Dairy in the Dietary Guidelines

Insights from the 2025–2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

DAIRY COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA — EST. 1919 —

The 2025–2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans shape federal nutrition policy and inform public health efforts nationwide. The updated guidelines encourage balanced dietary patterns that include protein, dairy, fruits, vegetables, whole grains and healthy fats, while limiting highly processed foods.

Key insights on dairy include:

Dairy is a Core Food Group

The Dietary Guidelines continue to recommend three servings of dairy per day as part of a healthy eating pattern. Dairy is highlighted as a rich source of protein, healthy fats, and essential nutrients such as vitamin D, calcium, and potassium.

Key Insight: Eating a variety of nutrient-dense foods across food groups provides flexibility to choose culturally relevant options and increase intake of under-consumed nutrients. Dairy, in particular, at a range of fat levels, can help address nutrition security and reduce chronic disease risk.

Dairy Supports Health Across the Lifespan

Pregnancy & Lactation	Dairy foods provide key nutrients to support both maternal and infant health.
Infancy & Toddlerhood	Full-fat yogurt and cheese are important complementary foods.
Childhood	Whole dairy supports energy needs and brain development.
Adolescence	Calcium and vitamin D intake are critical for achieving peak bone mass.
Older Adulthood	Dairy helps meet higher needs for key nutrients even if calorie needs decline.

Key Insight: Dairy foods provide **essential nutrients** that support brain and bone health, and regularly consuming dairy as part of a healthy dietary pattern supports growth, development and overall health across all life stages.

Added Sugar and Flavored Dairy

The Dietary Guidelines recommends limiting added sugar to less than 10 grams per meal. Flavored milk and yogurt can fit within these limits and encourage intake of essential nutrients like calcium, vitamin D, and potassium.




Gut Health & Fermented Dairy

Fermented dairy foods like yogurt, kefir and many cheeses have probiotics that support a healthy microbiome and are linked to improved gut, heart, and bone health, weight maintenance, and reduced risk of certain cancers and type 2 diabetes.

Dairy Foods are a Source of High-Quality Protein

The Dietary Guidelines elevates the importance of high-quality protein from both animal and plant sources and increases the recommended daily intake to 1.2-1.6 g/kg of bodyweight per day.

Key Insight: Dairy foods are naturally an excellent source of high-quality protein and are available in a variety of ways that are accessible and easy to prepare including milk, yogurt and cheese.

	Previous Recommendation	New Recommendation
Grams/Kilogram of Bodyweight Per Day	0.8	1.2-1.6
Daily recommendation 160-pound person	58 grams	87-116 grams

Dairy Fat is a Whole Food Source of Healthy Fats

The Dietary Guidelines encourages people to choose whole food sources of saturated fat, including full-fat dairy, while keeping total saturated fat intake within established limits of no more than 10% of daily calories.

Key Insight: Eating a variety of nutrient-dense foods across food groups allows for flexibility to choose culturally relevant foods while helping increase intake of under-consumed groups. This is particularly true for dairy, where options at all fat levels can support food and nutrition security and help reduce chronic disease risk.

Recommendation to Limit Highly Processed Foods

For the first time, the new guidelines recommends limiting highly processed foods (e.g., chips, cookies, and candy with added sugar and sodium) due to links with poorer health outcomes, while recognizing that not all processing is negative. Nutrient-dense processed foods like whole-grain cereals, canned beans, frozen vegetables, and yogurt can still support health. Processing is one of several factors to consider when evaluating food quality, along with nutrient density, access and affordability.

Key Insight: Not all processed foods are created equal; some undergo steps that add benefits and support health. Milk and dairy foods can undergo a range of processing techniques, including pasteurization, fermentation and fortification, that lead to many safe and nutritious products.

Dairy Foods Support Nutrition Security

While the Dietary Guidelines outlines nutrient requirements for individuals, there are numerous ways foods from different food groups can be combined to meet individual needs. Dairy foods are an accessible and widely available source of key nutrients, with affordable, convenient and culturally relevant options to meet the needs of all people.

To view a full list of references, visit: DairyCouncilofCA.org/DietaryGuidelines