



KSC FITNESS CENTER

Latest news and bulletin updates

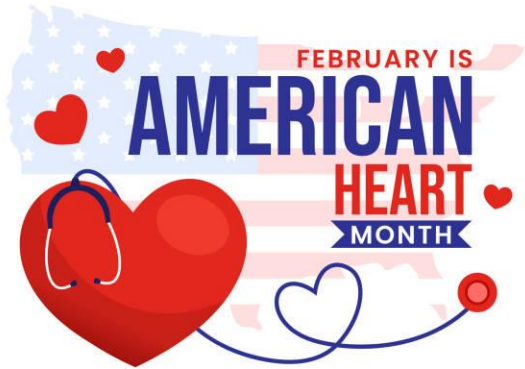
Thursday,
January 15, 2026

KSC's Fitness and Health Education & Wellness (HEWP) Team

Kristopher Schweitzer, Wellness Specialist

Get Smart About Your Heart

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in both men and women and February is American Heart Month, a national observance to raise awareness about heart disease. National Wear Red Day, which focuses more on women’s heart health, is February 6th. With support from the American Heart Association (AHA) and the Center for Disease Control (CDC), people are encouraged to focus on their cardiovascular health by learning about the risks of heart disease and the importance of identifying and managing heart-related health conditions.



Heart disease describes a range of conditions that affect the heart. Heart disease includes:

- Blood vessel disease, such as coronary artery disease.
- Irregular heartbeats, called arrhythmias.
- Heart conditions that you're born with, called congenital heart defects.
- Disease of the heart muscle.
- Heart valve disease.

Risk factors for heart disease include:

- Age: Growing older increases the risk of damaged and narrowed arteries and a weakened or thickened heart muscle.
- Sex assigned at birth: Men are generally at greater risk of heart disease and the risk in women increases after menopause.
- Family history: A family history of heart disease increases the risk of coronary artery disease, especially if a parent developed it at an early age. That means before age 55 for a male relative, such as a brother or your father, and 65 for a female relative, such as your mother or a sister.
- Smoking: Substances in tobacco smoke damage the arteries. Heart attacks are more common in people who smoke than in people who don't smoke. Talk with a healthcare professional if you need help quitting (our Health Education & Wellness Program can also provide you with smoking cessation resources – email Brittany.freeman@nasa.gov).
- Unhealthy diet: Diets high in fat, salt, sugar and cholesterol have been linked to heart disease.
- High blood pressure: High blood pressure that is not controlled can cause the arteries to become hard and thick. These changes alter blood flow to the heart and body.
- High cholesterol: Having high cholesterol increases the risk of atherosclerosis. Atherosclerosis has been linked to heart attack and stroke.
- Diabetes: Diabetes increases the risk of heart disease. Obesity and high blood pressure increase the risk of diabetes and heart disease.
- Obesity: Excess weight typically worsens other heart disease risk factors.
- Lack of exercise: Being inactive is associated with many forms of heart disease and some of its risk factors too.
- Stress: Emotional stress may damage the arteries and make other heart disease risk factors worse.
- Poor dental health: Having unhealthy teeth and gums makes it easier for germs to get into the bloodstream and travel to the heart. This can cause an infection called endocarditis. Brush and floss your teeth often. Also get regular dental checkups.

The same lifestyle changes used to manage heart disease may also help prevent it. Try these heart-healthy tips:

- Don't smoke.
- Eat a diet low in salt and saturated fat.
- Exercise at least 30 minutes a day on most days of the week.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Reduce and manage stress.
- Control high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes.
- Get good sleep. Adults should aim for 7 to 9 hours daily.

The most common type of heart disease is coronary artery disease, or CAD. In 2022, CAD caused 371,506 deaths in the United States. Coronary artery disease is a heart condition that affects the major blood vessels that supply the heart muscle. A buildup of fats, cholesterol and other substances in and on the artery walls is the most common cause of coronary artery disease. This buildup is called plaque. The buildup of plaque in the arteries is called atherosclerosis. Atherosclerosis reduces blood flow to the heart and other parts of the body. It can lead to chest pain, a heart attack, or a stroke.

