

**DIETARY
GUIDELINES
FOR AMERICANS
2015-2020**
EIGHTH EDITION

**AUDIENCE
RESEARCH:**
Professionals and
the *2015–2020
Dietary Guidelines*

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Human Services



A wooden cutting board with a metal measuring cup on it. The measuring cup is a 1/4 cup size and has the number '3001' on its handle. The background is a dark, textured wood grain.

Acknowledgement

Project Lead:

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Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

**At the time this work was completed*



Dietary Guidelines Communications Research

Target Audience

- Primary target audience for the Dietary Guidelines is *professionals*



- HHS and USDA defined several segments of the target audience, including public health program planners and point of care professionals



Dietary Guidelines Communications Research

Overview

- Formative research to
 - Gain an understanding of the target audiences' information needs and characteristics
 - Determine what messages, formats, and channels resonate with segments of the target audiences

Research Objective

To develop messaging, products, and tools that meet the needs of targeted audiences of professionals who use the Dietary Guidelines



Methods: Formative Research

- Environmental scan
- Literature review
- Online exploratory surveys
- Focus groups
- In-depth interviews
- Audience descriptions and personas
- Message testing
- Website usability testing



Participants

- Federal staff
- Program planners and evaluators
- Point-of-care professionals
- Media and communications professionals
- Food and beverage industry representatives



Survey and Interviews: Cross-cutting Findings

- Professional audiences view the DGA as the go-to, evidence based source for nutrition guidance

Key Topics and Priorities

- Dietary behavior change
- Link between nutrition and chronic disease
- Food-based guidelines and messages over nutrient-based
- Key differences between 2010 DGA and the new 2015-2020 DGA



Survey and Interviews: Cross-cutting Findings

- Professional audiences wanted
 - Online policy document that's searchable
 - Ability to view it across devices (e.g., desktop, laptop, smartphone, tablet)
 - Collateral materials, easy to share with professionals and consumers
 - Infographics, social-media messages
 - Material to highlight “key takeaways”



Survey and Interviews: Cross-cutting Findings

- Professional audiences supported simple, actionable consumer messages
 - Favor “small steps” approach to consumer messaging
 - Visual, attention-grabbing resources
 - Recipes, videos, etc.

Findings used to develop methods
for additional audience research and
message development



Research: Identifying Professional Audiences

5 Segments of Professional Audiences

- Point-of-care
- Media and communications
- Federal staff
- Program planners and evaluators
- Food and beverage industry

Methods

- Literature of best practices for reaching target audiences
- Survey
- In-depth interviews



Research: Identifying Professional Audiences

Explore each segment to identify preferred information channels and formats, information needs, perspectives on the Dietary Guidelines.

Results used to inform communications strategy and messages for the Dietary Guidelines and its implementation.

General Findings: Point-of-care Providers

Description

- General practitioners (e.g., internists, nurses, etc.)
- Nutrition-specific practitioners

Reach consumers

- Direct one-on-one access

Need

- Quickly understand the DGA and what has changed
- Prepackaged, actionable guidance they can share
- Simple user-friendly tools that help consumers act on DGA guidance (e.g., NFL, MyPlate)



General Findings:

Media and Communications Professionals

Description

- Traditional media- reporters for newspapers, magazines, radio, and TV
- Newer media- citizen journalists, bloggers, and social network managers

Reach consumers

- Web, print, TV, and radio

Need

- Information they can understand quickly
- Interviews with nutrition expert
- Rapid responses to requests for information



General Findings: Federal Staff

Description

- National program managers, public health advisors/analysts, researchers, policy makers
- Public relations staff, health educators

Reach consumers

- Messaging and programs that directly affect consumers
- Work with other federal, state, nonprofit, and industry organizations that reach consumers

General Findings: Federal Staff

Need

- Roadmap
 - Explains how the DGA will be implemented across agencies
 - Follow-up that DGA is used as planned
- Training on how to adopt DGA policies
- Details on specific differences between the 2010 and 2015-2020 DGA to make updating policies easier
- Guidance that clearly connects DGA to other Federal resources for nutrition information (e.g., MyPlate, DRIs)
- Efforts to promote DGA at scientific meetings and build on existing collaborations



