



## The New Food Pyramid

In April, the U.S. Department of Agriculture unveiled a new pyramid that is based on the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans which were released in January of this year. The revised system includes significant revisions to the 1992 Food Guide Pyramid; a new slogan, "Steps to a Healthier You;" and interactive online tools that help individuals choose the calorie level that is right for them.

The MyPyramid symbol represents the recommended proportion of foods from each food group and focuses on the importance of making smart choices in every food group, every day. The pyramid has a series of vertical colored bands of varying widths that represent the food groups. The combined bands for fruits and vegetables are the widest, followed by grains, with the narrowest bands belonging to the oils. The revamped pyramid also includes a stick-figure climbing steps to its top, a symbol meant to highlight the importance of physical activity.

### One size does not fit all

The new strategy symbolizes a personalized approach to healthy eating and physical activity. Twelve versions of the new pyramid are available depending on one's activity level and caloric needs. The tool relies on an internet site ([www.MyPyramid.gov](http://www.MyPyramid.gov)) designed to help individuals plan their dietary intake based on their age, sex, and level of daily physical activity. This new emphasis on individualized planning is thought to be an improvement over the 1992 Food Guide Pyramid, which had one set of recommendations for the "average" American. The website's links enable consumers to:

- Evaluate their daily intake.
- Make smart choices from every food group.
- Obtain an assessment of their food intake and physical activity level.
- Find the appropriate balance between food and physical activity.
- Get the most nutrition for their calories.

MyPyramid is a strategy for healthy eating and not a diet plan. However, officials hope that consumers will use the website to track their daily food intake as a starting point for gradual weight loss, if necessary. The graphic symbol, consumer messages and educational tools work together to guide people toward healthy food choices while conveying the following key messages:

- Dietary advice and weight management requires a personalized approach and one size **does not** fit all.
- Eat a variety of foods from every group in balance and moderation.
- Pay attention to calorie consumption.
- Achieve a balance between food intake and regular physical activity.

Please visit [www.MyPyramid.gov](http://www.MyPyramid.gov) for additional information on these guidelines.