



Americans flunk healthy eating index

I'm trying to eat more healthfully by following the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the "MyPlate" tips. I thought I had been eating OK, but I'm surprised at how drastically I've changed my diet. Do many people actually follow these recommendations?

First, congratulations on eating healthier. The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (online at <http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/>) focuses on helping people balance calories and physical activity to manage weight; consume more fruit, vegetables, whole grains, fat-free and low-fat dairy products, and seafood; and consume less sodium, saturated and trans fat, cholesterol, added sugars, and refined grains. The related MyPlate website (<http://www.choosemyplate.gov>) makes it easy for people to personalize those recommendations and determine, well, what to put on your plate.

Unfortunately, most people don't manage to meet the recommendations outlined in the Dietary Guidelines. In fact, a study recently published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicated that Americans flunk, getting an overall score of 57 percent on healthy eating. This study actually examined the scores of 4,488 adults

on what they ate based on the 2003-2004 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. Although the data is several years old, it's the most recent available to the researchers.

Of the 12 categories examined, participants scored well in only two categories: total grains and meat and beans. They scored especially low in:

- Dark green and orange vegetables and legumes, scoring 1.3 out of 5 points.
- Whole grains: 1 out of 5.
- Sodium (a lower score meant they consumed too much): 3.8 out of 10 points.
- Calories from solid fats, alcohol and added sugars (again, a lower score meant they consumed too much): 7.8 out of 20.

Other categories in which participants missed the mark were their consumption of fruit, vegetables, whole grains, milk, oils, and saturated fat.

The amount of food that you should consume in one day depends on the number of calories you should be getting each day, and that depends on your sex, age and amount of physical activity you perform. To determine the quantity that is right for you, download the Dietary Guidelines from the health.gov website and check Appendix 6 for calories and Appendix 7 for food amounts. Then start tracking your own progress.

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@osu.edu.



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