

Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating: A New Look, A New Approach

Canada has a new Food Guide! *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* replaces the old *Guide*, first developed in 1942. The early *Food Guide* was written in a time when Canadians suffered from nutrient deficiency diseases due to food shortages. The *Guide* was to ensure that Canadians met their basic nutrient needs and avoided diseases. Times have changed. The Canadian food supply is now plentiful and varied. Nutrient deficiency diseases, such as scurvy and beriberi, have been almost eliminated.

The new *Guide* is a practical approach to healthy eating which takes into account individuals' personal preferences, varying energy requirements and budget restraints. The recommendations have considered links between diet and nutrition related problems such as heart disease, osteoporosis and cancer. It is designed for Canadians four years of age and older.

Here is a summary of its key features and concepts:

New Approach

A total diet approach has been taken with the new *Guide*, in contrast to the foundation diet approach of previous guides. A foundation diet is a basic diet which meets minimum nutrient requirements, but falls short of meeting the energy needs of most people. The total diet approach guides consumers who have a wide range of energy needs in the selection of all foods.

The total diet approach acknowledges that healthy eating is the sum total of all food choices made over time. It is the pattern of foods eaten, not any one food or one meal that determines if an eating pattern is healthy. Foods should not be labelled "good" or "bad." The nutritional value of any food or meal can be balanced by choices made at other meals. Thus, an overall pattern of healthy eating can be created with foods of varying nutritional quality.



Rainbow Design Replaces Circle

This is the most dramatic visual change from the previous circle design. The new design conveys the message that all four food groups are important but the amounts needed from each group vary. The names of the food groups have changed slightly and are now called:

- Grain Products
- Vegetables and Fruits
- Milk Products
- Meat and Alternatives

The 'Variety' Message

Enjoying a variety of foods from each group every day promotes an adequate intake of essential nutrients, use of foods enjoyed by different ethnic and cultural groups, and inclusion of foods varying in colour, flavour and texture.

Choose Lower-Fat Food

The *Food Guide* supports a decrease in fat intake for Canadians. Eating patterns that are high in fat are associated with a higher incidence of heart disease and certain types of cancer. The strongest link is

between saturated fat intake and heart disease. The key fat message to consumers is to choose lower-fat dairy products, leaner meats and foods prepared with little or no fat. To meet this nutrition recommendation only 30% of energy should come from fat and 10% from saturated fat.

The Number of Servings has Increased

The number of servings recommended has increased for Grain Products and Vegetables and Fruit. This does not mean that everyone has to aim for the upper range of servings. The range provides guidance for a variety of people with varying energy needs.

For example, a woman with energy needs at about 1800 Cal (7500 kJ) will aim for the lower end of the range, whereas an athletic teenage boy needing around 3200 Cal (13400 kJ) will choose in the upper end of the range for all food groups.

The recommended range of servings in the *Food Guide*:

- Grain Products 5-12
- Vegetables & Fruits 5-10
- Milk Products
 - Children Ages 4-9 2-3
 - Youth Ages 10-16 3-4
 - Adults 2-4
- During Pregnancy and Breast Feeding 3-4
- Meat and Alternatives 2-3
- Other Foods - No specific range

Some Serving Sizes have Changed

Serving sizes have changed to better reflect how people eat particular foods, to be consistent with the way serving sizes are reported on labels, and to recognize that people eat different quantities at different meals.

Some Grain Products are shown as a 2 serving portion to better reflect how

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