General Findings:

Program Planners and Evaluators

Description

- Program managers and planners, health educators, researchers, public health advisors/analysts, and administrative staff

Reach consumers

- Direct messaging to consumers
- Outreach to intermediaries that provide messages to consumers

Need

- Details about differences between 2010 and 2015-2020 DGA to make updating policies/information easier
- Messages that can be tailored to their mission and audiences to better align their messages



General Findings: Industry Representatives

Description

- Representatives from agriculture, manufacturing, wholesale and distribution companies, sales, marketing, and public relations

Reach consumers

- Supermarket shelves- foods and beverages sold
- Advertising that saturates media channels
 - Impact on dietary habits and how people understand healthy eating



General Findings: Industry Representatives

Need

- Clear guidance on changes from 2010 to 2015-2020 DGA to understand potential impact on business and changes they may need to make
- Consumer guidance that stresses what people can eat more of rather than what they need to limit/moderate; focus on foods rather than nutrients
- Further collaboration with government- leveraging existing partnerships and having government representation to industry events



Summary

- Professionals audiences are critical to successful implementation of the DGA
- Serve as ambassadors- reach millions of consumers
- Range of settings- doctor's offices, newsrooms, boardrooms
- Need right information, right format, right time

Findings informed message strategy plan



Message Strategy and Testing

Purpose

- Tailored audience-specific messages
- Social media messages
- Companion/collateral materials
- To be appealing, clear, credible, and appropriate for professionals

Concepts included...

- Healthy eating patterns
- Making small dietary shifts



Message Strategy and Testing

Methods

- Phone-based focus groups
- Phone-based in-depth interviews



Message Strategy and Testing

General Findings

- Participants reported that it's important to build trust in the Dietary Guidelines
 - Long track record of the DGA
 - Significant role in national programs/policies
 - Nutrition science changes over time and DGA reflects most current science
 - Rooted in evidence

Message Strategy and Testing

General Findings

- Participants preferred messages that are framed positively
 - Negative messages unnecessary and distracting
- Participants liked messages that acknowledge the role health professionals play in implementing and communicating the DGA



Message Strategy and Testing

General Findings

- Participants who promote/develop nutrition and public health policy
 - Messages with “supporting” and “empowering” resonated most strongly
 - Messages that reference health disparities and health equity are appropriate for their work
- Participants who provide care or services directly to consumers
 - Liked messages that included specific recommendations in the DGA or specific information on how to apply to their work





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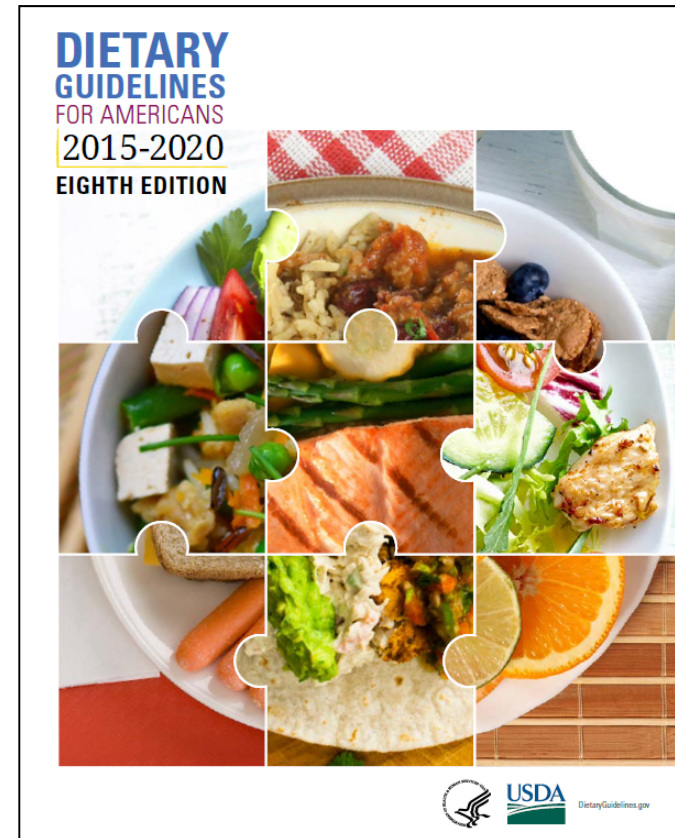
Translation of
**AUDIENCE
RESEARCH**
into Products for
Professionals...



