

GMHC's Nutrition & Wellness Program

My Pyramid: Steps to a healthier you.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) released a new food Guidance system to help Americans make healthy food choices and to be active every day.

It is important for those living with HIV/AIDS to practice healthy living every day to help strengthen the immune system, manage stress, improve lifestyles, and maintain a healthy body weight.

By logging onto MyPyramid.gov you can use the new system as an interactive database to track your nutrient intake and help improve your overall nutrition status. However, many find the web site overwhelming and end up more confused after trying to navigate the system.



Here is a guide to help you make sense of the new pyramid. If you are new to the guidance system, remember that the focus is on three main components:

Moderation: The logo demonstrates this by the narrowing of food groups from the base toward the tip of the pyramid. At the bottom there are foods with little or no solid fats or added sugar. As the pyramid narrows the more fat and sugar you will find in foods.

Balance: When we look at the width of the pyramid we see a variety of color. The varying widths of the stripes tell us that a variety of foods from all food groups is

needed to maintain a healthy balanced diet. We need to make healthy choices from all food groups to receive key nutrients.

Exercise: Activity is demonstrated by the person climbing the stairs. This is to remind us to be physically active every day.

Every one is different and based on your age, sex, and activity level the pyramid will help you to determine the amount of calories you need.

Below you will find an approximation of daily calories you may need.

	Sedentary	Moderately Active	Active
Females			
19-30	2,000	2,200	2,400
31-50	1,800	2,000	2,200
51+	1,600	1,800	2,200
Males			
19-30	2,400	2,800	3,000
31-50	2,200	2,600	3,000
51+	2,000	2,400	2,800

For each calorie level (1,600- 3,000 kcal) there are certain amounts of Grains, Vegetables, Fruits, Milk, Meat & Beans, Oils, and Discretionary calories that we should eat. Think of you calorie allowances as you food budget. Your budget is divided in to essentials and extras. Your essentials are going to be your Grains, Fruits, Vegetables, Milk, Meat & Beans, and some Oils. Your extra budget is limited and not necessary and this is going to be your discretionary calories. * See attached table



Grains: Grains are our main source of Carbohydrates. We need Carbohydrates to fuel our bodies and help us perform daily activities. Try to focus on getting whole-grain foods and whole oats with the least amount of added sugar and fat to optimize your intake. Servings are in one ounce portions and examples of these are

- ½ cup of cooked oatmeal
- 1 cup of Bran Flakes
- 1 slice of whole wheat bread
- ½ cup of cooked pasta or rice
- 1 5 inch tortilla



Vegetables: Any vegetable or 100% vegetable juice counts as a member of this group. Vegetables are essential in keeping immune systems strong and maintaining your health. Make sure to eat as many different colored vegetables as you can.

Vegetables may be raw or cooked; fresh, frozen, canned, or dried/dehydrated; and may be whole, cut-up, or mashed. Generally one cup of juice or cooked vegetable or two cups of a raw leafy vegetable is considered a serving.



Fruit: Any whole fruit or 100% fruit juice is considered a serving. If choosing canned fruit

make sure that it is packed in water to avoid any added sugar.

Fruits are low in sodium, fat, calories, and have no cholesterol. They provide nutrients, and fiber to help reduce the risk of certain diseases like cancer, heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, and stroke.

A serving size of fruit is usually about 1 cup of whole fruit and ½ cup of 100% fruit juice.



Milk: Fluid milk and food products made with milk are a part of this group. All milk selections should be low-fat or non-fat!

Dairy foods contain significant amounts of Calcium, Vitamin D, and Potassium. These nutrients help keep bones strong and help decrease the risk of bone loss through the life cycle.

For people that have difficulty digesting milk products lactose free milk and dairy substitutes are included in this group. *Keep in mind;* many of the nutrients obtained from milk and dairy foods are not in these products.

There are some foods that do not retain much of their Calcium during processing and are therefore not a part of this group. Examples of these foods are cream cheese, cream, and butter.

In general, 1 cup of milk or yogurt, 1 ½ ounces of natural cheese, or 2 ounces of processed cheese can be considered as 1 serving from the milk group.



Meat and Beans: All meat, fish, poultry, and eggs are a part of this group. Additionally, dried beans, peas, and nuts are a part of this group (as well as the vegetable group).

Meat choices should be lean or low fat. Fish and nuts have healthy fats so we should choose these foods more often. Foods from the meat and beans group supply many nutrients. These include protein, B vitamins (niacin, thiamin, riboflavin, and B6), vitamin E, iron, zinc, and magnesium.

