

Nutrition expert applauds latest federal dietary guidelines

January 8 2016

While early reaction to the new dietary guidelines released by the federal government on Thursday focused on new warnings about added sugar, sodium and meat, a University of Georgia expert noted the [report](#) is largely consistent with previous versions.

The 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommended consumption of less than 10 percent of calories a day from added sugars—the number is currently at more than 13 percent—and from saturated fats, which would require cutting back on meat, cheese and butter, for example.

The guidelines also removed the daily limit for dietary cholesterol (300 milligrams) included in the most recent guidelines published in 2010.

Also, average sodium intake, according to the guidelines, is 3,440 mg per day and should be reduced to less than 2,300 mg a day for adults and children ages 14 and older, and to 1,500 mg per day for individuals with [high blood pressure](#).

"These changes are not at odds with previous versions of the guidelines," noted Ali Berg, a UGA Cooperative Extension nutrition and health specialist and faculty member in the College of Family and Consumer Sciences. "The sugar recommendation is based on how best to help consumers eat a diet that meets nutritional needs and is within calorie limits to promote a healthy body weight and reduce the risk for chronic disease. This is an effort to help Americans eat better and not too much

sugar and is no different from previous editions of the guidelines. They've just quantified it this time."

The guidelines have been published every five years since 1980 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and are used in the development of federal food, nutrition and health policies and programs.

The guidelines "embody the idea that a healthy eating pattern is not a rigid prescription, but rather an adaptable framework" toward accomplishing a healthy lifestyle, according to the report's executive summary.

Berg agreed, noting research continues to support a healthy diet includes a variety of foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat and fat-free dairy and lean protein.

Also, saturated fats, trans fats and sodium "are not so good for us," Berg said, pointing out the new guidelines affirm this long-held view of many experts.

"The most recent release of the [dietary guidelines](#) reflects continued commitment to provide recommendations that will help Americans consume a diet that is health-promoting and backed by good, quality science," Berg said.

The report also recommended Americans meet the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, referencing a 2008 science-based report published by the HHS to help Americans 6 and older maintain and improve health through [regular physical activity](#).

The guidelines note "it is clear ... that the vast majority of people in the United States are not meeting these recommendations," adding that in

general Americans consume too many calories and don't get adequate physical activity.

Berg praised the report's recommendation that "collective action" is needed to affect food and exercise choices and to help prevent chronic disease.

"The new guidelines bring attention to the fact that healthy living doesn't occur in a vacuum," Berg said. "It's going to take the efforts of individuals, communities, organizations, industry and policymakers to make healthy living the 'easy, accessible, affordable and normative' choice. These recommendations will drive the efforts of policymakers, health professionals, health educators and industry to support individuals in implementing the [guidelines](#)."

More information: The 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans can be read at health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/.

The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans can be read at health.gov/paguidelines/guidelines/.

Provided by University of Georgia

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