

Tips from “Eat, Drink and Be Healthy” Strategies for Success in Health Management

Tips come from the book: Willett, W. & Skerrett P.J. (2005). Eat, Drink, and Be Healthy: The Harvard Medical School Guide to Healthy Eating. New York: Free Press

Harvard medical professor Walter Willett, M.D. says: The USDA Food Pyramid is “outdated and dangerously wrong” because it’s not enough to recommend that fats be used sparingly and to classify all complex carbohydrates as good.

We need food for basics of everyday life

- to pump blood
- move muscles
- think thoughts

We can eat to live well and live longer by right choices we can avoid some of the things we think of as the inevitable penalties of getting older.

Healthy diet teamed up with regular exercise and no smoking can eliminate 80 percent of heart disease and 70 percent of some cancers.

Making poor choices:

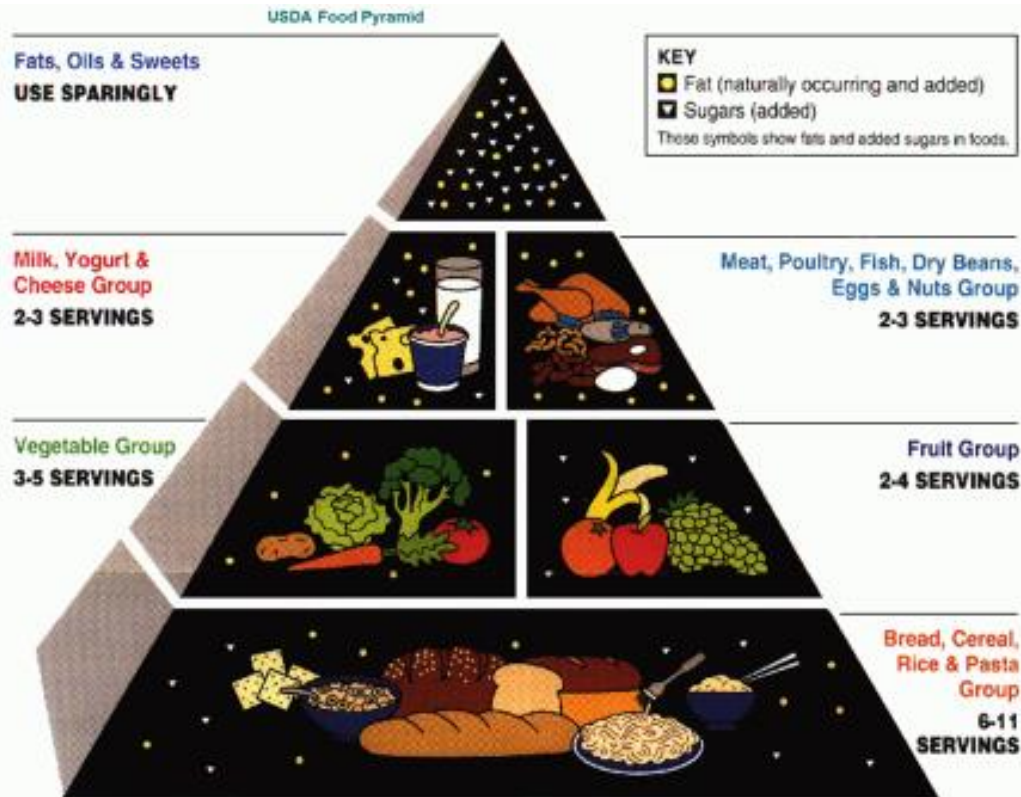
- eating too much of the wrong kinds of food
- too little of the right kinds
- or too much food altogether

increases chances of developing cancer, heart disease, diabetes, digestive disorders, and aging-related loss of vision.

In working on your daily intake of food there are some drawbacks

1. Separating what’s good from what’s bad can be discouraging
2. Each day you have to choose from an ever increasing number of foods and products, some good, most not so good
3. Maybe the time to prepare food, or even to eat, seems to shrink by the month
4. You may feel overwhelmed by contradictory advice on what to eat
5. Newspaper and newscast tout results from the latest nutrition studies
6. Magazines trumpet hottest diets with heartfelt testimonials
7. Daily new diet/nutrition books come out
8. Supermarkets, fast-food restaurants, cereal boxes and internet sites offer advice
9. All this jumble quickly turns into nutritional white noise that many people tune out

Have a look at the USDA Food Pyramid:



