Focusing on America's Children:
The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

A Spotlight on Children

The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) places an important focus on children because of the growing body of evidence documenting the vital role that optimal nutrition plays throughout the lifespan. Many Americans, including children and adolescents [1,2,3] are consuming diets high in calories but low in nutrients, which can leave them overweight and undernourished. Childhood obesity is at an all-time high,[4] and eating patterns established in childhood often track into later life, making early intervention on adopting healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviors a priority. To improve the health of Americans, the ultimate goal of the DGA is "to improve the health of our Nation's current and future generations by facilitating and promoting healthy eating and physical activity choices so that these behaviors become the norm among all individuals."

Establishing Healthy Eating Habits

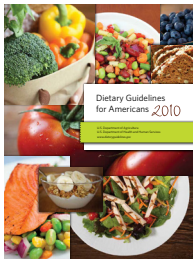
The 2010 DGA provides several recommendations to support Americans of all ages in addressing obesity, improving nutrient intakes and establishing healthy eating habits overall. Children need to build healthier eating patterns by consuming more nutrient-dense foods such as low-fat or fat-free milk and milk products, fruits, vegetables and whole grains, while limiting intakes of sodium, solid fat, added sugars and refined grains. In addition, to curb obesity and improve health, children need to decrease the calories they consume and increase the calories they burn through physical activity.

A Spotlight on Dairy Foods

The DGA encourages all Americans to increase intakes of low-fat or fat-free milk and milk products to the recommended daily amounts (2 cups for children 2 to 3 years, 2.5 cups for children 4 to 8 years, and 3 cups for those 9 years and older). Milk is the number one food source of three of the four nutrients the DGA identified as lacking in the American diet – calcium, vitamin D and potassium[5].

The DGA notes it is especially important to establish the habit of drinking milk in young children, as those who consume milk at an early age are more likely to do so as adults. This has lifelong benefits because current evidence indicates intake of milk and milk products is linked to improved bone health, especially in children and adolescents. In addition, intake of milk and milk products is associated with a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and lower blood pressure in adults.

A Call to Action



The 2010 DGA puts out a clear call to action to all sectors of society to help develop effective and sustainable improvements in the food and physical activity environment, stating "everyone has a role in the movement to make America healthy." To reverse current trends, a "coordinated, system-wide approach" is needed that engages individuals and families, educators, communities and organizations, health professionals, businesses and policymakers. Health and nutrition professionals, including registered dietitians, family physicians, pediatricians and school nutrition professionals, play a critical role in the fight against obesity, and the time is NOW to educate children about how to live long, healthy lives through good nutrition and daily physical activity.

1 What We Eat in America, NHANES 2001-2002 : Usual Nutrient Intakes from Food Compared to Dietary Reference Intakes. Accessed 02 February 2011. <http://www.ars.usda.gov/foodsurvey>.

2 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010. 7th Edition, Washington, DC: U.S Government Printing Office, December 2010.

3 What We Eat in America, NHANES 2005-2006: Usual Nutrient Intakes from Food Compared to Dietary Reference Intakes. Accessed 02 February 2011. <http://www.ars.usda.gov/foodsurvey>.

4 Ogden C, Carroll M, Curtin L, Lamb M, Flegal K. Prevalence of High Body Mass Index in US Children and Adolescents, 2007-2008. J Am Med Assoc 2010;303(3):242-249.

5 Dairy Research Institute™, NHANES (2003-2006). Ages 2+ years. Data Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. Hyattsville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [2003-2004; 2005-2006]. [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhanes.htm]

Taking the Guidelines into Schools:
Fuel Up to Play 60

Tackling the Obesity Crisis Where it Counts

Efforts to prevent obesity and improve children's nutrition and physical activity would be most effective if they permeate all environments (e.g., home, schools, community),[6] and schools are in a unique position to impact children's food choices on a daily basis to help ensure that children adopt healthful dietary habits and active lifestyles.[7,8] Schools serve more than 40 million youth a day at breakfast and lunch, and together these meals can provide more than 50 percent of the Recommended Dietary Allowance for several nutrients.[9] And, helping children be healthier and improving their academic performance are not mutually exclusive. In fact, research shows that good nutrition and physical activity habits go hand-in-hand to help positively affect academic achievement and test scores.[10,11]

In response to the growing obesity epidemic and declining physical fitness of America's youth, National Dairy Council and the National Football League, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture, launched a unique in-school nutrition and physical activity program called Fuel Up to Play 60. Based on youth's input and in line with the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA), this program encourages consumption of low-fat or fat-free milk and milk products, fruits, vegetables and whole grains, and achieving at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day.

Youth Empowerment

Fuel Up to Play 60 was designed to be customizable and non-prescriptive – allowing youth and schools to determine which tools and resources will best meet youth wellness goals and each school's wellness policies. The program responds to real-world needs in today's schools with tools that complement – not compete with – the academics-focused environment.

Fuel Up to Play 60 Answers the Call for a "Coordinated, System-Wide Approach"

The DGA calls for a "coordinated, system-wide approach" to tackle the obesity epidemic, and Fuel Up to Play 60 is poised to play its part in answering that call. The appeal of the program is evidenced by the enrollment of more than 70,000 schools – that's two-thirds of all the schools in the U.S., with the potential to reach over 36 million children – as well as the support Fuel Up to Play 60 has received from respected, third-party health and nutrition organizations including all local Dairy Councils, 32 NFL Clubs, USDA, and supporting health and nutrition organizations – Action for Healthy Kids, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Dietetic Association, National Hispanic Medical Association, National Medical Association and School Nutrition Association. In addition and to meet shared goals, Fuel Up to Play 60 is working collaboratively with the First Lady's *Let's Move* initiative and the USDA's HealthierUS School Challenge.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit **www.FuelUptoPlay60.com** to learn more about the program and how to get involved
Visit **www.dietaryguidelines.gov** to learn more about the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

United States Department of Agriculture
Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion

6 White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity. Report to the President. Solving the Problem of Childhood Obesity Within a Generation. May 2010. Accessed 31 January 2011. www.letsmove.gov/obesitytaskforce.php

7 Fox, M.K. J. Am. Diet. Assoc. 110: 1010, 2010.

8 American Academy of Pediatrics, Council on Sports Medicine and Fitness and Council on School Health. Pediatrics 117: 1834, 2006 (Reaffirmed May 2009).

9 U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. School Meals. Accessed 31 January 2011. www.fns.usda.gov/CND/Lunch/AboutLunch/NSLPFactSheet.pdf and www.fns.usda.gov/CND/Breakfast/AboutBfast/SBPFactSheet.pdf

10 Action for Healthy Kids (2008). "Progress or Promises? What's Working for and Against Healthy Schools ". Accessed 31 January 2011. http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/resources/research-and-reports/progress-or-promises-what-s-working-for-and-against-healthy-schools.html

11 Action for Healthy Kids (October 2004)."The Learning Connection: The Value of Improving Nutrition and Physical Activity in Our Schools". Accessed 31 January 2011. http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/resources/files/learning-connection.pdf

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