2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines

Policy document

- Available in three formats
 1. Digital document (website)
 2. PDF
 1. Download to desktop or smart device
 2. Printable
 3. Printed hard copy*
- Online, user-centered website
 - Searchable
 - Interactive graphics
 - Printable



*Coming soon from GPO

Go to www.DietaryGuidelines.gov

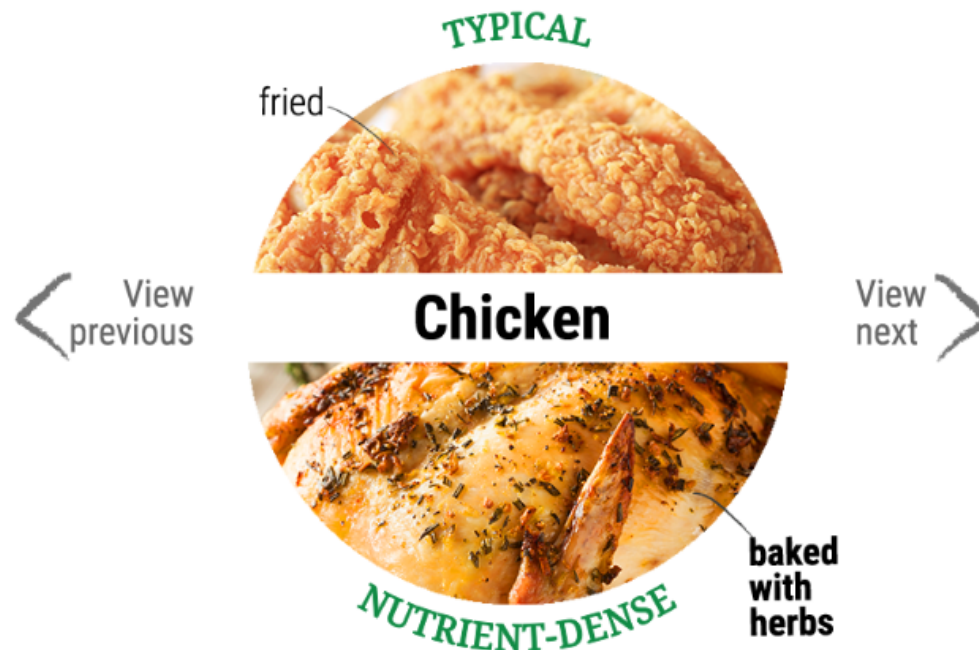


2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines Policy document (cont.)

Figure 2-8.

Typical Versus Nutrient-Dense Foods and Beverages

Achieving a healthy eating pattern means shifting typical food choices to more nutrient-dense options—that is, foods with important nutrients that aren't packed with extra calories or sodium. Nutrient-dense foods and beverages are naturally lean or low in solid fats and have little or no **added** solid fats, sugars, refined starches, or sodium.



[Read text description of Figure 2-8](#)



Dietary Guidelines.gov “Tools & Resources”

Additional Materials for Professionals

- Executive Summary*
- Recommendations At-A-Glance*
- PowerPoint Presentation (*with commentary*)
- Digital Press Kit
 - Frequently Asked Questions
 - Top 10 Things You Need to Know
 - Factsheets
 - B-roll and graphics

**Available in English and Spanish*



Dietary Guidelines.gov "Tools & Resources"

Additional Materials for Professionals

- Toolkit for professionals
 - Example social media messages
 - Static versions of interactive graphics
 - **Handouts**
 - ***For Professionals: Recommendations At-A-Glance***
 - ***For Professionals: Talk to Your Patients & Clients About healthy Eating Patterns***
 - ***Shift to Healthier Food & Beverage Choices***
 - ***Cut Down on Added Sugars***
 - More to come...Saturated Fats, Sodium, etc.
- ***Eat Healthy Be Active Workshops- Updating, English and Spanish***





DIETARY GUIDELINES FOR AMERICANS 2015-2020 EIGHTH EDITION

For Professionals: Recommendations At-A-Glance

The 2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines provides the information you need to help Americans make healthy food choices. Based on the current body of nutrition science, the Dietary Guidelines is a go-to resource for policymakers, public health professionals, and other experts working to improve the health of individuals, families, and communities across the nation.

