

Nutritional needs of infants, toddlers part of new Dietary Guidelines

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New federal dietary guidelines released today include recommendations for healthy dietary patterns for infants and toddlers for the first time since the 1985 version.

The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025* from the U.S. Departments of Agriculture (USDA) and Health and Human Services (HHS) offers guidance by all stages of the life span, marking the first edition to take this approach. The recommendations for breastfeeding and overall nutritional needs of children align with those of the AAP.

“Nutrient needs vary over time,” said U.S. Secretary of Agriculture “Sonny” Perdue in a video presentation to release the new guidelines and the theme “Make every bite count.”

HHS Asst. Secretary for Health Adm. Brett P. Giroir, M.D., FAAP, said it is “never too early nor too late to eat healthy.”

“No matter your age, health status, economic status, budget, race, ethnicity, sex ... following the recommendations in the dietary guidelines can help all Americans lead healthier lives,” Dr. Giroir said.

Highlights

Four overarching guidelines focus on dietary patterns as a whole rather than individual nutrients:

1. Follow a healthy dietary pattern at every life stage.
2. Customize and enjoy nutrient-dense food and beverage choices to reflect personal preferences, cultural traditions and budgetary considerations.
3. Focus on meeting food group needs with nutrient-dense foods and beverages, and stay within calorie limits.
4. Limit foods and beverages higher in added sugars, saturated fat and sodium, and limit alcoholic beverages.

One chapter is dedicated to the needs of infants and toddlers from birth to 24 months, and another addresses 2- through 18-year-olds. Still another covers nutrition for women who are pregnant and those who are lactating.

Pediatric recommendations include the following:

- For about the first six months of life, exclusively feed infants human milk, continuing through at least the first year of life, and longer if desired. Feed infants iron-fortified infant formula during the first year of life when human milk is unavailable.
- Provide infants with supplemental vitamin D beginning soon after birth.

- At about 6 months of age, introduce infants to nutrient-dense complementary foods. Introduce infants to potentially allergenic foods along with other complementary foods. Encourage infants and toddlers to consume a variety of foods from all food groups, including those rich in iron and zinc, especially for infants fed human milk.
- From 12 months through adulthood, follow a healthy dietary pattern across the life span to meet nutrient needs, help achieve a healthy body weight and reduce the risk of chronic disease.

Diet-related chronic diseases

Information in the *Dietary Guidelines* includes the following concerns, which helped to inform the recommendations:

- More than 70% of Americans are overweight or have obesity, including 40% of children and adolescents and 74% of adults. The rate increases throughout the childhood and teen years, and prevalence has risen over the last two decades.
- Poor diet and lack of physical activity contribute to chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers.
- Food insecurity remains a persistent problem, disproportionately impacting low-income, Black and Hispanic households, households with young children and those headed by single parents.

Advisory committee input

For the guidelines, USDA and HHS identified topics and scientific questions to be addressed by an advisory committee before the committee members were selected. Input was gathered from federal agencies and the public. Subcommittees addressed specific questions and graded the evidence, and the advisory committee issued a [scientific report](#).

The U.S. government uses the *Dietary Guidelines* as the basis of its food assistance and meal programs, nutrition education efforts and national health objectives.

Look to the February issue of AAP News for more coverage.

Resources

- [Resources related to the "Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025"](#)

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