

Using MyPyramid in Your Life

Handout 1



My Pyramid will help you build an eating plan that works for you. You will find the right amount of foods to eat to meet your calorie needs and promote a healthy weight. Your eating plan will also give you the nutrients you need for good health!

Step 1: Estimate Your Daily Calorie Needs



Use the **Estimated Daily Calorie Needs** chart to find a calorie level that's right for you. Find your gender and age. Then select the activity level that best describes your lifestyle – sedentary, moderately active or active – (see definitions below).

The calorie levels in each gender and age group are based on persons of average height and at a healthy weight. If you are overweight, your calorie needs may be higher to maintain your weight. To lose weight, you can follow the calorie level in the chart or select a lower level, depending on your goal. When losing weight, try to lose no more than 1 pound a week, and be sure that you are not hungry a lot of the time. You need to eat enough to get the nutrients you need!

Estimated Daily Calories Needs			
Activity Level	Sedentary	Moderate	Active
Females			
19-30	2,000	2,200	2,400
31-50	1,800	2,000	2,200
51-60	1,600	1,800	2,200
61+	1,600	1,800	2,000
Males			
19-30	2,400	2,600	3,000
31-50	2,200	2,400	2,800
51+	2,000	2,200	2,600

Sedentary – less than 30 minutes a day of moderate physical activity in addition to daily activities.

Moderate – at least 30 minutes up to 60 minutes a day of moderate physical activity in addition to daily activities.

Active – 60 or more minutes a day of moderate physical activity in addition to daily activities.

My **Estimated Daily Calorie Needs** are _____ calories. This calorie level is right for a person of average height who is at a healthy weight.

The calorie level I want to aim for in my eating plan is _____ calories. (Use this number to build your eating plan using the chart on the next page.)

Step 2: Build Your Eating Plan

Find your calorie level at the top of the **My Eating Plan** chart. Follow the column below your calorie level to see how much food to eat from each of the food groups. There are tips for each food group below the chart.

Use the **Meal Planning Worksheet** to plan your meals for one day. Make sure you select foods that you enjoy and that fit your lifestyle. Remember to choose a variety of vegetable types. Choose lower fat versions of foods most of the time. Choose foods and beverages low in added sugars.



Note: oz means ounce-equivalent; see the Grains and Meats and Beans groups below to understand how these work.

My Eating Plan

Calorie Level	1,600	1,800	2,000	2,200	2,400	2,600
Fruits	1 1/2 cups	1 1/2 cups	2 cups	2 cups	2 cups	2 cups
Vegetables	2 cups	2 1/2 cups	2 1/2 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 1/2 cups
Grains	5 oz	6 oz	6 oz	7 oz	8 oz	9 oz
Meats and Beans	5 oz	5 oz	5 1/2 oz	6 oz	6 1/2 oz	6 1/2 oz
Milk	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups
Oils	5 tsp	5 tsp	6 tsp	6 tsp	7 tsp	8 tsp

Fruit Group includes all fresh, frozen, canned and dried fruits and fruit juices. In general, 1 cup of fruit or 100% fruit juice or 1/2 cup of dried fruit is considered 1 cup from this group.



Vegetable Group includes all fresh, frozen, canned and dried vegetables and vegetable juices. In general, 1 cup of raw or cooked vegetables or vegetable juice or 2 cups of raw leafy greens can be considered as 1 cup from the vegetable group. Most Americans need to eat more dark green and orange vegetables and dry beans and peas (legumes). MyPyramid recommends eating the following weekly amounts of vegetables.

Weekly Recommended Vegetable Intake						
Calorie Level	1,600	1,800	2,000	2,200	2,400	2,600
Dark green vegetable	2 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups
Orange vegetable	1 1/2 cups	2 cups	2 cups	2 cups	2 cups	2 1/2 cups
Legumes	2 1/2 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 1/2 cups
Starchy vegetable	2 1/2 cups	3 cups	3 cups	6 cups	6 cups	7 cups
Other vegetables	5 1/2 cups	6 1/2 cups	6 1/2 cups	7 cups	7 cups	8 1/2 cups

Grains Group includes all foods made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal or barley, such as bread, pasta, oatmeal, breakfast cereals, tortillas and grits. In general, 1 slice of bread, 1 cup of ready-to-eat cereal or 1/2 cup of cooked rice, pasta or cooked cereal can be considered as 1 ounce equivalent from this group. At least half of all grains eaten should be whole grains.



Milk Group includes all fluid milk products and foods made from milk that retain their calcium content, such as yogurt and cheese. Foods made from milk that have little to no calcium, such as cream cheese, cream and butter are not part of the group. Make most milk group choices fat-free or low-fat. In general, 1 cup of milk or yogurt, 1 1/2 ounces of natural cheese or 2 ounces of processed cheese is considered as 1 cup from this group.

Meats and Beans Group: In general, 1 ounce of lean meat, poultry, or fish, 1 egg, 1 tablespoon peanut butter, 1/4 cup cooked dry beans or 1/2 ounce of nuts or seeds can be considered as 1 ounce equivalent from the meats and beans group.



Oils include fats from many different plants and from fish that are liquid at room temperature, such as canola, corn, olive, soybean and sunflower oil. Some foods are naturally high in oils, like nuts, olives, some fish and avocados. Foods that are mainly oil include mayonnaise, certain salad dressings and soft margarine. Limit solid fats like butter, stick margarine, shortening and lard as well as foods that contain these.

Physical Activity: For good health, MyPyramid recommends at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days, preferably daily. To prevent weight gain, many people need about 60 minutes of physical activity on most days. To keep off lost pounds, most people need 60 to 90 minutes of physical activity daily.

Adapted from the University of Florida, IFAS Extension, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, 2005, <http://fyics.ifas.ufl.edu/pyramid/index.htm>. For more information, visit <http://MyPyramid.gov>.

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