Symptoms of coronary artery disease can include:

- Chest pain, chest tightness, chest pressure and chest discomfort, called angina.
- Shortness of breath.
- Pain in the neck, jaw, throat, upper belly or back.
- Pain, numbness, weakness or coldness in the legs or arms if the blood vessels in those body areas are narrowed.

You might not be diagnosed with coronary artery disease until you have a heart attack, angina, a stroke, or heart failure, so it's important to watch for heart symptoms. Talk with your healthcare team about any concerns. Heart disease can sometimes be found early with regular health checkups.

What are the ABCS of heart health?

A: Take aspirin as directed by your health care professional.
Ask your health care professional if aspirin can reduce your risk of having a heart attack or stroke. Be sure to tell your health care professional if you have a family history of heart disease or stroke, and mention your own medical history.

B: Control your blood pressure.
Blood pressure measures the force of blood pushing against the walls of the arteries. If your blood pressure stays high for a long time, you may suffer from high blood pressure (also called hypertension). Hypertension is the leading cause of heart attack and stroke in the United States. It can also damage your eyes and kidneys. Nearly half of American adults have high blood pressure, and only about 1 in 4 have it under control. Find out what your blood pressure numbers are and ask your health care professional what those numbers mean for your health. If you have high blood pressure, work with your health care team to lower it.



C: Manage your cholesterol.
Cholesterol is a waxy substance produced by the liver and found in certain foods. Your body needs cholesterol, but when you have too much, it can build up in your arteries and cause heart disease. There are different types of cholesterol. One type is “good” and can protect you from heart disease, but another type is “bad” and can increase your risk. Talk to your health care professional about cholesterol and how to lower your bad cholesterol if it’s too high.

S: Don’t smoke.
Smoking raises your blood pressure, which increases your risk for heart attack and stroke. If you smoke, quit. Talk with your health care professional about ways to help you stick with your decision. It’s never too late to quit smoking. Visit smokefree.gov or call 1-800-QUIT-NOW today.

References:
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/heart-disease/symptoms-causes/syc-20353118>
<https://www.cdc.gov/heart-disease/data-research/facts-stats/index.html>

GRC’s Slim-A-Thon 2026!

While not an event being directed by the Kennedy Space Center Fitness Center, we can do bodyfat measurements with our tools on-hand. It is very quick process and is non-invasive. From there, you can track your measurements and send them over to the team at GRC. Read below to see the challenge details!

Welcome back former Slim-A-Thonners! 2026 marks over 30 years of the GRC Fitness Center’s Slim-A-Thon Challenge, and we’re excited to kick off another year of renewed resolutions and a fresh commitment to improving health and wellness.

Slim-A-Thon is a 12-week program designed to help you better understand your body composition, create sustainable healthy lifestyle changes, and have fun while staying active. The challenge focuses on fat loss, muscle toning, and waist shrinking – and best of all, it’s open to **everyone!** Participants from **all NASA centers** are welcome, including civil servants, contractors, retirees, and family & friends.

To participate, simply complete the attached form, submit a body fat measurement, and commit to tracking your exercise over the 12-week challenge. If you have any questions or need help obtaining a body fat assessment, please reach out to Bob Laws (robert.c.laws@nasa.gov).

- Key Dates:**
- **Body Composition Measurements:** January 6 - January 19
 - **Challenge Duration:** January 19 - April 18

Elevate Your Fitness with Group Exercise!

Looking to add energy and variety to your workouts? Our **Group Exercise Classes** are designed to help you build strength, improve flexibility, and boost endurance—all in a supportive, community-driven environment.

Why Join a Class?

- ✓ **Stay Motivated** – Energizing workouts led by expert instructors
- ✓ **Build Community** – Exercise alongside fellow KSC employees
- ✓ **All Levels Welcome** – Modifications provided for every fitness level

Class Lineup

- **Buffed & Balanced:** A strength-based class using body weight and optional weights for a total-body experience.
- **Stretch:** Improve flexibility, balance, and mobility through guided poses and movements.
- **Circuit Training:** A fast-paced, high-energy workout combining **strength, endurance, and cardio**.



