

Differences Between the Food Guide Pyramid and MyPyramid Plan

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Fig 2: MyPyramid Plan

Source: <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/MyPyramid-breakout.htm>

Discussion:

The MyPyramid Plan succeeds in several areas, such as differentiating between good and bad oils and fats, lessening the daily recommendations of meat, and placing more emphasis on the importance of vegetables, as Table 1 demonstrates. While there are many beneficial changes to the original design, some aspects still remain unchanged. For example, contrary to evidence against the benefits of dairy products, the MyPyramid still allows 3 servings a day. The problem is, the 'MyPyramid Plan' (MPP) itself does not include the actual information on what the different bandwidths and colors represent on the pyramid, making it necessary for the average American to have a ready internet connection to be able to actually understand their dietary recommendations. Not only this, but the specific servings are not available, with the 'MyPyramid Plan' supporting instead 'personalized' dietary plans, which may be beneficial, but makes it even harder for the non-internet savvy American to be able to determine what their diets should be.

References:

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- Murphy, Susan P.. "Guest Editorial." *Developing the Consumer INterface fo the MyPyramid Guidance System* (2006):

Jelliffe, Derrick B., and E.F. Patrice Jelliffe. *Nutrition and Growth*. New York, NY: Plenum F United States Department of Agriculture. *Nutrition: Eating for Good Health*.

Introduction:

According to the USDA's Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion mission statement, the purpose of the update of the original Food Guide Pyramid is "making consumer tools available that inform the public of a healthful diet based on current science and American consumption patterns". The 'MyPyramid Plan' does not have a general dietary recommendation for everyone, rather it provides specific dietary recommendations based on factors such as age, weight, and height. I entered my own physical information and exercise habits to see a recommended amount for myself. This is the basis that I used for the comparison between the two pyramids. The research methods used on this project include research into the development of the Food Guide Pyramid through literature, analysis of the changes between the Food Guide Pyramid and MyPyramid Plan, and extensive reading into the available resources on the USDA sponsored website MyPyramid.gov.

Table 1: Comparison of MPP and FGP Guidelines

| Food Categories | MyPyramid Plan | Food Guide Pyramid |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Grains: | 10 ounces a day, 5 ounces whole grain. | 6-11 servings. |
| Vegetables | 3.5 cups daily divided into categories.* | 3-5 servings. |
| Oils & Discretionary Calories | 8 teaspoons of oils a day. | In "Fats, Oils, & Sweets" Category, labeled "Use Sparingly". |
| Milk & Dairy | 3 cups. | 2-3 servings. |
| Meat & Beans | 7 ounces. | 2-3 servings. |
| Physical Activity | At least 30 minutes per day. | Not specifically mentioned. |

*The vegetable serving recommendations on the MyPyramid Plan are broken up into the following categories and servings:
 Dark green vegetables = 3 cups weekly
 Orange vegetables = 2.5 cups weekly
 Dry beans & peas = 7 cups weekly
 Other vegetables = 8.5 cups weekly

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Abstract:

The new MyPyramid presentation of the USDA Food Guide is based on the 2005 Dietary Guidelines recommendations. According to a review on the official website, it was "peer reviewed by several nutrition educators and then reviewed for consistency with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans". The new MyPyramid format is an updated form of the original guideline released by the USDA, which is known as the Food Guide Pyramid, released in 1992. Changes in the MyPyramid plan, according to the website information, include a differentiation between the various vegetable types, a re-classifying of fats and oils that recognizes the health benefits of oils (with a recommended 8 teaspoons a day), and some fats. In the Food Guide Pyramid fats were placed with "sweets" and labelled "use sparingly". The MyPyramid places an emphasis on grains, recommending 10 oz daily, 5 of which are whole grains. The MyPyramid Plan adds a bottom layer to the pyramid graphic, recommending 30 minutes of physical activity each day.

Methods:

The development of the Food Guide Pyramid was investigated through analysis of the changes between the Food Guide Pyramid and MyPyramid Plan, reading the available resources on the USDA sponsored website MyPyramid.gov and peer-reviewed sources.

