

Another new food pyramid

No better, critics sniff

IN THEIR LATEST attempt to get Americans to eat healthier, government diet experts unveiled a new set of rainbow-colored food pyramids yesterday that can be individually tailored to a person's age, sex and lifestyle.

Critics quickly blasted the new recommendations, saying they do little to clear up the confusion that existed with the old one-size-fits-all pyramid.

The new pyramids have vertical bands that represent different food groups — such as grains, vegetables and dairy. But the suggested daily portions now vary according to who you are and how active you are.

For example, a 40-year-old woman who exercises less than 30 minutes a day should eat 6

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ounces of grains, 4 cups of fruits and vegetables, 3 cups of dairy, 5 ounces of meat or beans and 5 teaspoons of oil a day.

To determine what's best for you, check the USDA's new Web site, MyPyramid.gov.

The old pyramid, adopted by the Agriculture Department in 1992, stacked food groups horizontally, giving the impression that nutrients like carbohydrates were more important than others. Scientists also worried that it didn't reflect the latest research.

"What it did was confuse people — and confused consumers do nothing and they get nowhere," said Keith Ayoob, a professor of nutrition at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx.

The new pyramids are an improvement for two reasons, Ayoob said. "One, it's simpler. And, two, we know more and we have the science behind it."

But critics said the government missed an opportunity to put more of the responsibility for healthier eating on food companies.

"It is so clear from the pyramids that there was involvement from the food industry," insisted Lisa Young, a professor of nutrition and food studies at New York University. "Every single lobby group has a food that is at the base of the pyramid now."

Josephine Connolly, a nutritionist at University Hospital in Stony Brook, L.I., agreed the government missed a chance to clear up great confusion about what to eat and what to avoid.

"Consumers are left in the dark about things like sugars," a disappointed Connolly said. "It's going to make a very small difference, if any."

The new recommendations abandon vague references to "servings" in favor of cups, ounces and teaspoons. But these measures can be equally confusing, critics said, since half a cup of cooked pasta counts as 1 ounce of grain.

"It's incomprehensible," Young said. "That's impossible for a human being who eats in a restaurant to understand."

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Obesity risks slimmed down

BEING OVERWEIGHT is nowhere near as big a killer as federal health officials had thought, ranking No. 7 instead of No. 2 among the nation's leading preventable causes of death, a newly released report said yesterday.

The new analysis still concludes that obesity is indisputably lethal but, like several other recent studies, also found that people who are modestly overweight actually have a lower risk of death than those of "normal" weight.

That may be because normal may be set too low for today's population, and many Americans classified as overweight are still eating better, exercising more and managing their blood pressure better than they used to.

In its report revising obesity mortality rates, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated that obesity accounts for nearly 26,000 deaths a year in the U.S. — a drastically lower figure than estimates of just a few months ago of 365,000 obesity-related deaths a year.

The Associated Press

GOOD DAY FOR DOUBLE FEATURE



PHOTOS BY MATTHEW ROBERTS

These twin sisters and dozens of other look-alikes flocked to Times Square yesterday for Wrigley Spearmint and Doublemint gum twins casting call. Below, blond twins Danielle and Dana Malcom speak to twin casting agents Debbie and Lisa Ganz.



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Diane D'Apolito-May won't let anything hold her back. Especially when it comes to helping others.

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