

New Federal Dietary Guidelines Keep Recommended Sugar, Alcohol Intake Levels the Same

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The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services (HHS) on Tuesday issued new dietary guidelines the federal agencies referred to as "a major step forward", but which keeps the recommended sugar and alcohol intake levels untouched. A scientific advisory committee which included 20 doctors and academics, had concluded after much research that added sugar intake of the diet should be limited to 6 percent of daily calories and 10 percent of the current guidelines.

The panel cited America's high obesity rate and its link to cancer, heart disease and Type 2 diabetes. Additionally, the panel recommended lowering the alcohol intake of men to one drink per day from two, which would have brought the recommendation for men in line with women's. The main reason for the recommended reduction in alcohol, the panel said, was the current level's

link to death.

"[Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025](#) carried forward the committee's emphasis on limiting these dietary components, but did not include changes to quantitative recommendations, as [there was not a preponderance of evidence](#) in the material the committee reviewed to support specific changes, as required by law. As in previous editions, limited intake of these two food components is encouraged," said the agencies.

The diet is published by USDA and HHS every five years. The agencies say the guidelines provide science-based recommendations designed to foster healthy dietary patterns for Americans of all ages – from birth through older adults. Importantly, this edition expands the guidance, for the first time including recommended healthy dietary patterns for infants and toddlers, said a release issued Tuesday.

"At USDA and HHS, we work to serve the American people – to help every American thrive and live healthier lives through access to healthy foods and providing nutrition recommendations," said U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue. "With the release of the dietary guidelines, we have taken the very important step to provide nutrition guidance that can help all Americans lead healthier lives by making every bite count."

The guidelines are designed for use by healthcare professionals and policy makers for outreach to the general public and provide the nutritional foundation for federal nutrition programs. The dietary guidelines should not be considered clinical guidelines for the treatment of disease, the agencies said.

"The science tells us that good nutrition leads to better health outcomes, and the new dietary guidelines use the best available evidence to give Americans the information they need to make healthy decisions for themselves and their families," said HHS Secretary Alex Azar. "USDA and HHS have expanded this edition of the dietary guidelines to provide new guidance for infants, toddlers, and pregnant and breastfeeding women, helping all Americans to improve their health, no matter their age or life stage."

The agencies said the new guidelines build on the previous editions and were informed by the scientific report developed by the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee, along with comments from the public and input from federal agencies.

"USDA and HHS thank the committee for their work and dedication over the last fifteen months, providing the departments with a comprehensive scientific review and proposal of overarching recommendations, a highly regarded step of critical importance in dietary guidelines development. USDA and HHS also made transparency a priority in this edition and appreciate the many public comments that were received throughout this process," stated the release.

The guidelines also provide the public with the most up-to-date evidence on dietary behaviors that promote health and may help prevent chronic disease, the USDA and HHS said. "Steeped in scientific evidence, the key recommendations look similar to those of the past and address two topics that garnered much attention throughout the development of the guidelines – added sugars and alcoholic beverages," the agencies said.

The policy document complements the four overarching guidelines, which encourage Americans to "Make Every Bite Count" by:

- Following a healthy dietary pattern at every life stage.

- Customizing and enjoying nutrient-dense food and beverage choices to reflect personal preferences, cultural traditions, and budgetary considerations.
- Focusing on meeting food group needs with nutrient-dense foods and beverages from five food groups – vegetables, fruits, grains, dairy and fortified soy alternatives, and proteins – and staying within calorie limits.
- Limiting foods and beverages higher in added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium, and limiting alcoholic beverages.