



February 2005

## Putting the USDA Pyramid into Play

You may have seen the new food pyramid, put out by the federal government to give us recommendations about our diet. (If you haven't seen it, go to <http://www.MyPyramid.gov>) The old pyramid was a single standard to apply to all eaters. The new pyramid is customized to each person. When you visit the website, you can plan your diet based upon your age, sex, and physical activity habits. The new pyramid also includes recommendations for exercise.

Diet is generally mentioned in the same breath as obesity, which is then linked to diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and the like. But diet can do more than just add pounds - it can also contribute to many other long-term diseases. Diet is estimated to account for 30% of all cancers, second only to tobacco use as a preventable cause of cancer. For example,

- ✓ Obese women who are past menopause have a 50% higher risk of breast cancer.
- ✓ Consuming alcohol increases the risk for breast cancer, as well as for throat, mouth and liver cancers.
- ✓ Eating red meat probably increases your risk of colorectal cancer. Eating more fruits and vegetables should decrease your risk.

How can you make the new food pyramid useful to clients? Here are a few ideas:

If the work environment can allow, have employees visit the pyramid web site and do their diet plan. Give employees who do their plan a lottery ticket for a drawing; give away a \$50 gift certificate to the grocery store.

Have employees sign the back of their grocery store receipt and submit it for a lottery. The receipt has to show that they bought five fruits and vegetables, in order for them to win. Again, make the prize a grocery store gift certificate. (This puts good foods right into the employees' own cabinets. They just might start eating better!)

Having bagels and fruit at company meetings, rather than donuts, does make a difference. If company tradition is to have pizza parties, try switching to submarine sandwiches or wraps.

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