Picture Description: A diverse group of four fit individuals sits on a gym floor, engaging in a post-workout high-five and sharing smiles. The industrial-style gym setting features large windows and a relaxed

New to Group Fitness?

No worries! Every class is beginner-friendly, and our instructors will guide you every step of the way. **Bring a coworker or friend** and make your workouts even more fun!

Find Your Class!

Visit the [Group Exercise Schedule](#) to explore class times, instructor details, and descriptions. This resource is updated regularly so you never miss a workout opportunity.

Monday-Friday midday classes are available in-person and on MS Teams:

- Click Here **to participate in Buffed & Balanced and Stretch class through MS Teams.**
- Click Here **for previously recorded classes.**
- Click Here **to request the outlook calendar series.**

Let's move together, get stronger, and make fitness fun! See you in class!

Meghan Johnson, Fitness & Wellness Intern

Benefits of Donating Blood



Picture Description: A blood collection bag connected via tube to a heart, receiving the blood.

As we begin to recover from the holidays and look forward to the new year, while re-establishing our routines, we should think about ways that we can improve our overall health. It’s no secret that physical activity can help improve your cardiovascular fitness, blood flow, and reduce your risk of heart disease; but did you know that donating blood is an additional way to improve your health?

January is National Blood Donor Month, and every year it serves as a reminder of how a simple act of generosity can strengthen both our community and our own health. Donating blood not only provides a lifeline to patients in need but can also offer meaningful cardiovascular benefits to the donor.

Regular blood donation may help reduce iron levels in the body, by increasing iron turnover and absorption, facilitating faster recovery and supporting long-term donor health (Kurhaluk et al., 2024). High iron stores in the body have been suggested to be a risk factor for acute myocardial infarction (MI) (aka a heart attack), and research has shown that middle-aged blood donors have an 88% reduced risk of MIs compared to non-blood donors (Salonen et al., 1998). Blood donation has also been shown to lower oxidative stress and support healthier blood vessels, while encouraging better blood flow and reducing the risk of arterial blockages and cardiovascular disease (Kurhaluk et al., 2024).

Heart disease remains the #1 killer in the U.S. and globally, where one person dies every 34 seconds (CDC, 2024). Heart Health Month in February encourages us to take proactive steps, like staying active, eating healthy, managing stress, and scheduling regular checkups, to protect our heart that works so tirelessly for us every day! While heart disease is one of the leading causes of death, many of the risk factors are preventable through healthy habits, early detection, and education. How many positive risk factors do you have?

Non-Modifiable Risk Factors:

- **Age:** Men ≥ 45yrs old; Women ≥ 55yrs old
- **Family History:** Myocardial infarction, coronary revascularization, or sudden death before 55 yrs old in father, or other first-degree male relative, or before 65 yrs old in mother or other first-degree female relative

Modifiable Risk Factors:

- **Cigarette Smoking:** Current cigarette smokers, those who quit within the previous 6 months or those exposure to environmental tobacco smoke
- **Physical Inactivity:** Not meeting the minimum threshold of 75-150 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous intensity of physical activity per week
- **Body Mass Index (BMI)/Waist Circumference:** BMI ≥ 30 or wait girth ≥ 40in for men or 38in for women
- **Blood Pressure:** Systolic BP (top number) ≥ 130 and/or diastolic BP (bottom number) ≥ 80
- **Lipids Panel:** LDL levels (“bad” cholesterol) ≥ 130; or HDL levels ≤ 40 (men) or ≤ 50 (women)
- **Blood Glucose:** Fasting glucose levels ≥ 100; or HbA1C ≥ 5.7%
- (ACSM, 2022)

Exercise strengthens the heart, improves blood vessel function, stimulates the production of red blood cells to meet the increased demand of muscular oxygen consumption- making muscles more efficient at using oxygen, lowers blood pressure, reduces stress hormones, and improves cholesterol and blood glucose levels (ACSM, 2022). Improving your health not only reduces your risk of cardiovascular disease and MIs but makes you a perfect candidate for blood donation. By giving just a small amount of time and compassion, you can support both your own health and the wellbeing of others.

