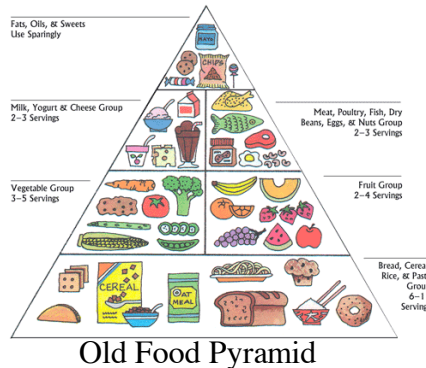


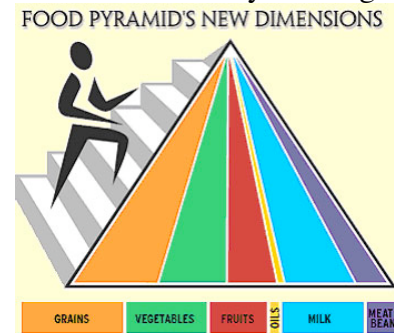


Building a Better Pyramid

The new USDA food pyramid was released in 2005 to replace a pyramid that had been created in 1992. The idea was to create a pyramid that would better reflect a balanced way of living and eating.



Old Food Pyramid



New Food Pyramid

Source: USDA

The new pyramid, however, seems to be even more confusing than the old one.

The orange part is meant to reflect grains; the green part vegetables; the red part fruit; the yellow part fats; the blue part dairy; and the purple part meat and beans. The person climbing up the stairs represents activity, and the fact that the food groups narrow represents moderation. The new pyramid is called MyPyramid to reflect that each person has individual needs.

Problems with MyPyramid:

- As with the old pyramid, while the pyramid says that we should eat grains, it doesn't say what type of grains. It doesn't differentiate from healthy whole grains and unhealthy refined grain products, such as white flour and pasta.
- In the Fats section (the thin yellow part), the pyramid doesn't tell us which fats are healthy and which aren't, and which fats we might need to eat more of.
- Another problem with the new pyramid is that dairy takes up such a large proportion of the pyramid. As Mark Bittman notes in his book, Food Matters: A Guide to Conscious Eating, "We would have to look quite hard to find an independent nutritionist or nutrition scientist who believes Americans need to eat more dairy than vegetables, especially in light of recent findings that plants are probably the most beneficial foods you can eat, and that too much dairy at any age, including childhood (with the exception of breast milk), is worse than not enough. Furthermore, *up to 50 million Americans cannot tolerate dairy in their diet at all.*" (Mark Bittman, Food Matters: A Guide to Conscious Eating, p.49)
- The final problem is that the pyramid doesn't differentiate between the different types of proteins to eat. The meat and beans category also happens to include fish but, more importantly, the pyramid assumes that eating meat, beans or fish are all nutritionally similar.

So, what should the pyramid look like?

- Lots of whole, unrefined grains, such as brown rice, millet, buckwheat, quinoa, and whole wheat.
- Lots of fruit and vegetables, especially leafy green vegetables.
- Healthy fats, such as olive oil, ghee, grass-fed butter, unrefined sesame oil.
- Minimal to no dairy and, if choosing dairy, choosing organic products.
- Lots of beans, some fish (check the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch List for the best sources), free-range poultry, and grass-fed beef occasionally.
- Finally, eliminate sugar and processed foods.

Michael Pollan says is best: "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants." (Michael Pollan, In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto, p.1 and Food Rules)