The current edition is structured around 5 overarching Guidelines. This overview gives busy professionals the essentials—a rundown of each Guideline along with supporting Key Recommendations—to help you apply the Guidelines in practice.

Guideline 1. Follow a Healthy Eating Pattern Across the Lifespan.

The 2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines emphasizes the importance of overall healthy eating patterns. They're important because people don't eat foods and nutrients in isolation. **What really matters is the big picture**—how a person's food and beverage choices add up over their lives.



Key Concept:

Eating pattern. The combination of all the foods and beverages a person eats and drinks over time.

Eating patterns have a significant impact on health. Diet is one of the most powerful tools we have to reduce the onset of disease. Healthy eating patterns can help prevent obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, and Type 2 diabetes. Currently, about half of all American adults have one or more of these diet-related chronic diseases.

Healthy eating patterns are adaptable. When people follow a healthy eating pattern, they can incorporate many of the foods they enjoy. Healthy eating patterns can work for anyone, accommodating their traditions, culture, and budget.

Guideline 2. Focus on Variety, Nutrient Density, & Amount.

The Dietary Guidelines gives clear recommendations about how to follow a healthy eating pattern. By definition, healthy eating patterns need to:

- Stay within appropriate calorie limits for a person's age, sex, and activity level
- Meet nutritional needs
- Be achievable and maintainable in the long-term

There are many paths to a healthy eating pattern. The Dietary Guidelines provides examples of 3 eating patterns—the Healthy U.S.-Style, Healthy Mediterranean-Style, and Healthy Vegetarian Eating Patterns.

Key Concept:
Nutrient density. Nutrient-dense foods have the right balance—they pack in plenty of important nutrients and are relatively low or low in solid fats and added sugars or no added solid fats, sugars, refined starches, or sodium. Nutrient-dense foods are the foundation of a healthy eating pattern.

Healthy eating patterns include nutrient-dense forms of:

- A variety of vegetables: dark green, red and orange, legumes (beans and peas), starchy, and other vegetables
- Fruits, especially whole fruits
- Grains, at least half of which are whole grains
- Fat-free or low-fat dairy, including milk, yogurt, cheese, and fortified soy beverages
- A variety of protein foods, including seafood, lean meats and poultry, eggs, legumes (beans and peas), soy products, and nuts and seeds
- Oils, including those from plants (canola, corn, olive, peanut, safflower, soybean, and sunflower) and oils that are naturally present in foods (nuts, seeds, avocado, olives, and avocados)

Note that these foods are only nutrient dense if they're prepared with little or no added solid fats, sugars, refined starches, and sodium.

Guideline 3. Limit Calories from Added Sugars & Saturated Fats & Reduce Sodium Intake.

The Dietary Guidelines also recommends limits on a few specific dietary components.

Added Sugars: Limit to less than 10% of total calories. When sugars or syrups are added to foods as they are prepared, they're called added sugars. (Not all sugars are added sugars. Some are naturally present in foods, such as fruits, vegetables, and milk—but are not added.) Added sugars are high in calories without other nutrients. Limiting added sugars is an important part of a healthy eating pattern.

Almost 30% of all added sugars in the American diet are from drinks—like soft drinks, flavored drinks, and energy drinks.

Guideline 4. Shift to Healthier Food & Beverage Choices.

When it comes to improving food and beverage choices, small changes can add up to big benefits. That's why the Dietary Guidelines emphasizes shifts—drable, healthy changes to how people already eat.

Key Concept:
Shifts. A term for healthy substitutions—replacing typical food choices with healthier alternatives. Healthy shifts can be within food groups or between them.

Making healthy shifts is a great way to add more nutrient-dense foods while eating fewer foods with added sugars, saturated and trans fats, and sodium.

