

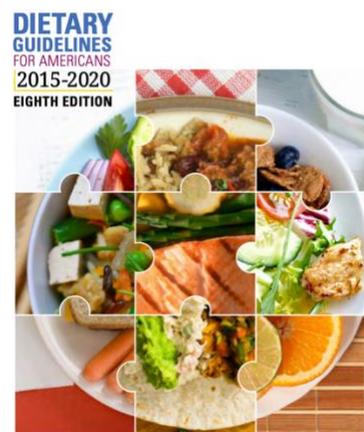
AICR's Federal Priorities: Evidence-Based Guidelines for Food, Nutrition and Physical Activity Programs

Background

Federal agency guidelines for food, nutrition and physical activity programs serve to inform the development of a range of health policies and programs. From nutrition standards in federal nutrition programs, such as the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), to educational programs for those receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, government guidelines have an impact on millions of Americans. They also function as a resource for health professionals and the general public to help them lead healthful lifestyles. As the leading authority on cancer prevention and survival through diet, weight and physical activity, the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) advocates that government lifestyle guidelines reflect the totality of the evidence.

Dietary Guidelines

Every five years, the US Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and of Agriculture (USDA) produce the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (DGA), a report containing evidence-based nutritional and dietary information and recommendations. While serving as a basis for what Americans should generally eat and feed their families, these guidelines are also the foundation for all federal food and nutrition policy programs. The 2015-2020 DGA emphasizes a healthy eating pattern, or combination of foods and beverages consumed over time, that includes vegetables, fruits, whole grains and lean meats. The 2015-2020 Guidelines also recommend limiting sodium, saturated and trans fats and added sugars.¹



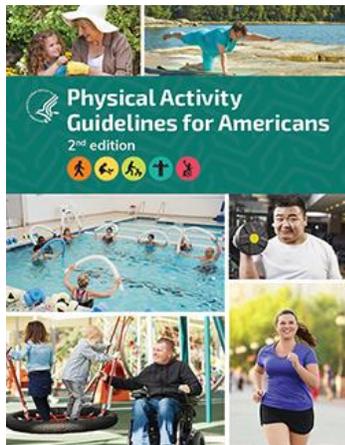
Source: US Department of Agriculture and
Department of Health and Human Services

The process to update the DGA for 2020-2025 is underway, and AICR is monitoring and informing their development. AICR has attended the public meetings of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC), a group of independent experts charged with reviewing the evidence and developing a scientific report to inform the development of the DGA, and provided oral comments when there was an opportunity to do so. AICR has also submitted several [comment letters](#) to the DGAC regarding the evidence on dietary patterns, alcohol consumption, and cancer risk. Additionally, we have [led efforts](#) in advocating for the use of external evidence in the formulation of the DGAC's conclusions and recommendations to help them reflect the most current and authoritative evidence. As the development of the 2020-2025 DGA continues, AICR is continuing to monitor the process and provide evidence regarding the diet and cancer connection. Following the release of the DGAC's final report, AICR is monitoring the development of the final guidelines and their implementation in nutrition-related policies in order to ensure that they adhere to the latest cancer prevention research.

Physical Activity Guidelines

HHS issued the first *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* (PAG) in 2008, and updated guidelines were published in 2018.² These guidelines provide physical activity recommendations for children and adolescents, adults, older adults, women during and after pregnancy, individuals with disabilities and individuals with chronic health conditions. The overarching

guidelines for adults to move more and sit less and engage in at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity per week are consistent with AICR's [Recommendations for Cancer Prevention](#).



Source: US Department of Health and Human Services

The most recent version of the PAG, published in 2018, included cancer experts as part of the advisory committee and the guidelines cite the benefits of an active lifestyle for cancer prevention and survivorship. During their development, AICR engaged with the committee and federal experts to ensure the guidelines reflected the most current evidence. A [blog post](#) by a former PAG Advisory Committee member can help consumers understand the guidelines and apply them to their own lives.

While the DGA are required by law to be updated every five years, no such law currently exists for the PAG. AICR has endorsed [S. 1608/H.R. 2891, the Promoting Physical Activity for Americans Act](#), which instructs HHS to provide physical activity guidelines for the general public based on peer-reviewed evidence at least every ten years. AICR will continue to monitor and advocate for legislation

ensuring physical activity recommendations are current and based on the most authoritative evidence.

Key Recommendations

While the provision of national physical activity and dietary guidelines is an important step, studies indicate that adherence to these guidelines is incredibly low amongst the general population, suggesting that more must be done to inform and influence the public on these important health measures.^{3,4} AICR provides numerous educational tools to help people more easily understand their nutritional needs and how those needs can be met through eating a healthful diet, such as through following the recommendations in the DGA.

We emphasize the importance of eating a healthful diet in the prevention of primary and secondary cancers. As such, we recommend that these guidelines continue to be based on the most up-to-date evidence, including evidence provided in [Diet, Nutrition, Physical Activity and Cancer: a Global Perspective](#), the American Institute for Cancer Research and World Cancer Research Fund's Third Expert Report, containing the most authoritative scientific research on cancer prevention and survivorship to date.⁵ Particularly, we recommend that these guidelines emphasize the well-documented effects of [alcohol](#) and [processed meat](#) on cancer risk, while also concentrating on the importance of including [whole grains](#) to the diet to protect against cancer.⁵ AICR will continue to advocate for policies that enhance the public's understanding of the link between these exposures and cancer, as well as other chronic diseases, while also serving as a resource to future DGACs and federal agencies on this topic.

AICR is equally committed to ensuring adherence to the PAG and utilizes our [educational materials](#), as well as other opportunities, to voice the importance of an active lifestyle in the prevention of primary and secondary cancers. We will also continue to support policies put into place that make exercise more accessible across all communities, such as policies that provide enhanced active transportation options like sidewalks, bike paths and community green spaces.

Conclusion

AICR continues to be a leader in advocating that guidelines for food, nutrition and physical activity are based on cancer prevention and survivorship research. We will also support

educational efforts that improve adherence to these evidence-based guidelines, helping every American to lead a healthy lifestyle.

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2015. *2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. 8th Edition. Available at https://health.gov/sites/default/files/2019-09/2015-2020_Dietary_Guidelines.pdf.

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*, 2nd edition. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2018. Available at <https://www.hhs.gov/fitness/be-active/physical-activity-guidelines-for-americans/index.html>.

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2019. *2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. 8th Edition. Available at https://health.gov/sites/default/files/2019-09/2015-2020_Dietary_Guidelines.pdf.

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Trends in meeting the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines, 2008-2018." Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/downloads/trends-in-the-prevalence-of-physical-activity-508.pdf>.

⁵ World Cancer Research Fund/American Institute for Cancer Research. *Diet, Nutrition, Physical Activity and Cancer: a Global Perspective*. Continuous Update Project Expert Report 2018. Available at dietandcancerreport.org.