars, look for ingredients that include the word “sugar” or “syrup” or end in “-ose.”</p> <p>Limit added sugar intake to no more than 10% of total daily calories, or no more than 10g per meal.</p>
 <p>Saturated Fats</p>	<p>Both DGAs recommend limiting saturated fat intake to no more than 10% of total daily calories. However, the new DGA says butter and beef tallow are “healthy fats,” which is inconsistent with research showing they are high in saturated fat and increase the risk of heart disease.</p>	<p>Limit saturated fats in your diet. Saturated fats are primarily found in animal products and are usually solids at room temperature, such as red meat, full-fat dairy, fried items, and pizza.</p> <p>Maintain a limit of no more than 10% of total calories from saturated fat, while prioritizing healthier fats, such as avocados, nuts, plant-based oils, and seafood.</p>

This resource is a collaboration between Public Health Communications Collaborative and Healthy Eating Research. For more information on healthy eating, visit HealthyEatingResearch.org.