

Increase consumption of calcium-rich foods for better health

The newly released 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans give positive advice on eating more nutrient-dense foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat or fat-free dairy products. Paulelda Gilbert, ISU Extension nutrition and health specialist for Greene County, says the guidelines serve as a practical plan for achieving good health and disease prevention through diet.

Based on the latest nutrition science, the recommendations suggest Americans now eat three servings of low-fat or fat-free dairy products each day. Dairy foods are abundant in nine nutrients, Gilbert says, including calcium, protein, potassium, phosphorus, riboflavin, niacin, and vitamins D, A, and B12. Getting three servings of dairy foods daily is as easy as enjoying low-fat milk, yogurt, or cheese with every meal or snack throughout the day.

Those sensitive to lactose should consider alternatives within the dairy group such as lactose-free milk, hard/aged cheeses, and yogurt as the most reliable and easiest way to get the same health benefits.

Gilbert says eating a well-balanced diet with dairy, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains will help Americans meet their nutrient needs and prevent chronic disease. The guidelines recommend that Americans eat 4 ½ cups of fruits and vegetables and three servings of whole grains each day.

To address Americans' expanding waistlines, the Dietary Guidelines also focus on calories. They provide advice on how many servings from each of the five food groups Americans should eat depending on how many calories they need each day. The report recommends that people enjoy more nutrient-rich foods (low-fat dairy, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains) first to meet nutrient recommendations without gaining weight. Three servings of dairy daily help meet the nutrition requirements for four critical nutrients Americans are lacking: vitamin A, calcium, magnesium, and potassium. The guidelines add that having three servings of dairy a day is not associated with increased body weight.

For the first time, the new Dietary Guidelines provide people with specific tips to apply the advice to their individual tastes and nutritional needs. Calorie charts (1,000 to 3,200) address a range of nutritional needs and activity levels. To read the details of the 2005 Dietary Guidelines, visit this Web site:

www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/recommendations.htm.

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For Release Week of March 21, 2005

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Iowa State University Extension has a variety of nutrition and health resources available. For more information, contact the _____ County Extension Office at _____.

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