

## **2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans Communication Effort Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is the purpose of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) communications effort?**

- The *2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* includes 26 recommendations to help consumers improve their overall diet. The Guidelines influence industry, public and private nutrition education efforts, and nutrition assistance programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the School Meal Programs and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Pregnant Women, Infants and Children (WIC).
- USDA is launching a communications effort to create cohesion among federal agencies. This effort will help to:
  - Communicate key recommendations from the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
  - Capitalize on national interest to reduce obesity among adults and children.
  - Encourage key sectors of the food environment to promote a familiar image and selected DGA messages aimed at helping Americans build healthier eating habits.

### **What happened to MyPyramid.gov and can I still use MyPyramid tools?**

- **MyPlate** will replace MyPyramid as the icon to represent the current USDA Food Guidance System. Consumers can find the successful dietary assessment and tracking tools formerly available through *MyPyramid.gov* through the new website, **ChooseMyPlate.gov**.
- The *MyPyramid Menu Planner* and *MyPyramid Tracker* will be available as part of an interim site to allow for transition to the new icon and resources. Also, the MyPyramid print-ready materials will be available in a section for professionals and educators on the **ChooseMyPlate.gov** website.
- USDA is in the process of updating the current Food Guidance system and related interactive tools. The revised online resource will include enhancements to address consumer feedback acquired over time.

### **What is new about the 2010 Dietary Guidelines Communication efforts?**

- The new icon, **MyPlate**, is an easy to understand communications symbol developed to provide a simple cue for eating healthy. The plate includes all five food groups and prompts consumers to prioritize their food choices. The icon supports the following DGA themes: *balance calories*, *foods to increase* and *foods to reduce*.
- **ChooseMyPlate.gov**, the new consumer website, is a wealth of resources including consumer-friendly tips and strategies, online tools, menus, recipes and nutrition

education material intended to engage communities, families and industry in an ongoing effort to promote healthier eating.

- The DGA themes are complemented by the following easy-to-understand, action-oriented messages and associated strategies to help consumers make wise choices:
  - *Balance Calories*
    - Enjoy your food, but eat less
    - Avoid oversized portions
  - *Foods to Increase*
    - Make half your plate fruits and vegetables
    - Make at least half your grains whole grains
    - Switch to fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) milk
  - *Foods to Decrease*
    - Compare sodium in food like soup, bread, and frozen meals – and choose the foods with lower numbers.
    - Drink water instead of sugary drinks.
- Partnerships are crucial to the effort. The new icon is supported by a comprehensive partnership network that will include stakeholders, professionals and practitioners who engage with individuals and families every day. Those interested in partnering can visit [ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov) and click on Partnering Program.

### **What is the cost of this effort?**

The concept and product development included several phases.

- **Exploratory research** – components included an environmental scan, literature review, media analysis and stakeholder feedback to help inform the direction of the communications initiative.
- **Formative research** – conducted focus groups to explore messages and image concepts. Surveys were used to refine and validate final images and messages.
- **Web Design and Materials Development** – final messages and image were incorporated into web –based and print-ready materials. Key products include [ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov) and the 2010 Dietary Guidelines Consumer Brochure.
- **Updated Online Consumer Tool** - a state of the art online tool will be available in the Fall that includes features such as interactive and personalized dietary and physical activity planning, assessment, and analysis. It will feature an extensive database of foods and enhanced user-functionality.
- The cost of the overall initiative was approximately \$2.9 million.

## What types of resources are available to help professionals and stakeholders implement the new campaign?

- A *Choose MyPlate* Starter Kit CD will be available in limited quantities to help organizations who deliver nutrition education incorporate the DGA communications effort into programs and initiatives. USDA will expand the resources available for educators and professionals as the first year of the communication initiative progresses.
- Federal departments and respective agencies will also develop and update resources to reflect the 2010 Dietary Guidelines and may incorporate elements of the communications effort into materials for their respective audiences. This will include revising and developing print materials, interactive tools, wireless vehicles, and online engagement efforts aimed at empowering consumers to make healthy change.
- Industry is also encouraged to develop initiatives that reflect the DGA communication effort to further extend the reach of the themes, messages and strategies.

## Does the plate represent what an individual should eat in a meal?

- Individual nutrient and calorie needs vary due to numerous factors such as age, gender, differences in eating patterns, calorie needs, and the amount of physical activity completed each day.
- The portions needed from each food group will also vary depending on applicable weights and measures for specific types of foods. The plate should be regarded as a suggestion, not a precise prescription, of what one needs to eat in a day.
- Because the United States is experiencing an obesity epidemic, most Americans need to better understand their individual calorie limit and make eating decisions based on their specific needs. Consumers can regard the plate as a prompt to help them prioritize food choices.
- Research has shown and thought-leaders have advised that no one symbol can effectively change how consumers make food choices. The new icon is part of a comprehensive effort help consumers focus their choices at critical times, such as when food is purchased, prepared, or served.
- More information about exact amounts from each food group, portion sizes and calorie balance can be obtained from the new website, [ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov).