

Appendix E-4: History of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans

In early 1977, after years of discussion, scientific review, and debate, the US Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs, led by Senator George McGovern, recommended Dietary Goals for the American people (US Senate Select Committee, 1977). The Goals consisted of complementary nutrient-based and food-based recommendations. The first Goal focused on energy balance and recommended that, to avoid overweight, Americans should consume only as much energy as they expended. Overweight Americans should consume less energy and expend more energy. For the nutrient-based Goals, the Senate Committee recommended that Americans:

- Increase consumption of complex carbohydrates and “naturally occurring sugars;”and
- Reduce consumption of refined and processed sugars, total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium.

For the food-based Goals, the Committee recommended that Americans:

- Increase consumption of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains;
- Decrease consumption of:
 - refined and processed sugars and foods high in such sugars;
 - foods high in total fat and animal fat, and partially replace saturated fats with polyunsaturated fats;
 - eggs, butterfat, and other high-cholesterol foods;
 - salt and foods high in salt; and
- Choose low-fat and non-fat dairy products instead of high-fat dairy products (except for young children).

The issuance of the Dietary Goals was met with considerable debate and controversy, as industry groups and the scientific community expressed doubt that the science available at the time supported the specificity of the numbers provided in the Dietary Goals. To support the credibility of the science used by the Committee, the US Department of Agriculture and US Department of Health and Human Services (then called the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare) selected scientists from the two Departments and obtained additional expertise from the scientific community throughout the country to address the public’s need for authoritative and consistent guidance on diet and health.

In February 1980, the two Departments collaboratively issued *Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, a brochure that, in describing seven principles for a healthful diet, provided assistance for healthy people in making daily food choices (USDA/HHS, 1980). These Guidelines were based, in part, on the 1979 *Surgeon General's Report on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention* (DHEW/PHS, 1979) and reflected findings from a study on the relationship between dietary practices and health outcomes (ASCN, 1979). Ideas for incorporating a variety of foods to provide essential nutrients while maintaining recommended body weight were a focus. The brochure also provided guidance on limiting dietary components such as fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium, which were beginning to be considered risk factors in certain chronic diseases. Both the Dietary Goals and the first Dietary Guidelines for Americans were different from previous dietary guidance in that they reflected the emerging scientific evidence and changed the historical focus on nutrient adequacy to also identify the impacts of diet on chronic disease. These documents discussed the concepts of moderation as well as nutrient adequacy.

Even though the recommendations of the 1980 Dietary Guidelines for Americans were presented as innocuous and straightforward extrapolations from the science base, they, too, were met with a fair amount of controversy from a variety of industry and scientific groups.

The debate about the 1980 Dietary Guidelines for Americans led to Congressional report language that directed the two Departments to convene an advisory committee that would ensure that outside advice, both formal and informal, was captured in developing future editions of the Dietary Guidelines. A Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee composed of scientific experts outside the Federal sector was established shortly after that directive and was very helpful in the development of the 1985 *Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (USDA/HHS, 1985). The Departments made relatively few changes from the first edition, but this second edition was issued with much less debate from either industry or the scientific community. The 1985 Dietary Guidelines were widely accepted and were used as the framework for consumer nutrition education messages. They also were used as a guide for healthy diets by scientific, consumer, and industry groups.

In 1989, USDA and HHS established a second scientific advisory committee to review the 1985 Dietary Guidelines and make recommendations for revision. The basic tenets of earlier Dietary Guidelines were reaffirmed, and the 1990 *Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (USDA/HHS, 1990) promoted enjoyable and healthful eating through variety and moderation, rather than dietary restriction. For the first time, the Guidelines also suggested numerical goals for fat and saturated fat, though they stressed that the goals were to be met through dietary choices made over several days, not through choices about one meal or one food.

The 1980, 1985, and 1990 editions of the Dietary Guidelines were issued voluntarily by the two Departments. With the passage of the 1990 National Nutrition Monitoring and Related Research Act (Section 301 of Public Law 101-445, 7 U.S.C. 5341, Title III) (US Congress, 1990), the 1995 edition of *Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans* became the first Dietary Guidelines report mandated by statute. This Act directed the Secretaries of USDA and HHS to jointly issue at least every 5 years a report entitled *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. A Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee was established to assist in the preparations of the 1995, 2000, 2005, and now 2010 versions of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (HHS/USDA, 1995a; HHS/USDA, 1995b; USDA/HHS, 2000a; USDA/HHS, 2000b; HHS/USDA, 2004; HHS/USDA, 2005a; HHS/USDA, 2005b).