Examples include:

- Full-fat cheese or whole milk to low-fat cheese or milk
- Soft or Salt-free
- White bread to whole wheat
- Fatty cuts of meat to skinned or lean
- Potato chips to unsalted nuts

The concept of "healthy shifts" makes it easy to change habits and keep eating the things people love. By helping people turn unhealthier choices into healthier ones, the Dietary Guidelines makes it more manageable.

Guideline 5. Support Healthy Eating Patterns for All.

The vast majority of Americans aren't following the recommendations in the Dietary Guidelines. You can help change that. Professionals can work together—with support from the public—to put the Dietary Guidelines into action around the nation. No matter your field of work or area of expertise, you can help bring about healthy changes.

At Home: Add more veggies to family meals. Plan meals as a family and cook at home.

In Schools: Support healthier options in the cafeteria. Encourage recess and physical activity programs.

At Work: Add healthier food options in vending machines and during work breaks. Promote health and wellness programs and increase physical activity during work.

In the Community: Start a community garden. Promote health and wellness programs and increase physical activity during work.





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EIGHTH EDITION**

For Professionals: Talk to Your Patients & Clients About Healthy Eating Patterns

As a health care provider, you know that helping your patients or clients make healthier food choices is essential. Written for health professionals like you, the [2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) makes your job easier—with clear, evidence-based nutrition guidance you can trust.

The *2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines* focuses on overall eating patterns—and how making healthy choices over time can have lasting health benefits. This guide can help you share the recommendations from the *2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines* with your patients or clients. Help inspire them to adopt healthier eating patterns.

Get the Conversation Started

When talking about healthy eating and the *Dietary Guidelines*, keep the conversation positive and encouraging. Try these friendly conversation starters.

What's your family's favorite dinner?

💡 Meet your patients or clients where they are. Once you have an idea how they're eating now, you can make suggestions for shifts and substitutions recommended in the *Dietary Guidelines*—ways to adapt their favorite dishes to make them healthier.

Who does the grocery shopping in your home? Who cooks?

💡 Find out what they're buying and how much they're cooking. You might be able to make suggestions for new foods to try, or goals for cooking at home more often.

What are some of your family's favorite food routines & traditions?

💡 Are patients or clients sharing family meals each night or eating separately? Talk about how healthy eating patterns are adaptable to any traditions or customs.

When you're thirsty, what kind of drink do you reach for?

💡 Almost 50% of added sugars in the American diet comes from sodas, fruit drinks, and other sweetened beverages. See if you can steer





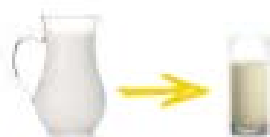
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Shift to Healthier Food & Beverage Choices

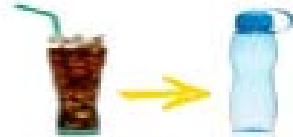
Here's some good news: Eating healthier doesn't mean you have to give up all the foods you love. It doesn't have to be confusing or complicated either. **The 2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines has a better approach—make small shifts in the foods you eat. Here's how to do it.**

What Are Healthy *Shifts*?

It's simple. When you can, **swap out a food or ingredient for a healthier option.** For example, you could:



Shift from whole milk to low-fat milk in your breakfast cereal



Shift from soda with added sugars to water during lunch



Shift from a cream-based pasta dish to one with a lighter sauce and more vegetables for dinner

How Will Making *Shifts* Help?

- Healthy eating patterns can help prevent chronic diseases like obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, and Type 2 diabetes.
- Shifting to healthier choices doesn't mean you have to change your whole eating pattern. Shifts can be easier to stick with over time—you're just making small changes to the way you're already eating.

About half of all American adults have one or more chronic diseases—and they're often related to eating a poor quality diet.

Make *Shifts* Throughout the Day

You have a chance to make a healthier choice whenever you:

- Open your fridge for a snack
- Pack a lunch
- Shop in the grocery store
- Look at a menu in a restaurant





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Cut Down on Added Sugars

Learn how to limit calories from added sugars—and still enjoy the foods and drinks that you love. Choosing a healthy eating pattern low in added sugars can have important health benefits.