Proteins found in meat and beans function as building blocks for bones, muscles, cartilage, skin, and blood. They are also building blocks for enzymes, hormones, and vitamins.

Meat is given in one ounce portions. However, typically, we eat more than that at one sitting. A good rule of thumb is to keep meat portions to about 4 ounces (the size of a deck of cards or the palm of your hand).



Oils: Foods that are considered oils are liquid at room temperature. Foods that are mainly oil are mayonnaise, salad dressings, soft tub oil and margarine with no trans-fats.

Oils from plant sources contain no cholesterol and should be chosen more often. Most oils are high in monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, and low in saturated fat (*with the exception of safflower and palm kernel oil*).

Solid fats are solid at room temperature. Solid fats come from many animal foods and can be made from vegetable oils through a process called hydrogenation. These fats should be chosen less often.

Fats can be confusing, but we all need some fat in our diet. It is just important to monitor *what type* of fat we eat. In general, saturated fats, *trans* fats, and cholesterol tend to raise “bad” (LDL) cholesterol levels in the blood, which in turn increases the risk for heart disease. Polyunsaturated (PUFA) or Monounsaturated (MUFA) fats found in fish, nuts, avocados, and vegetable oils do not raise LDL, so these are the fats we should consume. Healthy oils contain essential fatty acids needed for cell formation and nerve functioning. They are also a great source of Vitamin E!

We are allowed some fat each day for cooking and flavoring. However keep this amount limited and keep it MUFA or PUFA! Serving sizes are about one teaspoon.

Discretionary Calories: These are calories that are allowed for that occasional sweet treat or salty indulgence. Most discretionary calorie allowances are very small, between 100 and 300 calories, especially for those who are not physically active. For many people, the discretionary calorie allowance is totally used by the foods they choose in each food group, such as higher fat meats, cheeses, whole milk, or sweetened bakery products.

You do not have to use all of your discretionary calories. It is recommended that you use some of those extra calories to eat foods that are nutrient dense.

Physical Activity: This can be anything from walking, gardening, walking the dog, jogging, playing a sport, or climbing stairs.

Activity is broken down into two categories:

Moderately Active: Walking briskly (about 3 ½ miles per hour), hiking, gardening/yard work, dancing, golf (walking and carrying clubs), bicycling (less than 10 miles per hour), and weight training (general light workout)

Vigorously Active: Running/jogging (5 miles per hour), bicycling (more than 10 miles per hour), swimming (freestyle laps), aerobics, walking very fast (4 ½ miles per hour), heavy yard work, such as chopping wood, weight lifting (vigorous effort), and basketball (competitive)

For health benefits, physical activity should be moderate or vigorous and add up to at least 30 minutes most days of the week (5 or 6 days).

Some physical activities are not intense enough to help you meet the recommendations. Although you are moving, these activities do not increase your heart rate, so you should not count these towards the 30 or more minutes a day that you should strive for. These include walking at a casual pace, such as while grocery shopping, and doing light household chores.

For more in depth information so that you can make your own decisions and personalizes your fitness goals. The web site also gives tips for getting started and tools to help keep a log of your progress. Please visit www.MyPyramid.gov.

Sources:

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). "Steps to A Healthier You". WWW.MyPyramid.Gov

Geiger, Sylvia M. MS, RD, Lawrence, Alice, Lawrence, James. "Pyramid Puzzled". [Eating Well](#) September, 20 2005. p30-39.

Revised 5/06

*

Calorie level	1,600	1,800	2,000	2,200	2,400	2,600	2,800	3,000
Grains	5 oz-eq.	6 oz-eq.	6 oz-eq	7 oz-eq	8 oz-eq	9 oz-eq	10 oz-eq	10 oz-eq
Vegetables	2 cups	2 ½ cups	2 ½ cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 ½ cups	3 ½ cups	4 cups
Fruits	1 ½ cups	1 ½ cups	2 cups	2 cups	2 cups	2 cups	2 ½ cups	2 ½ cups
Milk	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups
Meat & Beans	5 oz-eq	5 oz-eq	5 ½ oz eq	6 oz-eq	6 ½ oz eq	6 ½ oz-eq	7 oz eq	7 oz eq
Oils	5 tsp	5 tsp	6 tsp	6 tsp	7 tsp	8 tsp	8 tsp	10 tsp
Discretionary	132	195	267	290	362	410	426	512

Based on USDA recommended nutrient intakes. Serving sized are based on the most nutrient dense (low in fat and added sugar calories) form of foods in each group.