

## Working with the New Food Guide Pyramid

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Not sure if you're getting enough exercise? Unclear about how the snack you just finished will fit into your diet plans? Getting in shape can be complicated, but it doesn't need to be. There's a new free tool online that puts everything you need to know right at your fingertips.

In April of this year, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion released a new food pyramid. MyPyramid explains how the right kinds of food and exercise will help you look and feel your best.

The USDA food pyramid has been around for a long time, but until now it gave only general advice for an average person. The "new and improved" food pyramid is interactive, personalized, and fun. It comes with lots of tools that make it easy for anyone to come up with a healthy plan for smart nutrition and exercise.

The first step is to go online and check out the new Web site. Go to [www.MyPyramid.gov](http://www.MyPyramid.gov), and key in just a few facts. MyPyramid will respond with a step-by-step plan for a healthier lifestyle.

### STEP 1

Enter your age, gender, and how many minutes you spend most days doing a physical activity (things like walking, jogging, playing ball, jumping rope, biking, or bowling).

### STEP 2

Check out what MyPyramid has to say about your food choices and level of physical activity. Think about what it says about how much you should be eating from each of the 5 food groups and which types of foods are best for you. Print it out, and then post it on the refrigerator or in your notebook to help remind you of your goals.

### STEP 3

Go to the "My Pyramid Tracker" section. Enter your age, gender, height, and weight. Then enter everything you ate yesterday. The program will "score" your day's food intake against what is ideal for you and suggest ways to change your eating habits to feel better and have more energy.



### STEP 4

Choose from the list those types of activities you did on a recent typical day and enter the amount of time you spent on each activity. The Tracker will figure out how your level of activity measures up against what is recommended for someone who fits your profile, then give you a "score" that shows where you fit in.

### STEP 5

So, how did you like your nutrition and exercise scores? Is there a difference between what you're doing now and what MyPyramid recommends? Give some thought to how to get from where you are now to where you want to be. Then write down your goals and check back every few days to see how you're doing.

### STAY IN STEP

Make a habit of logging your food and exercise habits each day on the Tracker. Once you know what your patterns are, you can decide to change them one step at a time. Get to know MyPyramid and how it can help you to create a lifestyle that will mean more energy and better health for years to come.

**Note to Readers:** The July *Nutrition Notes* column, "Eating Out Without Standing Out," contained general information about obtaining meals in restaurants for persons with several medical disorders, including food allergies. Please note that this short article did not contain comprehensive information about obtaining a safe restaurant meal for a person with life-threatening food allergies (eg, notification of an allergy to appropriate restaurant personnel, concern for cross contact with allergens during food preparation, assurance about the ingredients of a meal, selection of safe restaurants, etc) and should not be used as a sole resource for such individuals. Additional educational materials about food allergies are available at [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org).

This patient education sheet is distributed in conjunction with the October 2005 issue of *Adolescent Health Update*, published by the American Academy of Pediatrics. The information in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. Comments and suggestions on *Nutrition Notes* should be forwarded to Marc Jacobson, MD, FAAP ([jacobson@lij.edu](mailto:jacobson@lij.edu)).

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