



# Nutrition for Family Living

Susan Nitzke, Nutrition Specialist; susan.nitzke@ces.uwex.edu  
Sherry Tanumihardjo, Nutrition Specialist; sherry.tan@ces.uwex.edu  
Amy Rettammel, Outreach Specialist; arettamm@facstaff.wisc.edu  
Gayle Coleman, Nutrition Specialist; gayle.coleman@ces.uwex.edu  
Heather Harvey, Nutrition Specialist; heather.harvey@ces.uwex.edu

---

## March, 2006 Topics

Examining the yellow slice of *MyPyramid*!

---

## Examining the yellow slice of *MyPyramid*!

By Ashley Valentine and Sherry Tanumihardjo



If you, like many Americans, made a resolution this year to establish lifelong healthy-eating habits you may have turned to *MyPyramid* for guidance. While one pyramid does not fit all, the pyramid has six sections that we should base our food selections on in order to maintain a healthy diet. Five of these colored sections represent the food groups from the previous Food Guide Pyramid (*i.e.*, orange for grains, green for vegetables, red for fruits, blue for milk products, and purple for meat and beans). The sixth section, colored yellow, is for oils. It is this skinny little yellow section of *MyPyramid* that may confuse most people when trying to maintain a healthy diet.

**What's the skinny on oils?** The new oils category represents some fats because oils *are* liquid fats at room temperature. Oils are healthier for us than fats that are solid at room temperature (e.g., butter, stick margarine, and animal fat). You may be wondering, how can one fat be “healthier” than another? Within the broad classification of fats are many different *types* of fat including saturated and *trans* fats (solid fats) and unsaturated, monounsaturated (MUFAs), and polyunsaturated (PUFAs) fats (oils). Some of these fats, such as MUFAs and PUFAs, are better for our bodies than others, such as saturated and *trans* fats. Solid fats contain mostly saturated and some *trans* fats that can increase a person's risk for heart disease. Oils, which are mostly MUFAs and PUFAs, do not. Additionally, besides being in butter, shortening, lard and vegetable oil, fats can be found in foods that belong to the five food groups too. With so many different names and sources of fats, recommendations can get confusing! How can people tailor their eating habits to incorporate healthier types of fats (MUFAs and PUFAs), less unhealthy types of fats (saturated and *trans* fats), and not eat too much fat overall?

**Fanatic about fats?** You don't have to be a fat-fanatic, in order to consume fats in a healthy manner. Remember, we don't want to stop eating fat. The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommend that adults consume 20-35% of total calories as fat. We want to establish lifelong healthy-eating behaviors that incorporate healthier fats and less unhealthy fats. Here are five general “rules” that can help you choose what type of fat to consume or cook with:

- Liquid fats (oils) are healthier for you than solid fats.
- Oils are liquid at room temperature and found in plant sources (e.g., olives, nuts, corn, sunflower seeds, and avocado) and in fish.
- Solid fats are solid at room temperature and found in animal products (e.g., butter, lard, beef and chicken fat).
- Oils can be made into solid *trans* fats through a process called hydrogenation (e.g., stick margarine and shortening).
- Palm and coconut oil should be considered solid fats because they are high in saturated fats.



## Nutrition for Family Living March, 2006

How can these “rules” be applied to eating and cooking? Think *replace* or *eliminate*. For most of us, there are many times during the day that an unhealthy fat could easily be replaced with a healthier fat or lower-fat version. Let’s examine a typical meal and look for areas where solid fats could be replaced, reduced or eliminated. Here is a sample meal plan:

- Chicken drumsticks and breasts, skin-on, baked
- Mixed vegetables sautéed in butter
- Dinner rolls with butter
- Whole milk
- Strawberries and regular whipped cream for dessert

What are some easy ways to make the fats in this meal healthier, using *replace*, and *eliminate*? The following are examples of possible ways to improve the fats in this meal. Your ideas may be different.

- *Eliminate* (cut-off) visible fat and the skin from the chicken.
- *Replace* butter by choosing a liquid fat, such as vegetable oil (but not palm or coconut oil), to sauté the vegetables.
- *Eliminate* butter from the roll. Go European! For moisture, use the roll to soak up the oil on your plate from the vegetables.
- *Replace* whole milk with low-fat or skim milk.
- *Replace* regular whipped cream with low-fat or fat-free.

***Please pass the peanut butter?*** Finally, you may be interested in reducing the amount of butter or margarine you consume daily. Many of us use these spreads on toast, bread, or crackers and it may seem tough to break this habit. Have you considered peanut butter as a replacement spread, which is found in the meat and beans group of *MyPyramid*? Peanuts have many nutritional and health benefits. Peanuts contain MUFAs, vitamin E, folate, magnesium, zinc, iron, fiber and protein. And peanuts, like all foods from plants, do not contain any cholesterol. Furthermore, research suggests that peanuts can reduce the risk of heart disease and diabetes and can contribute to weight loss when incorporated appropriately in the diet. Choose a peanut butter that has “peanuts” as the main or only ingredient listed on the label, and watch for added sugars and salt. However, some individuals may have a severe allergic reaction to peanuts.



### Resources used:

*Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, 2005. 6th Edition, Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office. <http://www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines/index.html>.

*MyPyramid* can be accessed online at <http://www.mypyramid.gov/>.

More information on peanuts can be accessed at <http://www.peanut-institute.org>.



This article is part of a 4-year project supported by the National Research Initiative of the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, grant number 2003-35200-05377 to Tanumihardjo entitled “Promotion of high vegetable consumption as a weight-loss strategy and general well-being.”