



Cut back on these foods for your health

I know the dietary guidelines tell us what we should eat. Do they also tell us what we shouldn't eat?

Sort of. The new federal dietary guidelines include a chapter on "Foods and Food Components to Reduce." These items — sodium, solid fats, added sugars, refined grains and alcohol — shouldn't be a surprise to anyone. What might be surprising is just how much of these items Americans currently devour.

Take, for example, sodium. It's estimated that Americans consume about 3,400 milligrams of sodium a day, with men in their 30s consuming the most, more than 4,500 milligrams. However, the "tolerable upper intake" level (above which you're more likely to see adverse health effects) is just 2,300 milligrams a day. The guidelines suggest reducing sodium to that level, or further limiting it to 1,500 milligrams for about half of all Americans who tend to be more sensitive to sodium intake — those who are older than 50, African-Americans, and those with hypertension, diabetes or chronic kidney disease.

Sodium is in so many foods, mostly added during processing, that it's hard to avoid. The largest sources in the American diet tend to be yeast breads, pizza, chicken dishes (including chicken strips and patties, stir-fries and casseroles) and pasta dishes (including macaroni and cheese). To reduce intake, compare sodium content on Nutrient Facts labels. And, prepare more fresh foods (choose fresh chicken without added

salt, for example, instead of prepared chicken dishes).

Other items to reduce include:

- Solid fats, including saturated and trans fats, and, for men, cholesterol. To reduce your intake, cut back on cheese, pizza and desserts (both grain-based, such as doughnuts, cakes, pies and cookies, and dairy-based, such as ice cream, pudding and milkshakes).
- Added sugars, which contribute an average of 16 percent of total calories in the American diet. Cut back by consuming less soda, energy drinks, sports drinks, sugar-sweetened fruit drinks, desserts and candy.
- Refined grains, which are stripped of fiber and some vitamins and minerals that whole grains naturally provide. Americans average 6.3 ounces of refined grains a day; the recommended level for those on a 2,000-calorie a day diet is just 3 ounces. Cutting back on yeast breads, pizza, grain-based desserts and tortillas would help.
- Alcohol. Moderate consumption (up to two drinks a day for men and one for women) offers some health benefits, but even that amount also carries some risk. Heavy or binge drinking is riskier yet. Those who consume alcohol should do so in moderation.

Read the guidelines in their entirety at <http://www.dietaryguidelines.gov>.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



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