References:

ACSM. (2022). Guidelines for Exercise Testing and Prescription, 11ed. American College of Sports Medicine. Wolters Kluwer.

CDC. (2024, October 24). Heart Disease Facts. Center for Disease Control (CDC).

Kurhaluk, N., Gradziuk, M., and Tkaczenko, H. (2024, December 27). Optimisation of Blood Donor Nutrition: Blood Donor Health Improvement Studies. *Cellular Physiology & Biochemistry*, 58, pp. 756-806.

Salonen, J.T., Tuomainen, T., Salonen, R., Lakka, T.A., Nyyssonen, K. (1998, Sept. 1). Donation of Blood Is Associated with Reduced Risk of Myocardial Infarction: The Kuopio Ischaemic Heart Disease Risk Factor Study, *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 148(5). pp. 445-451.

Blood Donation Resources:

One Blood: <https://www.oneblood.org/>

Parrish Medical Center: <https://www.parrishhealthcare.com/patients-visitors/blood-organ-tissue-donation/>

Advent Health Blood Center: <https://www.adventhealth.com/medical/adventhealth-blood-center>

2025 Advent Calendar Challenge: Final Leaderboard

We thank all of you who participated in the Advent Calendar Fitness & Wellness Challenge. From our perspective, it was a great success and challenging but enjoyed, so we want to host it again next year! We would also love your feedback on this challenge and/or others we’ve hosted by submitting a [Fitness](#) or [HEWP](#) survey (also attached).

The TOP 10 Participants:

78 points (PERFECT SCORE): Gabriela Escalera & Pam Honeycutt

76 points: Brianna Soat

71 points: Lindsay Hays

68 points: Allison Gregg & Katherine McBrayer

65 points: Kimberly Schuetz

58 points: R. Kent Hodson

57 points: Lauren Patrick

55 points: Allyson Grooms

From the event organizer, Kris Schweitzer: CONGRATULATIONS to Gabriela and Pam on completing EVERY challenge and achieving a PERFECT score in our Advent Calendar Fitness & Wellness Challenge. That is impressive! Now, to determine the overall Champion, you two have to hold a best of 3 arm-wrestling contests. Just kidding!! Congratulations to all of you on your participation in this event. You did the very best that you could and that’s all we can ask. We had a lot of fun creating this challenge and we hope you had fun as well. Wishing all of you a fit and healthy new year!

Colin Andryc, Wellness Specialist

Living with Tinnitus



Tinnitus, the very loud albeit silent sound that only a few people can hear. Unfortunately, this is not a superpower but a debilitating condition affecting roughly 10-25% of adults. The National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders defines tinnitus as, the perception of sound that does not have an external source, so other people cannot hear it.

Now just from this definition, it’s clear to see why those suffering from the condition can feel hopeless in their endeavor of overcoming this ailment. We can see a herniated disk through an MRI, an athletic trainer can palpate a torn bicep tendon by manipulating the area, and you are able to visually see the effects of the flu. To those with tinnitus, it can feel like an invisible war that is fought by yourself; you can ask your loved one if they hear that high pitched ringing and most of the time they will say no, maybe sending the individual deeper into a hole of hopelessness and confusion.

- **What are the symptoms?**

Those with tinnitus have symptoms that can vary from person to person. While one person may hear a squeak or a hissing sound others may hear a whistle or a roaring sound. Sometimes it will be a high-pitched squeal or other times it could be a low-pitched buzzing sound. The part that is fascinating to me is that some can be affected by these sounds all the time or the sounds can come and go. Compared to something like tennis elbow (elbow tendonitis), certain movements can exacerbate the pain felt in the elbow or bumping the elbow against the wall can elicit a pain response. As we see with tinnitus, one day can be very different from the next for those suffering from the condition.

