

Senior Nutrition Program

Network Discussion

Overview of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and Dietary Reference Intakes

Judy Simon, National Nutritionist

Administration for Community Living

January 2022

Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs)

- The U.S. Departments of Agriculture (USDA) and Health and Human Services (HHS) update and release the DGAs every 5 years, with each edition reflecting current nutrition science.
- The purpose of the DGAs is to:
 - Promote health
 - Reduce the risk of chronic disease
 - Meet nutritional needs

Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs) Cont.

- The DGAs are relevant to those in the U.S. who are:
 - Healthy
 - At risk for chronic conditions, such as cardiovascular disease or diabetes
 - Living with 1 or more diet-related chronic illnesses
- The goals of the DGAs include:
 - Achieving a healthy body weight
 - Limiting added sugars
 - Limiting the consumption of saturated fats

Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs)

- While the DGAs focus on healthy meal patterns, the DRIs generally focus on one or more **specific nutrients**, such as calories or sodium.
- The DRIs are being updated over the next few years and will likely have some revisions by the time the next DGAs are issued for 2025-2030.

Older Americans Act (OAA) and the DGAs and DRIs

- The OAA follows the DGAs and DRIs because it is essential to ensuring older adults receive the optimal nutrition to support healthy aging and reduce the risk of chronic conditions, food insecurity, and malnutrition.
- Intents of the OAA Nutrition Program include:
 - Providing good nutrition
 - Increasing socialization
 - Promoting health and well-being

OAA Nutrition Program Evaluations

- Evaluations of the OAA Nutrition Program have found that the program has positive impacts on older adults':
 - Nutritional status
 - Feelings of connection and socialization
 - Health and well-being

OAA Nutrition Program Flexibilities

- State Units on Aging (SUAs) develop policies, procedures, and guidance for service implementation – giving each state flexibility in how it approaches menu and nutrition standards.
- SUAs can then delegate responsibilities to Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) or local providers to provide even more flexibility as needed.

Nutrition and Aging Resource Center

- Has resources for:
 - Providing nutritious meals and meeting minimum calorie requirements
 - Best practices for including socialization opportunities along with meals
 - Technical assistance for implementing new approaches, such as grab-and-go meals

