



March 1, 2003

Dear Colleague:

**National Nutrition Month**© greetings from **Eat Right Montana** and welcome to the third month of **Fit and Healthy, Anytime, Anywhere**. In our March packet, we focus on **lunch** and **how to fit food into the incredible, shrinking American lunch "hour."** We also offer some fun **middle-of-the-day fitness tips** and weigh in on the current debate about the role of the **USDA Food Guide Pyramid (FGP)**.

There is no doubt that the Food Guide Pyramid, the very foundation of US nutrition education, has been under direct attack recently. The January 20<sup>th</sup> *Newsweek* and January 2003 *Scientific American* featured articles about the crumbling pyramid. Since the FGP was introduced in 1992, Americans have gotten fatter and fatter, and some experts place blame squarely on the pyramid. They claim that it teaches Americans to eat too many carbohydrates in the quest for a low-fat lifestyle.

According to the February 28<sup>th</sup> Nutrition News Focus ([www.nutritionnewsfocus.com](http://www.nutritionnewsfocus.com)), here's what "you need to know:" ***What the articles ignore is that most Americans do not eat according to the Food Guide Pyramid. We eat too many sweets and not enough whole grains, which are at the base of the pyramid. It is also important to remember that a serving on the pyramid is a defined portion and not whatever fits on your plate.***

The Food Guide Pyramid remains today what it has always been - a flexible teaching tool to graphically illustrate the US Dietary Guidelines. Does the FGP need to be tailored to different audiences? Absolutely! Is it time to revisit and update it for the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Yes - and USDA is already engaged in that process. You can send YOUR comments to: **Pyramid Comments, USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 1034, Alexandria, VA 22302-1594**

Is it time to throw out the USDA Food Guide Pyramid? No way - and it's not fair to blame the FGP for all the nutrition ills in the US either. After all, Dr. Atkins' books have been on the bestseller lists for much of the past ten years - and he isn't taking personal responsibility for the obesity "epidemic" in the US.

**As always, we welcome feedback - so, please let us know what you think.**

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**Fit and Healthy, Anytime, Anywhere: Power lunches for everyone**  
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**Healthy Families 2003: Healthy options for lunchtime meals (3<sup>rd</sup> in a series of 12)**

It's no wonder that Americans rely on fast food more at lunch than at any other time of day. Hectic schedules and work pressures have made the lunch "hour" a thing of the past for many people. We rush through the drive-thru – and then try to combine dashboard dining with long to-do lists.

"Power lunches are possible everywhere," says Chris Fogelman, RD (Registered Dietitian), and Director of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). "A cup of bean soup and a crisp green salad, or roast beef on whole wheat with a fruit salad, are both power choices. In the fast food lane, you can choose a small burger, small fries and a carton of milk or juice."

Brown bags, or insulated to-go boxes, are lunchtime bonanzas. Packing a meal from home saves money and time (no more waiting in drive-thrus). It's also the way to pack a serious nutrition punch into your lunch. For a real time-saver, make extra at dinner – and pack the "planned-overs" for the next day.

According to Fogelman, skipping lunch can be a weight management disaster. "If you miss a mid-day meal, you will probably over-eat later on," she says. "Lunch skippers tend to hit the vending machines and candy jars all afternoon. Or they snack on hundreds of calories while fixing dinner."

Lunchtime is also a great time to focus on nature's fast food – fruits and vegetables. Survey after survey shows that Americans are still coming up short on their 5 to 9 recommended servings of produce per day. Just think of all the quick and delicious options for lunch – fresh fruit salad, steaming tomato soup, savory spinach salad, refreshing orange juice, crisp apples, juicy pears or crunchy carrots with dip.

Eat Right Montana (ERM), a statewide coalition promoting healthful eating and active lifestyles, urges all Montanans to enjoy a lunch today – and every day. For optimal health and fitness, combine your favorite power lunch with a power walk – and feel great for the rest of the day.

"Enjoy all the benefits a healthy lunch," says Fogelman. "Nutrition and fitness are only two aspects of health. It's also important to give yourself a break – and to connect with friends and family."