- **What exactly is going on inside my head?**

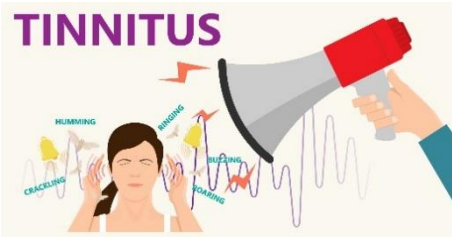
According to The National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, the exact causes of tinnitus are not fully understood, but linked to the following: noise exposure, hearing loss (which ties into old age), medications, earwax/ear infection, and head/neck/jaw injuries. Regarding noise exposure, having a workplace setting in a loud environment could put you in line for tinnitus. The condition is also prevalent amongst our veterans because of extremely loud noises such as gunfire or bomb blasts. Tinnitus is also the most common service-related disability among veterans.

Another fascinating part of tinnitus is the perception of the noise. While we may think the tinnitus occurs in our ears, the silent sounds are instead generated by our brain, in an area called the auditory cortex. The auditory cortex communicates with other parts of the brain, such as the parts that control attention and emotions, and studies have shown that some people with tinnitus have changes in these nonauditory brain regions.

- **How can it be treated?**

Always consult a physician before starting any treatment for tinnitus. An ear, nose, and throat doctor (ENT) or an audiologist can help pinpoint your tinnitus. A primary care doctor can also check for any earwax or fluid from an ear infection that maybe blocking your ear canal.

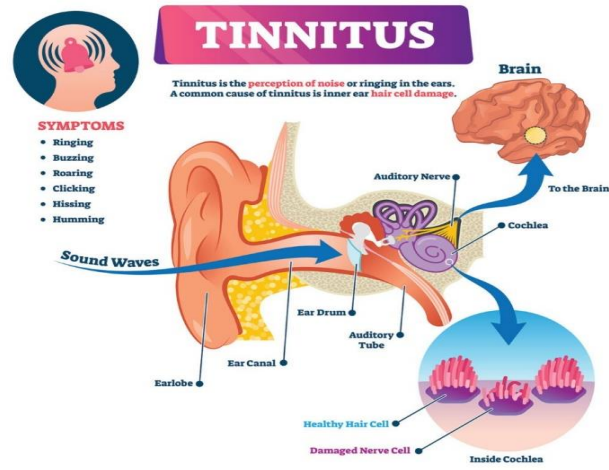
Treatments that can lessen the effects of tinnitus include sounds therapies (using sounds to reverse some of the neural changes and help silence tinnitus), utilizing white noise generators when sleeping to block out the ringing sounds, and hearing aids (by amplifying external noise sources, your tinnitus would be less noticeable). Behavioral therapy helps one’s wellbeing by reducing the impact of tinnitus on your life and by developing other coping mechanisms. There are no medications specifically for treating tinnitus, but a doctor can prescribe an antidepressant or sleeping medication to help in other aspects of your life affected by tinnitus.



- **Personal stories and in-review**

Here are some excerpts from personal stories regarding tinnitus from the Tinnitus subreddit:

- “It has made me avoid studying anything or learning, or even focusing on video games, writing, doing art. Because intense concentration for me just leaves me alone with the annoying pain and sound in my ear.”
- “I’ve had a mild case of tinnitus for 7+ years. Last month, after a neck injury, the ringing got significantly worse. I can hear it 24/7 no matter what I am doing. Not sure if the neck injury had any part of the injury or if it was potentially from the medication I was prescribed for that pain or something else altogether.”



Not all hope is lost though, as there has been success stories too, including, “So here's the secret. Just IGNORE IT. I know it seems impossible at first, but IT DOES GET BETTER,” and “I also tried some TMJ (temporomandibular joint) massages I found on YouTube. They seemed to help calm the hum immediately. I'm also trying to eat soft foods to give my jaw a break.”

In retrospect, those who suffer from tinnitus can have a very difficult experience navigating this condition. Whatever path you decide to go down regarding treating your tinnitus; make sure to speak with your physician and be consistent with your treatment. Just like with weightlifting, if you are taking 5 days off between workouts, you will not see the results, and the same goes for using white noise, behavioral therapies, and other avenues of treatment for tinnitus. I highly recommend the Tinnitus subreddit if you are trying to interact with others suffering from tinnitus.