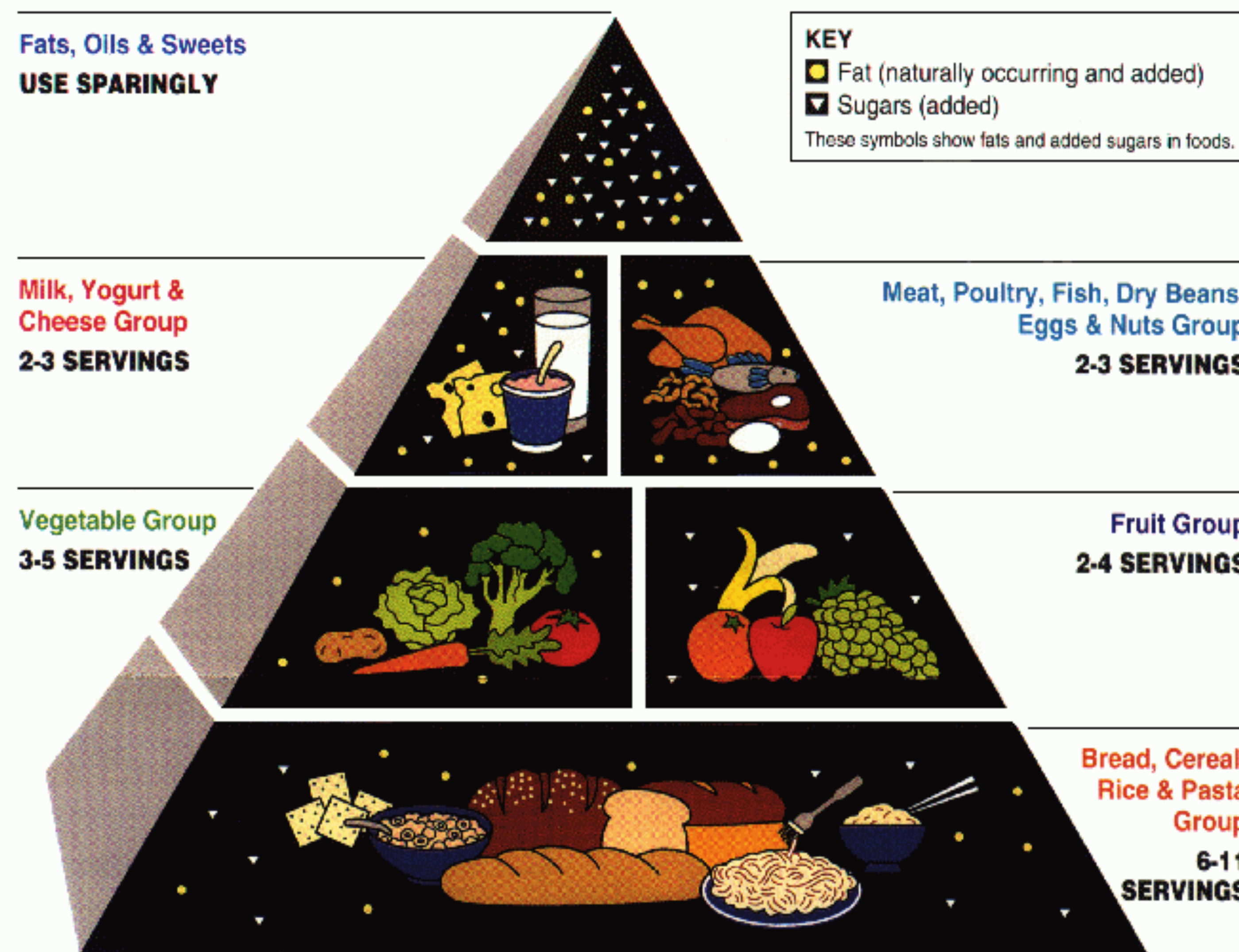


Fig 1: The Food Guide Pyramid

Source: <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/FGPGraphicResources.htm>

Results:

Fig. 1 shows the serving recommendation on the Food Guide Pyramid. Table one shows the serving recommendations not obvious in Fig. 2, and the differences between the serving recommendations of the two Food Guide Pyramids.