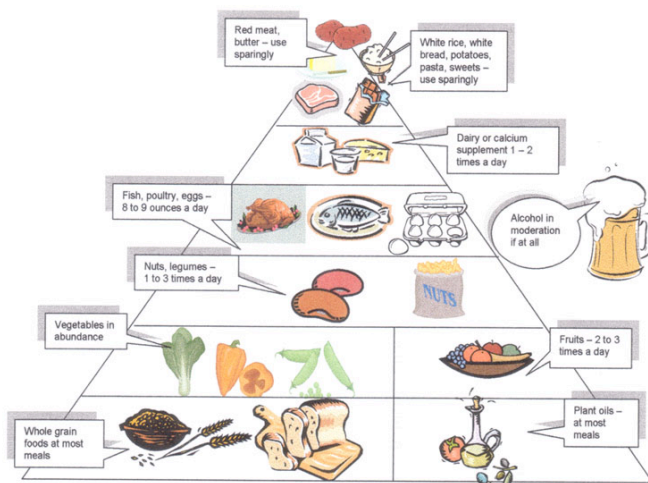


NEW-trition Guidelines



“NEW and IMPROVED” has been used and abused and many nutrition programs tout themselves as “THE one and only way to eat for permanent weight loss and ultimate health”? You’re probably thinking, “oh no, not another gimmick!” Hold on – keep reading.

The truth is; the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) Food Pyramid, which was introduced in 1992, may have played a major role in causing Americans to become more obese. Almost 40% of the American population is considered overweight and 50% of those are considered obese.

Most nutrition experts feel that the Food Guide Pyramid is flawed because it concentrates on carbohydrates while attempting to steer Americans away from fatty foods to prevent cardiovascular disease. This subtle focus on carbohydrates, regardless of quality has been instrumental in the increase of diseases, such as Type II Diabetes, that are related to poor nutritional practices. The experts feel that the USDA should have cautioned the public to reduce their fat intake by decreasing the saturated fats found in red meat and dairy products. However, the USDA oversimplified the issues by making a blanket decision to encourage the reduction of all fats, and the increase in carbohydrates, regardless of their sources.

Carbohydrates and fats are our primary sources of energy. If the majority of calories from one main source of energy (fats) are cut from one’s dietary intake, one needs to increase intake of carbohydrates and proteins. Americans took the low-fat idea to the extreme by assuming, falsely, that low-fat meant healthy when, in fact, it has imposed a high-tech nutrition crisis in our country. To make matters worse, the food industry quickly discovered that naturally low fat whole grains were much more profitable when puffed, fried, sweetened and attractively packaged.

According to Dr. Walter Willett and his colleagues at Harvard Public Health there is a NEW and improved way of eating healthfully. Dr Willett et al have designed the Healthy Eating

Pyramid in which some ideas are controversial. It includes a strong endorsement of vegetable oils (at most meals) and a virtual prohibition of potatoes and white rice. However, research has substantiated its benefits.

The major difference between the current USDA Food Pyramid and Dr. Willett’s Healthy Eating Pyramid is that Dr Willett’s Pyramid focuses on individual foods, within a single group, rather than promoting all fats as bad and all carbohydrates as good. The current USDA Food Pyramid implies that all fats are dangerous and most carbohydrates are safe. Willett’s Pyramid looks similar to the Mediterranean diet in that he calls for liberal amounts of unsaturated fat and warns Americans to eat foods such as white rice and ‘Twinkies’, sparingly. The distinction; there are good fats (unsaturated – plant oils) and good carbohydrates (whole grain foods).

The second most prominent difference in Willett’s Healthy Eating Pyramid is his treatment of protein sources. Protein is sprinkled throughout the top half of the pyramid. Legumes and nuts hold the most preferable position, fish and poultry next, dairy is optional (easily replaced with calcium supplements) and red meats are to be eaten sparingly. The current food pyramid has protein confined to one level of the pyramid, of which dairy products occupy one half and it really doesn’t indicate what sources are considered better choices than others.

Scientists are and have been well aware that the saturated fat found in red meat and dairy products can raise cholesterol and promote heart disease; that certain fats can be healthful and some carbohydrates, especially when heavily refined, can be detrimental to health. Unfortunately, in an effort to get the typical, sedentary, not-so-lean American to eat less saturated fat from meat and dairy products, the government oversimplified the concern by placing those foods in the USDA Food Pyramid toward the top (less desirable) section of the pyramid. The goal was admirable and may not have been a problem if the food industry hadn’t introduced all those low-fat or non-fat, sugary, processed baked goods. This may be the straw that broke the camel’s back and an almost certain death sentence for many obese, sedentary and / or diabetic individuals.

Dr Willett’s Healthy Eating Pyramid basically tells us to concentrate on consuming primarily whole (versus processed), plant based foods, exercise daily and do everything in moderation.