References:

1. TMJ disorders. National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research. <https://www.nidcr.nih.gov/health-info/tmd>. Accessed Oct. 18, 2024.
2. What Is Tinnitus? — Causes and Treatment | NIDCD
3. Reddit.com/r/tinnitus

Brittany Freeman, Wellness Coordinator

2026 Nutrition Trends

The MIND Diet:

Starting with great news, the top-rated diets reported in 2025, and likely to carry over into 2026, focus on balance over restriction, including The Mediterranean Diet, DASH diet and the MIND diet, combining the two. Before proceeding with an explanation of these, let us rewire the negative stigmatism often associated with the term ‘diet’ by focusing on healthy *lifestyle* changes instead. There are cases when diets are prescribed for temporary medical treatment, but in most cases, it is best to make healthy eating habits to last a lifetime. So, instead of thinking of a diet as a temporary solution, focus on healthy changes you can maintain forever, not just a few weeks/months or one year. If changes are too restrictive to maintain forever, the result is likely to take us back to where we started, or worse, due to depleting the body of essential nutrients, creating a less efficient metabolism and/or developing a negative mindset regarding food.

Assuming it will cross our paths soon, if not already, let us explore what the MIND diet entails. MIND is an acronym for Mediterranean – DASH Diet Intervention for Neurodegeneration Delay. It is great exploring a nutrition fad centered on improving mental well-being! What makes MIND effective in protecting our brains by delaying neurodegeneration? It combines components of the Mediterranean and DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diets, modified to incorporate what nutrition research has deemed beneficial in preventing or treating dementia. In a 2016 study, the MIND diet showed more cognitive changes among participants than the Mediterranean and DASH diets (Morris, et al., 2016). In summary, the MIND diet emphasizes foods that have revealed slowed cognitive decline in research, including 10 brain healthy food groups and five non-brain healthy food groups.

10 Brain Healthy Food Groups	Five Non-Brain Healthy Food Groups
<u>Green Leafy Vegetables</u> - high in folate, vitamin E, carotenoids and flavonoids, all linked to lower cognitive decline and decreased risk for dementia	Red Meats
Other Vegetable Consumption	Butter
<u>Nuts</u> - associated with maintaining higher cognitive scores when compared to low-fat diets	Margarine
<u>Berries</u> - shown to improve memory in animals (still awaiting effectiveness for human consumption and cognitive health)	Cheese
<u>Beans</u>	Pastries & Sweets
<u>Whole Grains</u>	
<u>Seafood</u> - just one fish meal per week is associated with decreased risk of dementia	
<u>Poultry</u>	
<u>Olive Oil</u> - associated with maintaining higher cognitive scores when compared to low-fat diets	
<u>Wine</u>	