**ATTACHED: *Eating Well and Being Active ~ at LUNCHTIME***

# Eating Well ~ at LUNCH TIME !!

The noon “hour” has disappeared for many Americans. Hectic schedules often mean less time to eat – and more time to run errands or continue working. Wherever you eat – home, school, work or drive-thru – lunch is a tasty time to harness the power of nutrition.

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## WHY eat in the middle of the day?

- 🍎 **RE-FUEL** your body for work, sports or play.
- 🍎 **MAINTAIN** your metabolism for healthy weight.
- 🍎 **FOCUS** your brain for afternoon activities.
- 🍎 **NOURISH** yourself inside and out.

## WHAT foods make a power lunch?

- 🍎 **Carbohydrate:** High-energy carbohydrates, especially whole grains, are essential for a power lunch. The goal is to get the energy you need – without going overboard on amounts. Stick with a slice or two of bread, a small roll or a handful of crackers.
- 🍎 **Protein:** One key to weight control is to enjoy high-quality protein every time you eat. Protein helps build and maintain muscle. It also provides long-lasting satiety (satisfaction). Go for lean meat, fish, poultry and low-fat dairy, like cheese and milk.
- 🍎 **Vegetables:** Lunch is the right time to load up on veggies – to get your daily dose of disease-fighting, anti-aging phytonutrients (plant nutrients). Veggies or fruit – go for bright colors: orange carrots, green broccoli, red tomatoes, or black beans.
- 🍎 **Fruit:** For optimal health and beauty (think skin, hair and eyes), experts suggest 5 to 9 servings of produce a day. Sweet fruit makes a delicious dessert at lunch. Enjoy a fruit salad, a piece of fresh fruit, a bowl of canned fruit, or a handful of dried fruit.

## HOW can I fit food into my busy lunchtime?

- 🍎 **Make noontime nutrition a priority:** Plan to eat before you start on errands or work. Protect at least 15 to 20 minutes for food – and you’ll feel better all afternoon.
- 🍎 **Pack it from home:** Brown bag lunches save time and money – and they’re often a better nutrition deal as well. Make it real easy: Just pack up leftovers from dinner.
- 🍎 **Stock your drawers and cupboards:** Supermarkets offer super easy options for work or home, like freeze-dried bean soups, single-serve fruit cups, and trail mix.



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# Being Active ~ at LUNCHTIME!!

Many people find that noontime is the perfect time to fit fitness into their day. Lunchtime provides a natural break in the day. It is also a time when some people have a bit more flexibility. Many fitness centers offer classes specially designed for mid-day activity.

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## WHY be active at lunchtime?

- ✓ **RE-ENERGIZE** your brain for afternoon work or school.
- ✓ **WAKE UP** your body for afternoon and evening fun.
- ✓ **STRETCH OUT** your muscles after sitting all morning.
- ✓ **TAKE A WELL-DESERVED BREAK!!**

## WHAT activities fit best into lunchtime?

Any physical activity can fit into the middle of the day – it's a question of what works for your schedule, location and budget. Health clubs are great, plus they offer showers!

- ✓ **Aerobic activities:** Most clubs and gyms offer a menu of heart-pumping classes – designed to firm, tone and burn off extra calories and stress.
- ✓ **Balance activities:** Yoga, Tai Chi and swim classes can relax and energize at the same time. Experiment with several options to find what suits you best.
- ✓ **Fun activities:** Focus on fun – and you'll be much more likely to stick with activity over the long run. Dancing? Kite flying? Swinging at the playground?