The *2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommends limiting calories from added sugars to no more than 10% each day. That's 200 calories, or about 12 teaspoons, for a 2,000 calorie diet.

What Are Added Sugars?

Just like it sounds, added sugars aren't in foods naturally—they're added. They include:

- Sugars and syrups that food manufacturers add to products like sodas, yogurt, candies, cereals, and cookies
- Sugar you add yourself—like the teaspoon of sugar in your coffee

Some foods have sugar naturally—like fruits, vegetables, and milk. The sugars in these foods are not added sugars.

The average American gets 270 calories of added sugars each day. That's about 17 teaspoons of sugar!



What's the Problem with Added Sugars?

Eating and drinking too many foods and beverages with added sugars makes it difficult to achieve a healthy eating pattern without taking in too many calories. **Added sugars contribute calories, but no essential nutrients.**

Almost half of the added sugars in our diets come from drinks—like sodas, fruit drinks, and other sweetened beverages.

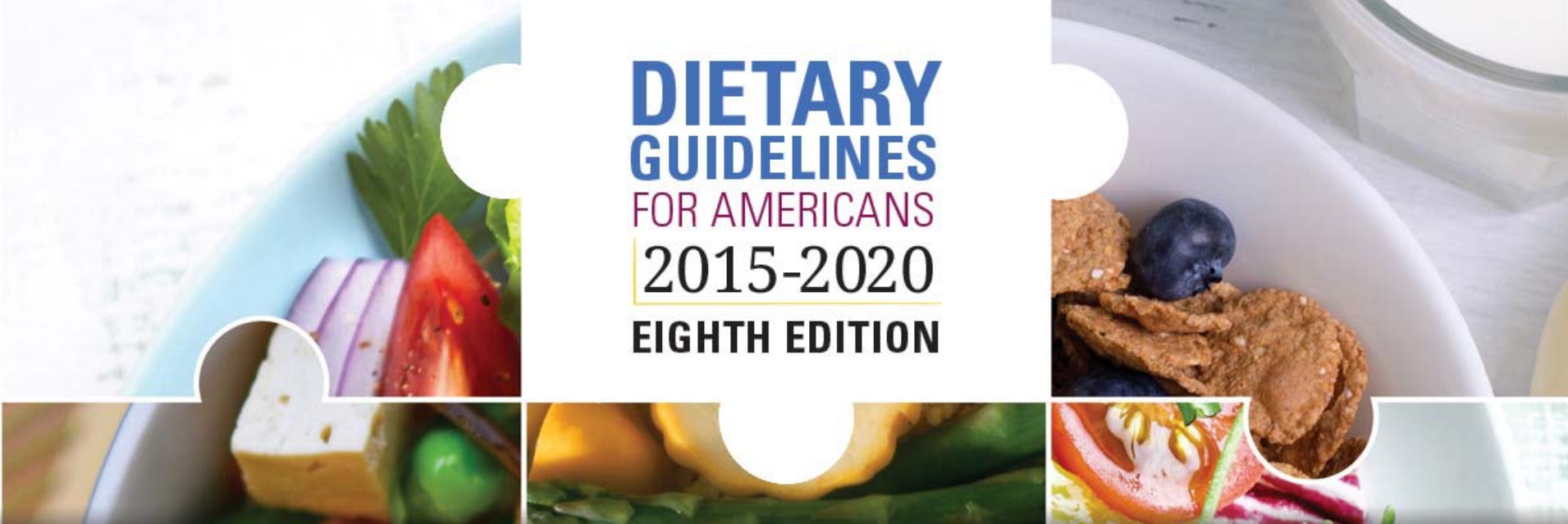
What Foods Have Added Sugars?

Lots of them. Some include:

- Regular sodas, energy drinks, and sports drinks
- Candy
- Fruit drinks, such as fruitades and fruit punch
- Cakes, cookies, and brownies
- Pies and cobblers
- Sweet rolls, pastries, and doughnuts
- Dairy desserts, such as ice cream

How Can I Cut Down on Added Sugars?





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DietaryGuidelines.gov

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Additional Resources:

Health.gov

ChooseMyPlate.gov