

What We Eat Is Who We Are

By Jermelia McCoy-Collins

Imagine if people looked like what they ate. I would look like a waffle in the morning and a shrimp at night, or some combination of them both, yikes! Thankfully we don't look like what we eat, but we are what we eat. So maybe I still am a waffle-shrimp, but only on the inside. What we eat is divided into categories in a food pyramid which was created by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The **food pyramid** shows the types of foods that a person should eat every day. The food pyramid is a picture of a triangle with different sections inside of it. You can find it on the back of many types of food, especially bread. Each section shows the types of food groups like dairy, sweets, bread, and protein.

The food pyramid had not changed since 1992, and in 2005 the USDA came up with a new revised food pyramid. The difference between the two pyramids is that the old pyramid showed the pictures of the foods that we needed to eat and it was measured in servings. The new food pyramid shows the total amount of how much a person should have of one type of food each day. One thing the new pyramid emphasizes is that people should eat less fats, oils and sweets. This means that people should cut down on candy, soda, potato chips, and cookies. The new pyramid is a way to educate us on how we should eat a more balanced diet from a variety of food without counting the calories when you eat. What's a calorie you ask? A **calorie** is the unit for measuring food energy. In other words, a calorie is how much energy you can get from food. The more calories a food has, the more energy it has.

Calories are good for us because our body needs them for energy and this energy gets us through the day. Yet, if we eat a lot of calories and don't burn them by the end of the day, then it can lead to weight gain.

There isn't an exact number of how many calories we need because kids come in all different sizes and forms, so each person burns calories (energy) in many different ways. But what doctors recommend is that kids who are in school should use about 1,600 to 2,500 per day. When girls reach 11-13 years old they need more calories, but they need fewer calories than boys. When boys reach 11-13 years old, they will need an estimate of 2,500 to 3,000 per day. But whether you are a boy or girl, kids who are active and move around a lot will need more calories than kids who are not active. Kids who are over weight need to make sure that they do not eat too many calories. No matter who you are, you should check with your doctor if you are concerned about how many calories you eat, and you should never start a diet without asking your doctor first. Eating too little calories can also hurt you.

Sometimes people mistakenly say that they have to burn off all the calories that they eat or they will gain weight, but this isn't true. The body needs calories just to keep the heart beating and lungs breathing. When you are a kid, your body also needs calories from a variety of foods in order for you to grow up healthy. So if you stick to the plan of eating the right type of healthy foods and not junk food, then you can grow up to be a strong healthy person!

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For Kids

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Grains Make half your grains whole	Vegetables Vary your veggies	Fruits Focus on fruits	Milk Get your calcium-rich foods	Meat & Beans Go lean with protein
<p>Start smart with breakfast. Look for whole-grain cereals.</p> <p>Just because bread is brown doesn't mean it's whole-grain. Search the ingredients list to make sure the first word is "whole" (like "whole wheat").</p>	<p>Color your plate with all kinds of great-tasting veggies.</p> <p>What's green and orange and tastes good? Veggies! Go dark green with broccoli and spinach, or try orange ones like carrots and sweet potatoes.</p>	<p>Fruits are nature's treats — sweet and delicious.</p> <p>Go easy on juice and make sure it's 100%.</p>	<p>Move to the milk group to get your calcium. Calcium builds strong bones.</p> <p>Look at the carton or container to make sure your milk, yogurt, or cheese is lowfat or fat-free.</p>	<p>Eat lean or lowfat meat, chicken, turkey, and fish. Ask for it baked, broiled, or grilled — not fried.</p> <p>It's nutty, but true. Nuts, seeds, peas, and beans are all great sources of protein, too.</p>

For an 1,800-calorie diet, you need the amounts below from each food group. To find the amounts that are right for you, go to MyPyramid.gov.

<p>Eat 6 oz. every day; at least half should be whole</p>	<p>Eat 2 1/2 cups every day</p>	<p>Eat 1 1/2 cups every day</p>	<p>Get 3 cups every day; for kids ages 2 to 8, it's 2 cups</p>	<p>Eat 5 oz. every day</p>
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Oils Oils are not a food group, but you need some for good health. Get your oils from fish, nuts, and liquid oils such as corn oil, soybean oil, and canola oil.

<p>Find your balance between food and fun</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move more. Aim for at least 60 minutes everyday, or most days. Walk, dance, bike, rollerblade — it all counts. How great is that! 	<p>Fats and sugars — know your limits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get your fat facts and sugar smarts from the Nutrition Facts label. Limit solid fats as well as foods that contain them. Choose food and beverages low in added sugars and other caloric sweeteners.
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U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service
September 2005
160-591



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New food pyramid, 2005