

MyPyramid—The New Tool for Diet Planning



In April 2005 USDA unveiled **MyPyramid**, a new symbol for their interactive Food Guidance System. Entitled “Steps to a Healthier You,” MyPyramid emphasizes an individualized approach to improving diet and lifestyle. Its goal is to provide nutrition advice that will help us live longer, better and healthier lives. MyPyramid replaces the Food Guide Pyramid introduced in 1992.

MyPyramid incorporates recommendations from the *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. Overall, MyPyramid translates that advice into 12 separate pyramids based on calorie needs (1000 to 3200 kcal/day).

The MyPyramid symbol represents the recommended proportion of foods from each food group to create a healthy diet. Physical activity is a new element in the symbol. Still, to get the individualized advice that is the hallmark of the plan, consumers need to utilize the web site, **MyPyramid.gov**. The USDA is also preparing a booklet that will summarize this information.

The symbol MyPyramid is designed to illustrate:

- **Personalization**, demonstrated by the MyPyramid Web site.
- **Gradual improvement**, encouraged by the statement, “Steps to a Healthier You.”
- **Physical activity**, represented by the steps and the person climbing them.

- **Variety**, symbolized by the six color bands representing the five food groups and oils. Foods from all groups are needed each day for good health. Orange is for grains, green is for vegetables, red is for fruits, yellow is for oils, blue is for milk and milk products, and purple is for meat and beans.

- **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 bands are wider for grains, vegetables, and fruits since these groups

should form the bulk of one's diet. The narrowest band is for oils, indicating these should be eaten sparingly. All the widths are just a general guide, however, and not exact proportions. Check MyPyramid.gov for the amount that is right for you.

- **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, and salt. These should be selected more often to get the most nutrition from calories consumed.

An innovative aspect of MyPyramid is the interactive technology found on MyPyramid.gov. This includes:

MyPyramid Plan - provides a quick estimate of what and how much food one should eat from the different food groups by entering age, gender, and activity level.

MyPyramid Tracker - provides more detailed information on diet quality and physical activity status by comparing a day's worth of foods eaten with current nutrition guidance. It allows the user to select from 8,000 foods and 600 activities. Nutrition and physical activity messages are tailored to the individual's need to maintain current weight or to lose weight.

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. The section

Anatomy of MyPyramid

One size doesn't fit all
USDA's new MyPyramid symbolizes a personalized approach to healthy eating and physical activity. The symbol has been designed to be simple. It has been developed to remind consumers to make healthy food choices and to be active every day. The different parts of the symbol are described below.

Activity
Activity is represented by the steps and the person climbing them, as a reminder of the importance of daily physical activity.

Moderation
Moderation is represented by the narrowing of each food group from bottom to top. The wider base stands for foods with little or no solid fats or added sugars. These should be selected more often. The narrower top area stands for foods containing more added sugars and solid fats. The more active you are, the more of these foods can fit into your diet.

Personalization
Personalization is shown by the person on the steps, the slope, and the URL. Find the steps and amounts of food to eat each day at MyPyramid.gov.

MyPyramid.gov

STEPS TO A HEALTHIER YOU

Proportionality
Proportionality is 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. Check the Web site for how much is right for you.

Variety
Variety is symbolized by the 6 color bands representing the 5 food groups of the Pyramid and oils. This illustrates that foods from all groups are needed each day for good health.

Gradual Improvement
Gradual improvement is encouraged by the steps. It suggests that individuals can benefit from taking small steps to improve their diet and lifestyle each day.