



Date: March 22, 2011

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### **Family Physicians Urge You to Keep in Mind *Dietary Guidelines for Americans***

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—As March comes to an end, so does National Nutrition Month. Do not let that be an excuse to forget about your nutrition and diet.

When exploring new diets, family physicians urge you to keep in mind the importance of [\*Dietary Guidelines for Americans\*](#) published every five years jointly by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture.

These guidelines provide advice about food choices that promote health and prevent disease in healthy Americans ages 2 and older. A diet that follows the dietary guidelines emphasizes a total diet approach, urging Americans to reduce calories and watch portion sizes; make more nutrient-rich choices such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat or fat-free milk and milk products; and move more.

“One practical tip that I give my patients to work at controlling portion size is to use smaller plates. Since childhood most of us have been taught to clean our plates. Even when we are not hungry – if the food is in front of us, we will eat it. Therefore, it is very important to dish less; if you are still actually hungry, it is always an option to have a second helping,” said Ryan Kauffman, M.D., a family physician in Bellefontaine, Ohio.

Also, when exploring new diets, you should account for the many genetic, environmental, behavioral and cultural factors that can affect your health. Understanding your family’s history of disease and your risk factors for disease (i.e., body weight, fat distribution, blood pressure and blood cholesterol) can help you make more informed decisions about the actions that affect your own health. Food choices are among the most pleasurable and effective of these actions, and they enable people of all ages to work productively and feel their best. Also, good diets can help reduce major chronic disease risk factors, including obesity, high blood pressure and high blood cholesterol.

“In my practice I find that patients often struggle with good nutrition; they feel that in order to have a good diet, it must be a perfect diet. I like to remind them that the best way to improve diet is to make small changes, but to make sure that they are permanent changes,” said Kauffman.

Remember, once you have selected a diet that you want to try, always consult with your family physician *before* starting the diet.

*The Ohio Academy of Family Physicians is a statewide professional association with more than 4,000 members, including practicing physicians, family medicine residents and medical students. The scope of family medicine encompasses all ages, both sexes and every disease entity. Family physicians provide comprehensive, continuing care to all members of the family.*

## FACT SHEET

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#### **Balancing Calories to Manage Weight**

- Prevent and/or reduce being overweight and obesity through improved eating and physical activity behaviors.
- Control total calorie intake to manage body weight. For people who are overweight or obese, this will mean consuming fewer calories from foods and beverages.
- Increase physical activity and reduce time spent in sedentary behaviors.
- Maintain appropriate calorie balance during each stage of life—childhood, adolescence, adulthood, pregnancy and breastfeeding, and older age.

#### **Foods and Nutrients to Increase**

Individuals should meet the following recommendations as part of a healthy eating pattern while staying within their calorie needs.

- Increase vegetable and fruit intake.
- Eat a variety of vegetables, especially dark green, red and orange vegetables, and beans and peas.
- Consume at least half of all grains as whole grains. Increase whole grain intake by replacing refined grains with whole grains.
- Increase intake of fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products, such as milk, yogurt, cheese or fortified soy beverages.
- Choose a variety of protein foods, which include seafood, lean meat and poultry, eggs, beans and peas, soy products, and unsalted nuts and seeds.
- Increase the amount and variety of seafood consumed by choosing seafood in place of some meat and poultry.
- Replace protein foods that are higher in solid fats with choices that are lower in solid fats and calories and/or are sources of oils.
- Use oils to replace solid fats where possible.
- Choose foods that provide more potassium, dietary fiber, calcium and vitamin D, which are nutrients of concern in American diets. These foods include vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and milk and milk products.

#### **Building Healthy Eating Patterns**

- Select an eating pattern that meets nutrient needs over time at an appropriate calorie level.
- Account for all foods and beverages consumed and assess how they fit within a total healthy eating pattern.

Sources: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture