

## **2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans**

*By Janet Hackert, Nutrition Specialist*

Every five years, the US Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Human Services are mandated to review the most current research in nutrition, physical fitness and food safety and, based on their findings, make recommendations for the people of this country. On January 31, 2011, the new 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans were released.

This time the guidelines focus on calorie consumption and physical activity. Agricultural Secretary Tom Vilsack said, "The majority of adults and one in three children are overweight or obese and this is a crisis that we can no longer ignore." These recommendations provide the information people need to make educated decisions so as to choose healthy foods in healthy quantities to help prevent food-related chronic illnesses. Vilsack added, "Improving our eating habits is not only good for every individual and family, but also for our country."

The Dietary Guidelines include 23 Key Recommendations for the general public, aged 2 years and older, and an additional six recommendations for specific groups, such as women who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

These 23 Key Recommendations are divided into four categories. One is balancing calories to manage weight, say, by enjoying food but eating less of it and avoiding oversized portions. They also suggest foods to eat more of, for example, by filling half your plate with fruits and vegetables and switching to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk. The guidelines recommend we eat less of other foods. For example, they suggest we compare sodium in foods like soup, bread, and frozen meals and choose foods with lower numbers. For optimal health, they also recommend choosing healthy eating patterns, such as drinking water instead of sugary drinks.

For more specific information on what the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend, go to <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/dietaryguidelines.htm> or contact me, Janet Hackert, at 660-425-6434.

To make these guidelines make a difference in your life, start today. Choose what will work and take that first step toward healthier living.

For more information on this or any other subject, contact your local University of Missouri Extension office. MU Extension programs are open to all.

*(Written February 11, 2011)*