## HOW can I fit fitness into my lunchtime?

**No gym, no money, no time to shower – walking works wonders too!**

- ✓ **Walk to and from lunch:** Instead of automatically jumping into your car, think about a 15-minute walk (each way) to a local restaurant. In under an hour, you can eat a leisurely lunch and get 30 minutes of physical activity. What a healthy deal!
  - ✓ **Walk (or run) errands:** Keep a pair of walking shoes in your office or car. When you have a long list of things to do, walk to at least some of them. Bad weather? No problem! Head to the mall – and use those walking shoes to shop for sales!
  - ✓ **Walk with friends or colleagues:** Walking groups offer a long list of benefits. Walk with colleagues – and get some additional work done while you walk and talk. Walk with friends or neighbors – and stay connected to the important things in life!
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# Finding a Food Pyramid to Fit YOU

If you're confused about the food pyramid, you are certainly not alone. The USDA Food Guide Pyramid, first introduced in 1992, has been under attack recently. Some nutrition experts and many media stories are blaming the current Pyramid for all sorts of public health problems – like increases in the number of overweight and obese Americans.

Here are some straightforward answers to frequently asked questions about the Food Guide Pyramid (**FGP**) – and some sources of food pyramids to fit your lifestyle.

## ✓ Will following the USDA Food Guide Pyramid make me fat?

No. Following the **FGP**, with close attention to portion sizes and servings per day, can help you maintain a healthy weight. The current pyramid can hardly be blamed for the America's weight problem, since most Americans do not eat according to the pyramid.

## ✓ Aren't there too many carbohydrates on the Food Pyramid?

It depends on many factors: your age, gender and activity level; what size portions you eat; and what kinds of carbohydrates you are talking about.

- ☉ The recommendation for 6-to-11 grains servings (bread, cereal, rice and pasta) is based on caloric needs. Inactive women and older adults need about six grain servings (and 1600 calories) per day. The upper end of the recommendations, 11 servings per day would be appropriate for teen boys and active men eating 2,800+ calories.
- ☉ The **FGP** portion sizes are much smaller than those served and eaten today. A serving of cooked rice or pasta is only ½ cup. If you eat 1½ cups for dinner, that's 3 servings.
- ☉ Many Americans are getting too many sugars (from the top of the **FGP**). Many also eat too few whole grains. The healthy solution is to right-size your portion sizes, eat fewer sugary snacks, drink fewer high-sugar soft drinks, and eat more whole grains.

## ✓ What is the “new” pyramid that everyone is talking about?

There is no “new” Food Guide Pyramid. There are lots of different versions of the food pyramid – and one of them may work better for your needs. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) is currently studying its **FGP** – and plans to issue a revision in 2005.

## ✓ So, what food pyramid should I be following?

The original **FGP** was never designed to fit all sizes and ages of Americans. Here are a variety of food pyramids – so you can pick one that is the healthiest fit for your lifestyle:

- **USDA Food and Nutrition Information Center** has details on the original Food Guide Pyramid, a pyramid for young children, and links to ethnic and other pyramids @ [www.nalusda.gov/fnic/Fpyr/pyramid.html](http://www.nalusda.gov/fnic/Fpyr/pyramid.html). You can also compare your intake to the **FGP** using the interactive **Healthy Eating Index** @ [www.fns.usda.gov/cnpp](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnpp)
- **Mayo Clinic Healthy Weight Loss Pyramid** incorporates daily physical activity and emphasizes fruits and veggies @ [www.mayo.edu/comm/mcr/news\\_1393.html](http://www.mayo.edu/comm/mcr/news_1393.html)
- **Tufts Food Guide Pyramid for Older Adults** recognizes that food and fluid needs change as we age @ <http://nutrition.tufts.edu/publications/pyramid.shtml>

Provided by Eat Right Montana

# Healthy Families 2003

## Fit and Healthy, Anytime, Anywhere: Taking charge of your eating and your life

January 2003

- Nutrition and Physical Activity, ANYTIME, ANYWHERE!!

February 2003

- Healthy options in the morning

March 2003

- Healthy options at noon

April 2003

- Healthy options in the evening

May 2003

- Healthy options between meals

June 2003

- Healthy options at work

July 2003

- Healthy options on the road

August 2003

- Healthy options while camping

September 2003

- Healthy options at school

October 2003

- Healthy options for hunting

November 2003

- Healthy options in restaurants

December 2003

- Healthy options at celebrations



**EAT RIGHT MONTANA**

*A coalition promoting healthy eating and active lifestyles*