Problem with USDA Food Pyramid in Willett's Opinion

1. It was built on shaky scientific ground back in 1992
2. Since then it has been steadily eroded by new research from all parts of the globe
3. Scores of large and small research projects have chipped away at the foundation (carbohydrates), the middle (meat and milk), and the apex (fats)
4. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which serve as detailed blueprint for USDA Pyramid, are a bit better
5. They are updated every five years and sometimes include ready-for-prime-time research
6. But the USDA Pyramid hasn't really changed in spite of important advances in what we know about nutrition and health
7. At best, the USDA Pyramid offers wishy-washy, scientifically unfounded advice on an absolutely vital topic — what to eat
8. At worst, the misinformation contributes to overweight, poor health, and unnecessary early deaths
9. In either case it stands as a missed opportunity to improve the health of millions of people

USDA Pyramid is wrong because it ignores the evidence that has been carefully assembled over the past forty years.

Where USDA Food Pyramid in Willett's opinion is wrong:

1. All fats are bad according to the USDA Food Pyramid

No question that two types of fat

1. Saturated fat - abundant in whole milk or red meat
2. Trans-fats - in many margarines and vegetable shortenings

Contribute to the artery-clogging process that leads to heart disease, stroke, and other problems

But the USDA Pyramid's recommendation to use fats "sparingly" ignores the fact that two other kinds of fat

Monounsaturated and Polyunsaturated fats found in olive oil and other vegetable oils, nuts, whole grains, other plant products, and fish are good for your heart

2. All "complex" carbohydrates are good according to the USDA Food Pyramid

Carbohydrates form the base of the USDA Pyramid with six to eleven servings of bread, cereal, rice, and pasta a day

But as with fats, this advice is too simplistic and overlooks essential research showing that the types of carbohydrates you eat matters a lot

Most dietary guidelines recommend limiting simple carbohydrates (sugars) and eating plenty of complex carbohydrates (starches) and white bread, potatoes, pasta, and white rice all fit this description and are the main sources of carbohydrates in the American diet.

While the terms simple and complex have a chemical meaning, they don't mean much inside your body. In fact, your digestive system turns white bread, a baked potato, or white rice into glucose and pumps this sugar into the bloodstream almost as fast as it delivers the sugar in a cocktail of pure glucose.

Swift, high spikes in blood sugar are followed by similar surges in insulin. As all this insulin forces glucose into muscle and fat cells, blood sugar levels plummet, triggering the unmistakable signals of hunger. These high levels blood sugar and insulin surges are implicated as part of perilous pathway to heart disease and diabetes

Harmful effects of these rapidly digested carbohydrates are especially serious for people who are overweight.

3. Instead the carbohydrates that should form the keystones of a healthy diet come from whole grains, like brown rice or oats, from foods made with whole grains, like whole-wheat pasta or bread, or from beans.

Your body takes longer to digest these carbohydrate especially if coarsely ground or intact and they have a slow, low, and steady effect on blood sugar and insulin levels

which protects against heart disease and diabetes. Eating these carbohydrates help you feel full longer and so keep you from getting hungry right away. These carbohydrates also provide important fiber as well as plenty of vitamins and minerals.

4. The right proteins are important but not red meat as in the USDA Food Pyramid

We need protein every day and we can get it from a variety of sources. Red meat is a poor protein package because of all the saturated fat and cholesterol. Red meat may also give too much iron absorbed whether need it or not.

Chicken, turkey give less saturated fat. Fish does too and delivers some important unsaturated fats. Beans and nuts as protein sources have some advantages over animal sources and give fiber, vitamins, minerals, and healthy unsaturated fats and like fruits and vegetables give phytochemicals help protect from chronic diseases.

5. Dairy products are essential according to the USDA Food Pyramid

There isn't a calcium emergency and Americans get more calcium than the residents of almost every other country except Holland and Scandinavian countries. There's little evidence that getting high amounts of calcium prevents broken bones in old age.

Further complicating the issue are some studies suggesting that drinking or eating a lot of dairy products may increase a woman's chances of developing ovarian cancer or a man's chances of developing prostate cancer. If one needs extra calcium there are cheaper, easier and healthier ways to get it than from dairy products.

Whole-milk dairy products are loaded with the kind of saturated fat that is most powerful at raising cholesterol levels. One percent and skim milk are clearly better choices. Spinach, broccoli, tofu, and calcium-fortified orange juice and breakfast cereals are good sources of calcium and have other advantages.

6. According to the USDA Food Pyramid eat your potatoes

Potatoes are mostly starch and easily digested and should be listed as part of the carbohydrate group. More than 200 studies found people eating plenty of fruits and vegetables decrease chances: heart attacks strokes, cancers, constipation and digestive problems. The same body of evidence shows that potatoes don't contribute to this benefit.

