

Sweeping Changes Recommended for American Diet

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(PhysOrg.com) -- In the face of soaring obesity rates in the United States, a national dietary advisory committee that includes a Yale University professor is recommending sweeping changes to the American diet: a reduction in overall calorie consumption, drastically reducing the intake of sodium and added sugars and shifting diets to more seafood and plant-based foods.

The report, prepared by the 2010 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee, will be forwarded to the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and will become the foundation for updated federal guidelines on nutrition, [diet](#) and health. The recommendations also could influence existing food assistance programs such as school lunches and food stamp and industry

regulation.

Rafael Pérez-Escamilla, a professor at the Yale School of Public Health, is among the 13 national experts who worked for the past two years on the comprehensive evaluation and review of existing federal nutrition guidelines and put forth the proposed changes. The dietary guidelines are updated every five years.

As many as two-thirds of adults and one-third of children are considered to be either overweight or obese in the United States, which results in a range of health problems and chronic diseases. If followed, the committee's recommendations could have a significant effect on the health and waistlines of Americans, Pérez-Escamilla said.

With the support of the current administration, including first lady Michelle Obama, who has used the committee's preliminary findings as the foundation of her own anti-obesity initiatives, and advances in nutritional science, there is a real chance to reverse current trends.

"There is no doubt in my mind that this is a historic opportunity," Pérez-Escamilla said. "We put forward the best science."

Specifically, the advisory committee recommends:

- Reduce maximum recommended daily sodium consumption from 2,300 mg to 1,500 mg for adults. This will require the cooperation of the food industry as the majority of [sodium](#) intake comes from processed foods.
- Shift to a more plant-based diet that emphasizes vegetables, cooked dry beans and peas, fruits, whole grains, nuts and seeds. In addition, increase the intake of seafood and fat-free and low-fat milk products while consuming only moderate amounts of lean meats, poultry and eggs.

- Significantly reduce the intake of foods containing added sugars and solid fats. Solid fats should be less than 10 percent of calorie intake. Foods with these components have excess calories and few, if any nutrients.
- Meet the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans.

More information: Minutes of the committee's meetings are posted online and can be viewed at www.cnpp.usda.gov/DietaryGuidelines.htm

Provided by Yale University

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