The Government Finally Updated Its Nutrition Advice. We Have Notes.

7 MIN READ

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More protein, real fats, and a curious callout to alcohol: here’s what the new guidelines mean for your plate.

The government just flipped the food pyramid (even though we haven’t used that since 2011… remember MyPlate?) and longevity experts are mostly applauding. The new **2025–2030 Dietary Guidelines** finally catch up to what the science (and our readers) have known for a while: more protein, real fats, and no ultra-processed foods. But there are a few head-scratchers in here too.

Here’s what changed, what it means for your plate, and where the guidelines still fall short.

5 Takeaways from the New Nutrition Guidelines:

1. Real, Whole Foods for The Win

The overarching message of the new guidelines is that real foods should take precedence in your diet—something we can wholeheartedly stand behind.

The opening statement nods to the fact that 90 percent of healthcare spending goes towards managing chronic diseases — many of which are driven not by genetics but by lifestyle, including a lack of movement and the Standard American Diet, which is rich in ultraprocessed foods (UPFs). According to a **2025 review published in the *BMJ***, greater intake of ultraprocessed foods is linked to 32 adverse health outcomes including a higher risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, depression,

and all-cause mortality. For anyone interested in aging healthily and living well, steering clear of UPFs is one of the most profound shifts you make.

An important caveat: This isn't to say that all processed foods are inherently "bad" or worth avoiding. Some minimally processed foods — including frozen and canned vegetables and yogurt — are included in the new food pyramid, which can be equally beneficial for your health as they are in terms of accessibility and cost. (As far as produce goes, they suggest aiming for three servings of vegetables and two servings of fruit daily. The more color and variety, the better). When in doubt, minimize your intake of fast food, refined carbohydrates, and desserts. In addition, one new helpful callout is to have no more than 10 grams of added sugar at each meal.

2. More Protein, A Lot More

Another big win: The recommended daily allowance (RDA) for protein received a long-overdue boost. The new RDA is 1.2 grams to 1.6 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight (which looks like 82 to 109 grams for someone who weighs 150 pounds). This replaces the former RDA of 0.8 grams per kilogram of body weight — a benchmark so that your body could fulfill basic functions. Yet we're interested in optimizing muscle maintenance, workout recovery, and longevity potential — and we're glad the government is now on board with this mission, too.

The new food pyramid includes photos of red meat, chicken, salmon, tuna, eggs, cheese, milk, and yogurt as good sources of protein to include in your diet. Less obvious but still crucial, the guidelines also call for adding plant protein to the mix, which just might help you live longer. A **2025 study published in *Nature Communications*** found that higher intake of plant protein was associated with lower mortality rates in adults. Another **2024 study published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition** found a 1:2 **animal-to-plant protein** ratio is ideal, but most Americans eat closer to 3:1 in the opposite direction.

All things considered, you can optimize your protein sources by:

- Opting for grass-red or pasture-raised animal proteins
- Avoiding ultraprocessed meat like salami and cold cuts
- Eating fish at least twice a week, which may **help protect against dementia**
- Using tofu, tempeh, beans, lentils, or peas as primary protein sources for some meals
- Snacking on edamame, nuts, and seeds to simultaneously boost your intake of protein and fiber

Another solid rule of thumb: Following the **30-gram rule**, or aiming for 30 grams of protein at each meal. A high-protein snack or two — like a protein shake or edamame and nuts — can also help you hit your macro goals and keep cravings at bay.

3. Fat Is Back, But Read the Fine Print

Fats haven't always been celebrated, but the new guidelines place them on the same tier as protein. You'll find healthy fats in some of the animal foods shared above — such as meat, poultry, eggs, seafood, and dairy — but also in plant-based sources like avocados and nuts. Olive oil's been singled out as a **healthy fat to prioritize when cooking** or preparing meals, with butter and beef tallow as other fat options.

A **2022 study in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*** found that higher olive oil intake was associated with a lower risk of all-cause and cause-specific mortality. It also found that replacing butter (and other fat sources like mayo and margarine) with olive oil was associated with low mortality risk.

So why are saturated fat sources like butter, beef tallow, and full-fat dairy also on the list? That's where things get murkier, and lobbying from Big Dairy is likely at play. Many health professionals wave a red flag at willfully adding more saturated fat into

your diet. “There is an overwhelming amount of research that links saturated fat — which is found in foods like butter, full-fat milk, beef tallow, and red meat — to heart disease, which is the leading cause of death in the United States,” says registered dietitian **Ashley Kitchens, MPH, RDN, LDN**. That said, it’s probably in your best interest to lean on these sources sparingly. Consumption shouldn’t surpass 10 percent of your daily calories — likely less if you have specific health issues such as high cholesterol.

4. Carbs Get Demoted (Sort Of)

Carbohydrates are deemphasized in the new inverted pyramid, and whole grains are placed at a lower priority than protein, healthy fats, and produce. Nonetheless, the guidelines now call for two to four servings of whole grains daily, which can certainly factor into a well-rounded, healthy diet. (After all, they’re part and parcel of the Mediterranean diet, aka one of the healthiest and most-studied dietary protocols in the world.) Good sources include whole-wheat bread, brown rice, oats, barley, and quinoa. Most importantly, they should take precedence over refined grains and other ultraprocessed carbohydrates, including white bread, sugary breakfast cereals, and similar offenders.

Tim Spector, MD, a professor of epidemiology and scientific co-founder of ZOE, champions this shift. “For the first time in a long while, we’re seeing official guidance acknowledging something that researchers and clinicians have been observing for years: Many chronic diseases improve when refined carbohydrate intake is reduced,” he says.

Despite their lower status on the pyramid, whole grains — alongside **other healthy carbs** like fruits, vegetables, and legumes — can have a meaningful impact on your health and quality of life. In a **2025 study published in *JAMA Network Open***,

high-quality carb intake and total dietary fiber in midlife women boosted the odds of healthy aging and good health in older adulthood.

5. On Alcohol, They Blinked

The nod to alcohol has to be the most perplexing change of the bunch. The **2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans** advised drinking no more than two alcoholic beverages daily for men and one for women. However, the updated guidelines simply recommend consuming "less alcohol for better overall health." That's hardly a guideline.

At the risk of killing your buzz, the truth is that there's no safe amount of alcohol to consume. It's a **Group 1 carcinogen** that increases cancer risk in **myriad ways**. Alcohol offers no benefits for your health (unfortunately, not even red wine), so steer clear or limit intake as much as possible.

A Step in the Right Direction

There's a lot of good here to focus on, including an emphasis on whole foods and more protein to nourish your mind and body. But some inclusions — including high sources of saturated fat like full-fat dairy, butter, beef tallow, and certain cuts of meat, plus a vague reference to drinking "less" — likely warrant a second look, especially for people with chronic health conditions.

According to Dr. Spector, the changes aren't perfect (including potential conflicts of interest involving the beef and dairy industries) but point in the right direction. "It aligns far better with what we now understand about metabolic health, gut biology, and long-term disease risk," he says.

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