

Statement on New USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans

From Marji McCullough, Sc.D., R.D., strategic director of nutritional epidemiology at the American Cancer Society

"The updated USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010 include recommendations for a healthy diet and physical activity, both important behaviors in reducing cancer risk. According to the American Cancer Society, about a third of cancer deaths can be attributed to poor diet and physical inactivity. Research has demonstrated that maintaining a healthy weight, staying physically active throughout life, and consuming a healthy diet can substantially reduce a person's lifetime risk of developing cancer.

"There are several areas of overlap between these guidelines and the Society's Guidelines on Nutrition and Physical Activity. Chief among them is the strong emphasis on achieving and maintaining a healthy body weight. Given the extraordinary increase in obesity in the US and compelling evidence that excess body weight increases the risk of many types of cancer, we fully support USDA's efforts to address this important public health issue. While much progress has been made in reducing cancer incidence and mortality rates, the current obesity epidemic threatens to jeopardize such progress. Trends in overweight and obesity among our youth are also clear threats to future rates of cancer and other chronic diseases.

"The Dietary Guidelines recommendation for a total dietary pattern containing a variety of vegetables, cooked dry beans and peas, fruits, whole grains, nuts and seeds is also consistent with our own recommendations. One key difference with the Society's guidelines is that the USDA guidelines do not recommend limiting red and processed meats, which is based on a wealth of studies showing increased colorectal cancer risk.

"We are pleased to see that the guidelines give much needed attention to community action and system-level approaches to create social and physical environments that encourage the adoption and maintenance of healthful nutrition and physical activity behaviors for all segments of the population. Using evidence-based approaches in schools, worksites, and communities are needed to address current obesity trends.

"For more on the Society's guidelines for nutrition and physical activity, visit <http://bit.ly/fnMEU0>"