Eating potatoes on a daily basis may be fine for lean people who exercise a lot or who do regular manual labor. For everyone else potatoes should be an occasional food consumed in modest amounts, not as a daily vegetable.

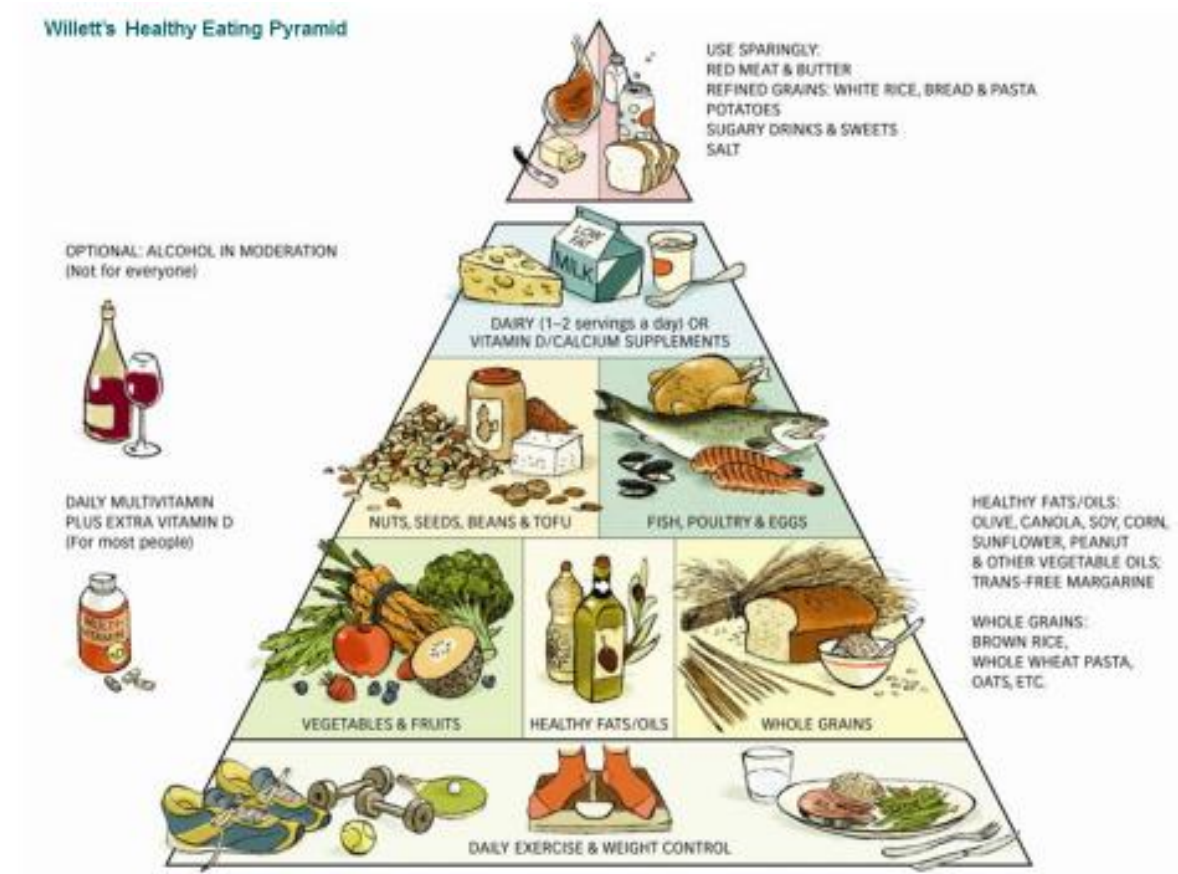
Baked potato increases levels of blood sugar and insulin more quickly and to higher levels than an equal amount of calories from pure table sugar. French fries as they are

usually sold do much the same thing, while also typically packing an unhealthy amounts of Trans fats.

7. In the USDA Food Pyramid there was no guidance on weight, exercise, alcohol, and vitamins

Like the Sphinx, the USDA Pyramid is silent on four things you need to know about — the importance of not gaining weight, the necessity of daily exercise, the potential health benefits of a daily alcoholic drink, and what you can gain by taking a daily multivitamin.

