



NEWS RELEASE

Defense Commissary Agency

Corporate Communication

1300 E Avenue • Fort Lee, VA 23801-1800

Tel: (804) 734-8000, Ext. 8-6105 DSN: 687-8000, Ext. 8-6105

FAX: (804) 734-8248 DSN: 687-8248

www.commissaries.com

Release Number: 16-11
Date: February 17, 2011
Contact: Karen Hawkins, DeCA dietitian
Tel.: (804) 734-8000, Ext. 4-8404
E-mail: karen.hawkins@deca.mil

Enjoy your food; just eat less

Dietary guidelines offer advice for healthy meal choices

*By Karen Hawkins,
DeCA dietitian*

FORT LEE, Va. – “Enjoy your food – just eat less,” and “make half your plate fruits and vegetables,” are just two of the simple messages to follow for a healthier lifestyle that appear in the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Most of us can use a little help with figuring out how to make changes that are science-based and somewhat easy to manage when it comes to eating and being active for the health benefits.

Science and policy go hand-in-hand

The guidelines provide the science and policy foundation for all federal nutrition programs, including research, education, nutrition assistance, labeling and nutrition promotion. The guidelines also offer advice for healthy Americans, age 2 and older, about making food choices that help promote health and reduce risk of disease.

Calorie-balanced equation

To maintain or to help achieve a healthy weight, the number of calories you take in needs to equal calories expended. If you want to lose weight, the amount of calories you burn or use for energy still must be more than the calories you take in. It really is about balancing how much and what you eat with physical activity according to the guidelines. A simple rule of thumb is

“calories in, calories out.” What you eat and drink – calories consumed – can be used as energy or may be stored as fat in your body.

Environment can play a big role in calorie-balance equation

The guidelines also include how the environment affects both sides of the calorie-balance equation. Your environment can promote eating too many calories and discourage you from any physical activity and, therefore, calorie expenditure. The next time you are at the local mall, look at all your food choices and how close in proximity they are to you. How far do you have to walk to buy a candy bar or french fries? Or, is an apple or an orange just as close? An important thing to remember is that food is all around us, and too often the food closest to us is food that has lots of calories. Making informed choices is key to having a healthy lifestyle.

The food supply has changed dramatically over the past 40 years, with an average daily increase of 600 more calories available per person in the marketplace. Many portion sizes available have also increased over the years. Research has shown that when larger portion sizes are served, people tend to take in more calories. In addition, the evidence shows that portion size is associated with body weight. If you are served and eat smaller portions, chances are good you will be able to lose weight.

The three primary messages from the guidelines, along with some helpful tips, should be posted on your refrigerator, above the microwave in the office kitchen and tucked in with your commissary coupons. They are:

- **Balancing Calories.** Enjoy your food, but eat less, and avoid oversized portions. **Tip:** Use a smaller plate at meals to help you eat less. Get a to-go box at the beginning of a meal when dining out, and put half the food in it before you begin eating.
- **Foods to Increase.** Make half your plate fruits and vegetables, and switch to fat-free or low-fat, 1 percent, milk. **Tip:** Fill half your plate with vegetables first. Gradually switch from whole milk to fat-free or low-fat, 1 percent, milk over a two-week period.
- **Foods to Reduce.** Compare the sodium content in foods like soup, bread and frozen meals, and choose the foods with a lower sodium count. Drink water instead of sugary drinks. **Tip:** Try to choose foods like soup, bread and frozen meals that have no more than 400-500 milligrams of sodium per serving. Drink water, adding lemon, orange, lime or cucumber slices to enhance the flavor without adding extra calories.

These are just some of the helpful tips from the guidelines. To create a personalized meal plan, go to <http://www.MyPyramid.gov>. There you can plan and assess your food choices based on the guidelines.

For more information about making healthy choices, visit Ask the Dietitian on <http://www.commissaries.com> and post your questions on the DeCA Dietitian Forum. Be sure to look for other useful information in the Dietitian's Voice archive. Sign up with the DeCA Dietitian on www.twitter.com and get messages sent to your cell phone today. For delicious recipes, check out Kay's Kitchen. And to enjoy all your commissary has to offer, sign up for the *Commissary Connection*.

-DeCA-

About DeCA: *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings worth more than \$4,400 annually for a family of four. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America's military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.*