

Dietary Guidelines Show Importance of Meat, Poultry

Meat and poultry continue to be important components of a balanced, healthy diet, according to *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005*, released Jan. 12 by former Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Tommy Thompson and former Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman. The guidelines, now in their sixth edition, stand by earlier recommendations for consumers to include meat and poultry in their daily diets and to make choices that are “lean, low-fat or fat-free.”

This edition of the guidelines places stronger emphasis on reducing calorie consumption and increasing physical activity than previous editions. “As the

government stresses the importance of reduced caloric intake and smart eating through consumption of a variety of nutrient-dense foods, the role of vitamin-packed protein sources in a balanced diet becomes critical,” notes Randall Huffman, vice president of scientific affairs at the American Meat Institute (AMI) Foundation. “Excellent nutrient-dense protein sources, such as meat and poultry, offer essential vitamins and minerals and quick satiety, which is a vital part of any diet on track.”

Huffman praises the new dietary guidelines as a scientifically based, big-picture view of the total diet. “Consumers are urged to pay close

Balanced diet, active lifestyle are stressed as key to healthy living.

Data from JAMA study don't support conclusions

Careful evaluation of a study published in the Jan. 12 *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA) shows that the study's findings are badly out of synch with JAMA's press release about it.

While a headline on the study's embargoed press release reads “Long-term High Consumption of Red and Processed Meat Linked With Increased Risk for Colon Cancer,” the study itself says, “High intake of red and processed meat reported in 1992/1993 was associated with higher risk of colon cancer after adjusting for age and energy intake, but not after further adjustment for body mass index, cigarette smoking and other covariates.”

This means that when the statisticians factored in the effects of body mass index, dietary fiber, fruit and vegetable consumption, smoking, alcohol consumption, and a host of other factors, there was no significant association between red meat consumption and cancer. In other words, the headline is not supported by the data.

“Putting the ‘Red Meat Causes Cancer’ headline on these data is like putting the ‘Dewey Defeats Truman’ headline on the 1948 presidential election

outcome. The two don't add up,” says Randall Huffman, American Meat Institute (AMI) Foundation vice president of scientific affairs. “Instead, the data continue to support the fact that the relationship between diet and cancer is a complex relationship and that it is difficult, if not impossible, to isolate one factor from another.”

Huffman also notes that this research is epidemiological in nature, meaning it involves questionnaires, calculators and statistics — not laboratories. “Epidemiological research is not designed to establish cause and effect. Rather, it is designed to identify areas for possible further research,” he says. “The weak associations noted in this paper are not conclusive. Every scientist lives by the phrase ‘association does not imply causation,’ and the conclusions implied by this press release clearly violate this scientific principle. In fact, this study is just one more in a long line of epidemiological studies that have shown no association, or a weak association, between meat consumption and cancer.”

The study is based in part on vol-

attention to these guidelines and to use a healthy serving of skepticism when considering the nutrition study of the week," he says. "If we adhered to even a portion of the advice that comes from every bad-food headline, we'd be cleaning out our pantries on a weekly basis. Americans should continue to shun the good-food vs. bad-food advice frequently espoused by special interest groups and focus on adhering to the advice contained in these dietary guidelines."

The 2005 guidelines are a joint project of both federal departments and the latest review of federal guidelines required by law every five years. The guidelines offer science-based information available to help Americans eat right and live longer, healthier lives. For information about the nutritional value of meat and poultry, take a look at www.meatpoultrynutrition.org.

The recommendations will help consumers make informed choices about food selections from every food group, get the most nutrition out of calories consumed and include exercise as a key component to a healthy lifestyle. "These recommendations highlight the long-standing body of science that says in very clear terms that the key to a healthy lifestyle is a balanced diet that includes each of the key food groups, coupled with daily exercise," says Alice Johnson, president

of the National Turkey Federation (NTF).

The report also mentions the importance of food safety and safe food handling as keys to staying healthy. Recommendations include keeping foods separate to avoid cross contamination, cooking foods to safe temperatures before eating, and tips on handling meat and poultry. For more information on safe

food handling, visit www.meatsafety.org.

"These guidelines remind consumers that a significant part of the food safety battle takes place at the grocery store when the food is purchased and at the home when the food is prepared," Johnson says. Food handling and preparation are two of the most important tasks performed in any household, she adds, "and deserve your full attention."

For more information visit www.meatami.com. To download the dietary guidelines for free or to read key recommendations, visit www.healthiers.gov/dietaryguidelines.



Editor's Note: This release was provided by AMI.

untary consumer questionnaires collected more than 20 years ago — snapshots in time based on consumers' recollections of what they ate in previous years. "Meat products have changed substantially in the last two decades and are significantly leaner than ever before," Huffman says. "Conclusions based upon the weak associations in this study, using 20-year-old data, may have little relevance to modern meat consumption."

What should consumers do in the wake of this news? "Consumers are best advised to eat a balanced diet as advised by the U.S. Dietary Guidelines, get plenty of exercise, maintain a healthy weight and avoid smoking," Huffman says. "While this commonsense advice may not be earth-shattering or new, it is clearly the wisest course of action and is supported by leading medical experts."

For more information visit www.meatami.com.

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