Willett's Healthy Eating Pyramid

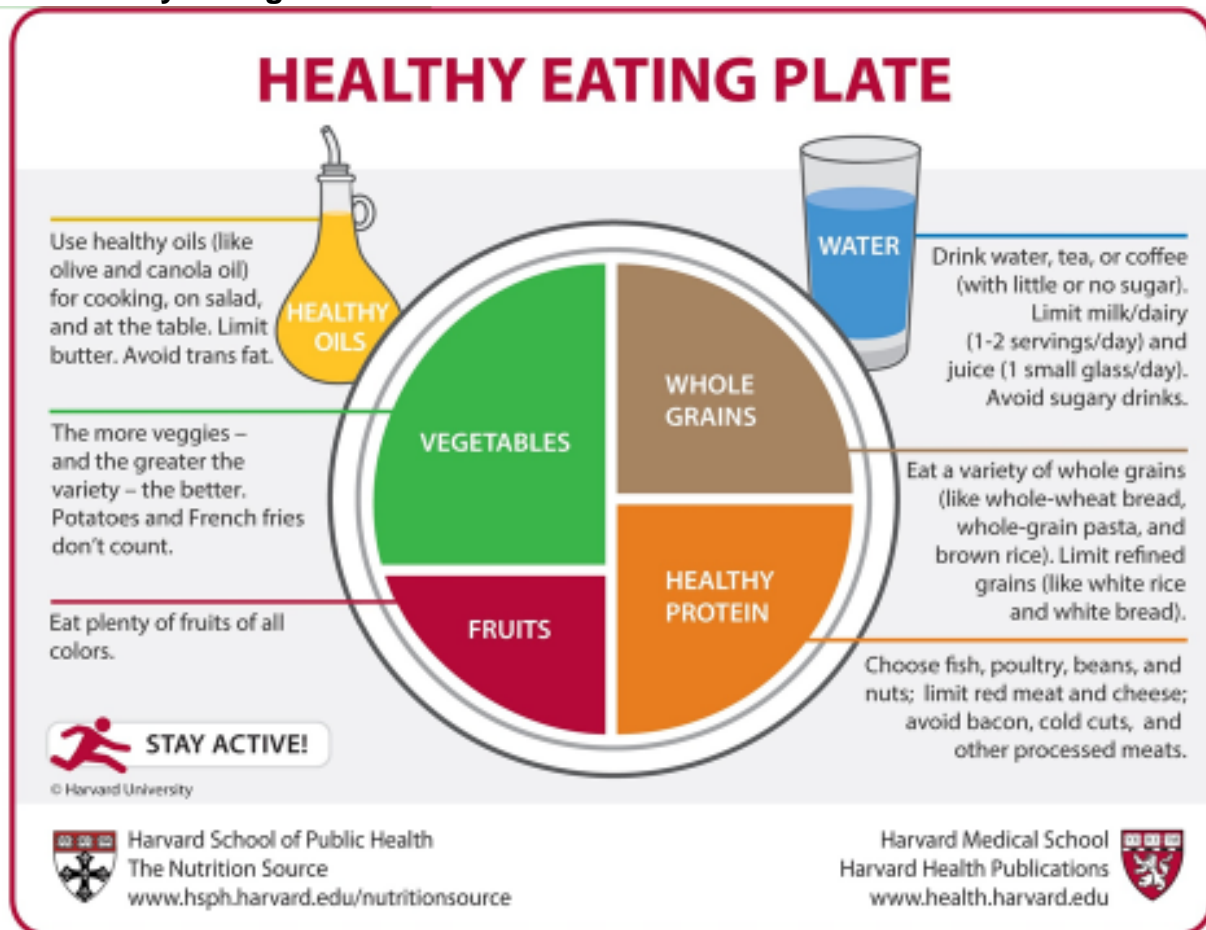


With the Willet Healthy Eating Pyramid

1. You don't have to weigh your food or tally up fat grams
2. There are no complicated food exchange tables to follow
3. You needn't eat odd combinations of foods or religiously avoid a particular type of food
4. It nudges you toward eating familiar foods shown to improve health and reduce risk of chronic disease
5. It involves simple changes you can make one at a time
6. It is an eating strategy for improved health instead of diet solely to shed pounds
7. It can make meals and snacks tastier

8. It is something you can stick with for years
9. It is based on evidence from different research
10. It is unlike other diets used by millions of Americans because it is built on of solid researched evidence
11. It does not continue fads like:
 - a. eat lots of meat
 - b. don't eat any meat
 - c. eat lots of carbohydrates
 - d. don't eat any carbohydrates
 - e. cut your intake of fat to under 20 percent of calories
 - f. eat as much fat as you want
 - g. stay away from sugar
 - h. eat potatoes

The Healthy Eating Plate



Another model of health eating emerged from the Willet healthy Eating Pyramid which is the Health Eating Plate which includes the advice to keep active and eat: Lots of veggies; Lots of whole grains; Healthy protein; Fruits; Healthy Oils and drink water.