

# The Food Pyramid Basics

## Orange Section on the USDA Food Pyramid

### Grain

The USDA recommends six servings or six ounces from the Grain Group daily.

What foods are in the Grain Group?

Any food made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley or another cereal grain is a grain product.

Grains are divided into two subgroups, **whole grains** and **refined grains**.

**Whole grains** contain the entire grain kernel -- the bran, germ, and endosperm. Whole grains are healthy choices because they are high in fiber. Fiber lowers cholesterol levels, aids the digestive system, helps maintain a healthy weight, and helps prevent certain diseases. Make at least half of your grains whole every day! Examples of whole grains include:

- Whole wheat flour
- Whole wheat crackers
- Whole wheat pasta
- Bulgur (cracked wheat)
- Oatmeal
- Whole cornmeal
- Brown rice

**Refined grains** have been milled, a process that removes the bran and germ. This is done to give grains a finer texture and improve their shelf life, but it also removes dietary fiber, iron, and many B vitamins. Some examples of refined grain products are:

- White flour
- White bread
- White rice

Most refined grains are *enriched*. This means certain B vitamins (thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, folic acid) and iron are added back after processing. Fiber is not added back to enriched grains. Check the ingredient list on refined grain products to make sure that the word "enriched" is included in the grain name. Some food products are made from mixtures of whole grains and refined grains.

Source: <http://www.mypyramid.gov/pyramid/>

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## Green Section on the USDA Food Pyramid

### Vegetable

The USDA recommends four servings or two cups from the Vegetable Group daily.

What foods are in the Vegetable Group?

Any vegetable or 100% vegetable juice counts as a member of the vegetable group. Vegetables may be raw or cooked; fresh, frozen, canned, or dried/dehydrated; and may be whole, cut-up, or mashed.

Vegetables are organized into five subgroups, based on their nutrient content. Some commonly eaten vegetables in each subgroup are:

#### Dark Green Vegetables

Bok choy  
Broccoli  
Collard greens  
Dark green leafy lettuce  
Kale  
Mesclun  
Mustard greens  
Romaine lettuce  
Spinach  
Turnip greens  
Watercress

#### Dry Beans and Peas

Black beans  
Black-eyed peas  
Garbanzo beans (chickpeas)  
Kidney beans  
Lentils  
Lima beans (mature)  
Navy beans  
Pinto beans  
Soy beans  
Split peas  
Tofu (bean curd made from soybeans)  
White beans

#### Orange Vegetables

Acorn squash  
Butternut squash  
Carrots  
Hubbard squash  
Pumpkin  
Sweet potatoes

#### Starchy Vegetables

Corn  
Green peas  
Lima beans (green)  
Potatoes

#### Other Vegetables

Artichokes  
Asparagus  
Bean sprouts  
Beets  
Brussels sprouts  
Cabbage  
Cauliflower  
Celery  
Cucumbers  
Eggplant  
Green beans  
Green or red peppers  
Iceberg (head) lettuce  
Mushrooms  
Okra  
Onions  
Parsnips  
Tomatoes  
Tomato juice  
Vegetable juice  
Turnips  
Wax beans  
Zucchini

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## Red Section on the USDA Food Pyramid

### Fruit

The USDA recommends three servings or one and a half cups from the Fruit Group daily.

What foods are in the Fruit Group?

Any fruit or 100% fruit juice counts as part of the fruit group. Fruits may be fresh, canned, frozen, or dried, and may be whole, cut-up, or pureed. Some commonly eaten fruits are:

#### **Fruits, General:**

Apples  
 Apricots  
 Avocado  
 Bananas  
 Cherries  
 Grapefruit  
 Grapes  
 Kiwi fruit  
 Lemons  
 Limes  
 Mangoes  
 Nectarines  
 Oranges  
 Peaches  
 Pears  
 Papaya  
 Pineapple  
 Plums  
 Prunes  
 Raisins  
 Tangerines

#### **Melons:**

Cantaloupe  
 Honeydew  
 Watermelon

#### **Berries:**

Strawberries  
 Blueberries  
 Raspberries

#### **Mixed fruits:**

Fruit cocktail

#### **100% Fruit juice:**

Orange  
 Apple  
 Grape  
 Grapefruit

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## Yellow Section on the USDA Food Pyramid

### Oils

A person's allowance for oils depends on age, sex, and level of physical activity. The daily allowances recommended by the USDA are shown below:

Gender	Age	Daily Allowance in Teaspoons
Children	2-3 years old	3
Children	4-8 years old	4
Boys	9-13 years old	5
Boys	14-18 years old	6
Girls	9-13 years old	5
Girls	14-18 years old	5

What are "oils"?

