

The Food Pyramid Basics

Orange Section on the USDA Food Pyramid

Grain

The USDA recommends six servings or six ounces from the Grain Group daily.

What foods are in the Grain Group?

Any food made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley or another cereal grain is a grain product.

Grains are divided into two subgroups, **whole grains** and **refined grains**.

Whole grains contain the entire grain kernel -- the bran, germ, and endosperm. Whole grains are healthy choices because they are high in fiber. Fiber lowers cholesterol levels, aids the digestive system, helps maintain a healthy weight, and helps prevent certain diseases. Make at least half of your grains whole every day! Examples of whole grains include:

- Whole wheat flour
- Whole wheat crackers
- Whole wheat pasta
- Bulgur (cracked wheat)
- Oatmeal
- Whole cornmeal
- Brown rice

Refined grains have been milled, a process that removes the bran and germ. This is done to give grains a finer texture and improve their shelf life, but it also removes dietary fiber, iron, and many B vitamins. Some examples of refined grain products are:

- White flour
- White bread
- White rice

Most refined grains are *enriched*. This means certain B vitamins (thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, folic acid) and iron are added back after processing. Fiber is not added back to enriched grains. Check the ingredient list on refined grain products to make sure that the word "enriched" is included in the grain name. Some food products are made from mixtures of whole grains and refined grains.

Source: <http://www.mypyramid.gov/pyramid/>

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Green Section on the USDA Food Pyramid

Vegetable

The USDA recommends four servings or two cups from the Vegetable Group daily.

What foods are in the Vegetable Group?

Any vegetable or 100% vegetable juice counts as a member of the vegetable group. Vegetables may be raw or cooked; fresh, frozen, canned, or dried/dehydrated; and may be whole, cut-up, or mashed.

Vegetables are organized into five subgroups, based on their nutrient content. Some commonly eaten vegetables in each subgroup are:

Dark Green Vegetables

Bok choy
Broccoli
Collard greens
Dark green leafy lettuce
Kale
Mesclun
Mustard greens
Romaine lettuce
Spinach
Turnip greens
Watercress

Dry Beans and Peas

Black beans
Black-eyed peas
Garbanzo beans (chickpeas)
Kidney beans
Lentils
Lima beans (mature)
Navy beans
Pinto beans
Soy beans
Split peas
Tofu (bean curd made from soybeans)
White beans

Orange Vegetables

Acorn squash
Butternut squash
Carrots
Hubbard squash
Pumpkin
Sweet potatoes

Starchy Vegetables

Corn
Green peas
Lima beans (green)
Potatoes

Other Vegetables

Artichokes
Asparagus
Bean sprouts
Beets
Brussels sprouts
Cabbage
Cauliflower
Celery
Cucumbers
Eggplant
Green beans
Green or red peppers
Iceberg (head) lettuce
Mushrooms
Okra
Onions
Parsnips
Tomatoes
Tomato juice
Vegetable juice
Turnips
Wax beans
Zucchini

Source: <http://www.mypyramid.gov/pyramid/>

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Red Section on the USDA Food Pyramid

Fruit

The USDA recommends three servings or one and a half cups from the Fruit Group daily.

What foods are in the Fruit Group?

Any fruit or 100% fruit juice counts as part of the fruit group. Fruits may be fresh, canned, frozen, or dried, and may be whole, cut-up, or pureed. Some commonly eaten fruits are:

Fruits, General:

Apples
 Apricots
 Avocado
 Bananas
 Cherries
 Grapefruit
 Grapes
 Kiwi fruit
 Lemons
 Limes
 Mangoes
 Nectarines
 Oranges
 Peaches
 Pears
 Papaya
 Pineapple
 Plums
 Prunes
 Raisins
 Tangerines

Melons:

Cantaloupe
 Honeydew
 Watermelon

Berries:

Strawberries
 Blueberries
 Raspberries

Mixed fruits:

Fruit cocktail

100% Fruit juice:

Orange
 Apple
 Grape
 Grapefruit

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Yellow Section on the USDA Food Pyramid

Oils

A person's allowance for oils depends on age, sex, and level of physical activity. The daily allowances recommended by the USDA are shown below:

Gender	Age	Daily Allowance in Teaspoons
Children	2-3 years old	3
Children	4-8 years old	4
Boys	9-13 years old	5
Boys	14-18 years old	6
Girls	9-13 years old	5
Girls	14-18 years old	5

What are "oils"?