Since 1980, the Dietary Guidelines have been notably consistent in their recommendations on the components of a healthful diet, but they also have changed in some significant ways to reflect emerging science. In keeping with renewed emphasis on data quality, the 2005 Committee used a systematic approach for reviewing the scientific literature in developing its recommendations. This systematic review of the evidence has been further expanded for the 2010 revision cycle. USDA has established the Nutrition Evidence Library, a comprehensive evidence-based review process, to support the 2010 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (see **Part C. Methodology** for additional information about the Nutrition Evidence Library).

Over the past two decades, *Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans* has evolved to become a broadly accepted, evidence-based document that serves as the basis for Federal nutrition policy from which nutrition education materials and activities are developed. The Dietary Guidelines have presented advice for healthy Americans, ages 2 years and older, about making food choices that promote health and help prevent disease. As new data emerge about the role of diet in utero and from birth on, it will be important also to consider those ages 2 years and younger. Nutrition and health professionals actively promote the Dietary Guidelines as a means of encouraging Americans to focus on eating a healthful diet and being physically active throughout the entire lifespan.

Development of the Dietary Guidelines – A Chronology

- 1977** *Dietary Goals for the United States* (the McGovern report) was issued by the US Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs (US Senate Select Committee, 1977). The *Dietary Goals* reflected a shift in focus, from obtaining adequate nutrients to avoiding excessive intake of food components linked to chronic disease. These goals were controversial among some nutritionists and others concerned with food, nutrition, and health.
- 1979** The American Society for Clinical Nutrition formed a panel to study the relationship between dietary practices and health outcomes (ASCN, 1979). The findings, presented in 1979, were reflected in *Healthy People: The Surgeon General's Report on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention* (DHEW/PHS, 1979).
- 1980** Seven principles for a healthful diet were jointly issued by the then US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (now HHS) and the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) in response to the public's desire for authoritative, consistent guidelines on diet and health. These principles became the first edition of *Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (USDA/HHS, 1980). The 1980 Guidelines were based on the most up-to-date information available at the time and were directed to healthy Americans ages two and older. The Guidelines generated some concern among consumer, commodity, and food industry groups, as well as some nutrition scientists, who questioned the causal relationship between certain guidelines and health.
- 1980** A US Senate Committee on Appropriations report directed that a committee be established to review scientific evidence and recommend revisions to the 1980 *Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (US Senate, 1980).
- 1983** A Federal advisory committee of nine nutrition scientists was convened to review and make recommendations in a report to the Secretaries of USDA and HHS about the first edition of the Dietary Guidelines (USDA/HHS, 1985a).
- 1985** USDA and HHS jointly issued the second edition of *Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (USDA/HHS, 1985b). This edition was nearly identical to the first, retaining the seven guidelines from the 1980 edition. Some changes were made for clarity, while others reflected advances in scientific knowledge of the associations between diet and chronic diseases. The second edition received wide acceptance and was used as the basis for dietary guidance for the general public as well as a framework for developing consumer education messages.
- 1987** Language in the *Conference Report of the House Committee on Appropriations* indicated that USDA, in conjunction with HHS, “shall reestablish a Dietary Guidelines Advisory Group on a periodic basis. This Advisory Group will review the scientific data relevant to nutritional guidance and make recommendations on appropriate changes to the Secretaries of the Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services” (US House of Representatives, 1987).

- 1989** USDA and HHS established a second Federal advisory committee of nine members, which considered whether revisions to the 1985 Dietary Guidelines were needed and made recommendations for revision in a report to the Secretaries (USDA/HHS, 1990a). The 1988 *Surgeon General's Report on Nutrition and Health* (HHS/PHS, 1988) and the 1989 National Research Council's report *Diet and Health: Implications for Reducing Chronic Disease Risk* were key resources used by the Committee (NAS/NRC, 1989).
- 1990** USDA and HHS jointly released the third edition of *Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (USDA/HHS, 1990b). The basic tenets of the 1990 Dietary Guidelines were reaffirmed, with additional refinements made to reflect increased understanding of the science of nutrition and how best to communicate the science to consumers. The language of the new Dietary Guidelines was positive, was oriented toward the total diet, and provided specific information regarding food selection. For the first time, numerical recommendations were made for intakes of dietary fat and saturated fat.
- 1990** The 1990 National Nutrition Monitoring and Related Research Act (Section 301 of Public Law 101-445, 7 U.S.C. 5341, Title III) directed the Secretaries of the USDA and HHS to jointly issue at least every 5 years a report entitled *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (US Congress, 1990). This legislation also required review by the Secretaries of USDA and HHS of all Federal publications containing dietary advice for the general public.
- 1993** The HHS Charter established the 1995 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee.
- 1994** An 11-member Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee was appointed by the Secretaries of HHS and USDA to review the third edition of the Dietary Guidelines and determine whether changes were needed. If so, the Committee was to recommend suggestions and the rationale for any revisions.
- 1995** The report of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee to the Secretaries of HHS and USDA was published (HHS/USDA, 1995a).
- 1995** Using the 1995 report of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee as the foundation, HHS and USDA jointly released the fourth edition of *Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (HHS/USDA, 1995b). This edition continued to support the concepts from earlier editions. New information included the Food Guide Pyramid, Nutrition Facts Label, boxes highlighting good food sources of key nutrients, and a chart illustrating three weight ranges in relation to height.
- 1997** The USDA Charter established the 2000 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee.
- 1998** An 11-member Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee was appointed by the Secretaries of USDA and HHS to review the fourth edition of the Dietary Guidelines to determine whether changes were needed and, if so, to recommend suggestions for revision.
- 2000** The Committee submitted its report to the Secretaries of USDA and HHS (USDA/HHS, 2000a). This report contained the proposed text for the fifth edition of *Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