Oils are fats that are liquid at room temperature, like the vegetable oils used in cooking. Oils come from many different plants and from fish. Some common oils are: canola oil, corn oil, cottonseed oil, olive oil, safflower oil, soybean oil, sunflower oil.

Some oils are used mainly as flavorings, such as walnut oil and sesame oil. A number of foods are naturally high in oils, like: nuts, olives, some fish, and avocados.

Foods that are mainly oil include mayonnaise, certain salad dressings, and soft (tub or squeeze) margarine with no trans fats.

Most oils are high in monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fats, and low in saturated fats. Oils from plant sources (vegetable and nut oils) do not contain any cholesterol. In fact, no foods from plants sources contain cholesterol.

A few plant oils, however, including coconut oil and palm kernel oil, are high in saturated fats and for nutritional purposes should be considered to be solid fats.

Solid fats are fats that are solid at room temperature, like butter and shortening. Solid fats come from many animal foods and can be made from vegetable oils through a process called hydrogenation. Some common solid fats are: butter, beef fat (tallow, suet), chicken fat, pork fat (lard), stick margarine, and shortening.

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# The Food Pyramid Basics

## Blue Section on the USDA Food Pyramid

### Milk

The USDA recommends three servings or three cups total from the Milk Group daily.

What foods are included in the Milk Group?

All fluid milk products and many foods made from milk are considered part of this food group. Foods made from milk that retain their calcium content are part of the group, while foods made from milk that have little to no calcium, such as cream cheese, cream, and butter, are not.

The healthiest choices from the Milk Group are fat-free or low-fat.

Some commonly eaten choices in the milk, yogurt, and cheese group are:

#### **Milk:**

*All fluid milk:*

Fat-free (skim)  
Low fat (1%)  
Reduced fat (2%)  
Whole milk  
Lactose reduced milks  
Lactose free milks

*Flavored milks:*

Chocolate  
Strawberry

*Milk-Based Desserts:*

Puddings made with milk  
Ice milk  
Frozen yogurt  
Ice cream

#### **Cheese:**

*Hard natural cheeses:*

Cheddar  
Mozzarella  
Swiss  
Parmesan

*Soft cheeses:*

Ricotta  
Cottage cheese

*Processed cheeses:*

American

#### **Yogurt:**

All yogurt  
Fat-free  
Low fat  
Reduced fat  
Whole milk yogurt

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# The Food Pyramid Basics

## Purple Section on the USDA Food Pyramid

### Meat & Beans

The USDA recommends two servings or four ounces from the Meat and Beans Group daily.

What foods are included in the meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, and nuts (Meat & Beans) group?

All foods made from meat, poultry, fish, dry beans or peas, eggs, nuts, and seeds are considered part of this group. Dry beans and peas are part of this group as well as the vegetable group.

Most meat and poultry choices should be lean or low-fat. Fish, nuts, and seeds contain healthy oils, so choose these foods frequently instead of meat or poultry.

Some commonly eaten choices in the Meat and Beans group, with selection tips, are:

<p><b>Meats</b></p> <p><i>Lean cuts of:</i></p> <p>Beef Ham Lamb Pork Veal</p> <p><i>Game meats:</i></p> <p>Bison Rabbit Venison</p> <p><i>Lean ground meats:</i></p> <p>Beef Pork Lamb</p>	<p><i>Lean luncheon meats</i></p> <p><i>Organ meats:</i></p> <p>Liver Giblets</p> <p><b>Poultry</b></p> <p>Chicken Duck Goose Turkey Ground chicken Ground turkey</p> <p><b>Eggs</b></p> <p>Chicken eggs Duck eggs</p>	<p><b>Dry Beans and Peas:</b> Tempeh Black beans Black-eyed peas Chickpeas (garbanzo beans) Falafel Kidney beans Lentils Lima beans (mature) Navy beans Pinto beans Soy beans Split peas Tofu (bean curd made from soy beans) White beans</p> <p>Texturized vegetable protein (TVP)</p> <p><b>Nuts &amp; Seeds</b></p> <p>Almonds Cashews Hazelnuts (filberts) Mixed nuts Peanuts Peanut butter Pecans Pistachios Pumpkin seeds Sesame seeds Sunflower seeds Walnuts</p> <p><i>Bean burgers:</i></p> <p>Garden burgers Veggie burgers</p> <p><i>Canned fish such as:</i></p> <p>Anchovies Clams Tuna Sardines</p>
<p><b>Fish</b></p> <p><i>Finfish such as:</i></p> <p>Catfish Cod Flounder Haddock Halibut Herring Mackerel Pollock</p> <p>Porgy Salmon Sea bass Snapper Swordfish Trout Tuna</p>	<p><i>Shellfish such as:</i></p> <p>Clams Crab Crayfish Lobster Mussels Octopus Oysters Scallops Squid (calamari) Shrimp</p>	

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