Oils are fats that are liquid at room temperature, like the vegetable oils used in cooking. Oils come from many different plants and from fish. Some common oils are: canola oil, corn oil, cottonseed oil, olive oil, safflower oil, soybean oil, sunflower oil.

Some oils are used mainly as flavorings, such as walnut oil and sesame oil. A number of foods are naturally high in oils, like: nuts, olives, some fish, and avocados.

Foods that are mainly oil include mayonnaise, certain salad dressings, and soft (tub or squeeze) margarine with no trans fats.

Most oils are high in monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fats, and low in saturated fats. Oils from plant sources (vegetable and nut oils) do not contain any cholesterol. In fact, no foods from plants sources contain cholesterol.

A few plant oils, however, including coconut oil and palm kernel oil, are high in saturated fats and for nutritional purposes should be considered to be solid fats.

Solid fats are fats that are solid at room temperature, like butter and shortening. Solid fats come from many animal foods and can be made from vegetable oils through a process called hydrogenation. Some common solid fats are: butter, beef fat (tallow, suet), chicken fat, pork fat (lard), stick margarine, and shortening.

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Blue Section on the USDA Food Pyramid

Milk

The USDA recommends three servings or three cups total from the Milk Group daily.

What foods are included in the Milk Group?

All fluid milk products and many foods made from milk are considered part of this food group. Foods made from milk that retain their calcium content are part of the group, while foods made from milk that have little to no calcium, such as cream cheese, cream, and butter, are not.

The healthiest choices from the Milk Group are fat-free or low-fat.

Some commonly eaten choices in the milk, yogurt, and cheese group are:

Milk:

All fluid milk:

Fat-free (skim)

Low fat (1%)

Reduced fat (2%)

Whole milk

Lactose reduced milks

Lactose free milks

Flavored milks:

Chocolate

Strawberry

Milk-Based Desserts:

Puddings made with milk

Ice milk

Frozen yogurt

Ice cream

Cheese:

Hard natural cheeses:

Cheddar

Mozzarella

Swiss

Parmesan

Soft cheeses:

Ricotta

Cottage cheese

Processed cheeses:

American

Yogurt:

All yogurt

Fat-free

Low fat

Reduced fat

Whole milk yogurt

Source: <http://www.mypyramid.gov/pyramid/>

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Purple Section on the USDA Food Pyramid

Meat & Beans

The USDA recommends two servings or four ounces from the Meat and Beans Group daily.

What foods are included in the meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, and nuts (Meat & Beans) group?

All foods made from meat, poultry, fish, dry beans or peas, eggs, nuts, and seeds are considered part of this group. Dry beans and peas are part of this group as well as the vegetable group.

Most meat and poultry choices should be lean or low-fat. Fish, nuts, and seeds contain healthy oils, so choose these foods frequently instead of meat or poultry.

Some commonly eaten choices in the Meat and Beans group, with selection tips, are:

Meats	<i>Lean luncheon meats</i>
<i>Lean cuts of:</i>	
Beef	<i>Organ meats:</i>
Ham	Liver
Lamb	Giblets
Pork	
Veal	Poultry
	Chicken
<i>Game meats:</i>	Duck
Bison	Goose
Rabbit	Turkey
Venison	Ground chicken
	Ground turkey
<i>Lean ground meats:</i>	Eggs
Beef	Chicken eggs
Pork	Duck eggs
Lamb	

Fish	<i>Shellfish such as:</i>
<i>Finfish such as:</i>	Clams
Catfish	Crab
Cod	Crayfish
Porgy	Lobster
Flounder	Mussels
Sea bass	Octopus
Haddock	Oysters
Halibut	Scallops
Snapper	Squid (calamari)
Swordfish	Shrimp
Herring	
Trout	
Mackerel	
Tuna	
Pollock	

Dry Beans and Peas:	Tempeh
Black beans	Texturized vegetable protein (TVP)
Black-eyed peas	
Chickpeas (garbanzo beans)	Nuts & Seeds
Falafel	Almonds
Kidney beans	Cashews
Lentils	Hazelnuts (filberts)
Lima beans (mature)	Mixed nuts
Navy beans	Peanuts
Pinto beans	Peanut butter
Soy beans	Pecans
Split peas	Pistachios
Tofu (bean curd made from soy beans)	Pumpkin seeds
White beans	Sesame seeds
	Sunflower seeds
	Walnuts

Bean burgers:
Garden burgers
Veggie burgers

Canned fish such as:
Anchovies
Clams
Tuna
Sardines

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