- 2000** The President of the United States spoke of the Dietary Guidelines in his radio address after USDA and HHS jointly issued the fifth edition of *Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans* earlier in the day (USDA/HHS, 2000b). Earlier versions of the Guidelines included seven statements. This version included 10—created by breaking out physical activity from the weight guideline, splitting the grains and fruits/vegetables recommendations for greater emphasis, and adding a new guideline on safe food handling.
- 2003** The HHS Charter established the 2005 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee.
- 2003** A 13-member Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee was appointed by the Secretaries of HHS and USDA to review the fifth edition of the Dietary Guidelines to determine whether changes were needed and, if so, to recommend suggestions for revision.
- 2003-2004** In keeping with renewed emphasis on data quality, the Committee used a systematic approach to reviewing the scientific literature to develop its recommendations. Committee members initially posed approximately 40 specific research questions that were put through an extensive evidence-based search and review of the scientific literature. Issues relating diet and physical activity to health promotion and chronic disease prevention also were examined. Other major sources of evidence used were the Dietary Reference Intake (DRI) reports prepared by expert committees convened by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) as well as various Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and World Health Organization (WHO) reports. USDA completed numerous food intake pattern modeling analyses and the Committee analyzed various national data sets and sought advice from invited experts.
- 2004** The Committee submitted its technical report to the Secretaries of HHS and USDA (HHS/USDA, 2004). This 364-page report resulted in a detailed analysis of the science and was accompanied by many pages of evidence-based tables that were made available electronically. After dropping some questions because of incomplete or inconclusive data, the Committee wrote conclusive statements and comprehensive rationales for 34 of the 40 original questions.
- 2005** Using the Committee’s technical report as a basis, HHS and USDA jointly prepared and issued the sixth edition of *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* in January 2005 (HHS/USDA, 2005a). This 80-page policy document was prepared from the DGAC Report. It was the first time the Departments prepared a policy document that was intended primarily for use by policy makers, healthcare providers, nutritionists, and nutrition educators. The content of this document included nine major Dietary Guidelines messages that resulted in 41 Key Recommendations, of which 23 were for the general public and 18 for special population groups. The report highlighted the USDA Food Guide and the DASH Eating Plan as two examples of eating patterns that exemplify the Dietary Guidelines. This publication continues to serve as the basis for Federal nutrition policy until the next policy document is released in 2010. A companion, 10-page brochure called *Finding Your Way to a Healthier You* (HHS/USDA, 2005b) was released concurrently with the Dietary Guidelines to provide advice to consumers about food choices that promote health and decrease the risk of chronic disease. Shortly thereafter, USDA released the MyPyramid Food Guidance System, an update of the Food Guide Pyramid, which included more detailed advice for consumers to follow the Dietary Guidelines.

- 2008** The USDA Charter established the 2010 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee.
- 2008** A 13-member Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee was appointed by the Secretaries of USDA and HHS to review the sixth edition of *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* to determine whether changes were needed and, if so, to recommend suggestions for revision.
- 2009** USDA established a Nutrition Evidence Library (NEL) for use in reviewing the scientific literature for answering approximately 130 of the 180 scientific questions posed by the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee. This was the most rigorous and comprehensive approach ever used for reviewing the science in order to develop nutrition-related recommendations for the public. When a full systematic review of the evidence was not needed, other methods for answering scientific questions were used. These included brief updates to substantial sources of evidences already completed in the past such as the 2005 DGAC Report and IOM Reports. Food pattern modeling using USDA's MyPyramid Food Guidance System and the review of various data analyses were also used in formulating answers for some of the questions posed. An elaborate public comments database was developed and successfully served to accept comments and attachments from the public in one central location. This database served to encourage public participation and supported a collection of more than 800 public comments related to the DGAC process.
- 2010** The Committee submitted its report to the Secretaries of USDA and HHS. This report will serve as the basis for preparing the seventh edition of *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. USDA and HHS will jointly issue the seventh edition of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. This publication will continue to serve as the basis of Federal nutrition policy. Additional consumer communication materials will be developed to provide advice to consumers about food choices that promote health and decrease the risk of chronic disease.

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