



# The New Food Pyramid: What It Is and Why It Matters

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In early 2026, the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Agriculture released the 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) – and with them came the return of the food pyramid as the primary visual guide to healthy eating. However, the reinstatement of the food pyramid comes with a twist, the shape is inverted. The new Guidelines deliver a clear, common-sense message to Americans: eat real food. We must begin to prioritize whole, nutrient-dense-protein, dairy, vegetables, fruits, healthy fats, and whole grains and dramatically reduce highly processed foods. The U.S. currently faces a national health emergency. Nearly 90% of health care spending goes toward treating chronic disease, much of it

linked to diet and lifestyle. More than 70% of American adults are overweight or obese, and nearly 1 in 3 adolescents has pre-diabetes. Diet-driven chronic disease now disqualifies many young Americans from military service, threatening national readiness and limiting opportunity.

What has changed with this modern pyramid? Traditionally, food pyramids placed grains at the base with fats and sweets at the small top. The new pyramid flips this concept, positioning vegetables and fruits as the new foundation, emphasizing variety, color and whole forms. Non-starchy





vegetables-such as leafy greens, cruciferous vegetables, and peppers-are especially encouraged due to their high nutrient density and low glycemic impact. Fruits remain important, though whole fruits are preferred over juices to preserve fiber and minimize sugar intake. Protein, dairy, and “healthy fats” are at the top, alongside veggies and fruits. This tier emphasizes protein quality rather than quantity. Plant-based proteins (legumes, nuts, seeds, and soy foods) are strongly emphasized, alongside fish, poultry, eggs, and fermented dairy. Red and processed meats are no longer central; instead, they are positioned as occasional foods due to associations with cardiovascular disease, colorectal cancer, and environmental burden. A notable shift in the new pyramid is the rehabilitation of

healthy fats. Unsaturated fats from olive oil, nuts, seeds, and fatty fish are now considered essential rather than optional. These fats support cardiovascular health, nutrient absorption, and satiety. In contrast, trans and highly processed seed oils are discouraged.

**In summary:**

- Prioritize protein at every meal
- Consume full-fat dairy with no added sugars
- Eat vegetables and fruits throughout the day

- Incorporate healthy fats from whole foods such as meats, seafood, eggs, nuts, seeds, olives, and avocados

- Focus on whole grains, while sharply reducing refined carbohydrates

- Limit highly processed foods, added sugars, and artificial additives

- Eat the right amount for you, based on age, sex, size, and activity level

- Choose water and unsweetened beverages to support hydration

- Limit alcohol consumption for better overall health

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