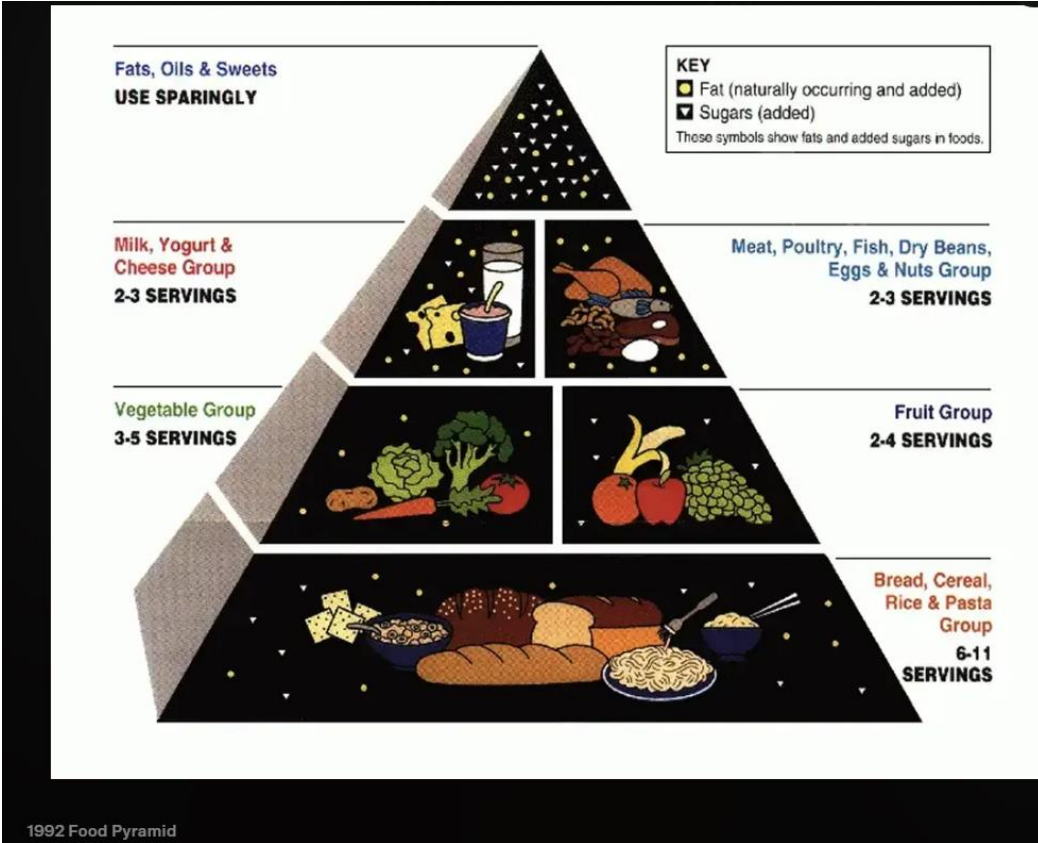
The MIND diet component servings and scoring used in the “MIND diet slows cognitive decline with aging” study in 2016 is shown in the image to the right:

The 2016 study provides some valuable information to consider, but as always, research is ongoing, and this study is already 10 years old. Since then, more research on the MIND diet has been done (take a look: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=MIND+diet>). It is worth noting that wine is not mentioned in several, or most, reviews of this study, likely because the risks often outweigh the benefits, if it provides any benefits at all. Moderation is always key in alcohol consumption, and it is linked to increased risk of several health complications. As mentioned later in this article, it is best not to consume alcohol. Despite that caveat regarding this research on the MIND diet, it appears to offer some valuable insight on nutrition that may delay cognitive decline and improved health in general!

	0	0.5	1
Green Leafy Vegetables ^a	≤2 servings/wk	> 2 to <6/wk	≥6 servings/wk
Other Vegetables ^b	<5 serving/wk	5 – <7 wk	≥1 serving/day
Berries ^c	<1 serving/wk	1 /wk	≥2 servings/wk
Nuts	<1/mo	1/mo – <5/wk	≥5 servings/wk
Olive Oil	Not primary oil		Primary oil used
Butter, Margarine	>2 T/d	1–2 /d	<1 T/d
Cheese	7+ servings/wk	1–6 /wk	< 1 serving/wk
Whole Grains	<1 serving/d	1–2 /d	≥3 servings/d
Fish (not fried) ^d	Rarely	1–3 /mo	≥1 meals/wk
Beans ^e	<1 meal/wk	1–3/wk	>3 meals/wk
Poultry (not fried) ^f	<1 meal/wk	1 /wk	≥2 meals/wk
Red Meat and products ^g	7+ meals/wk	4–6 /wk	< 4 meals/wk
Fast Fried Foods ^h	4+ times/wk	1–3 /wk	<1 time/wk
Pastries & Sweets ⁱ	7+ servings/wk	5 –6 /wk	<5 servings/wk
Wine	>1 glass/d or never	1/mo – 6/wk	1 glass/d
TOTAL SCORE			15

2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

And now, surpassing a trend, the big nutrition news of 2026 many of us have been waiting for: the updated Dietary Guidelines for Americans! On January 7, 2026, the USDA and US Department of Health & Human Services released the 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA), focused on more *real foods* and less processed foods (USDA, 2026). It is no doubt big change was needed, as we have witnessed increased rates of obesity, Type II diabetes, cancer, inflammation and other issues that could be prevented or decreased with dietary changes. To better reveal the changes made, photos of previous Dietary Guidelines for Americans are shown below with links for more information:



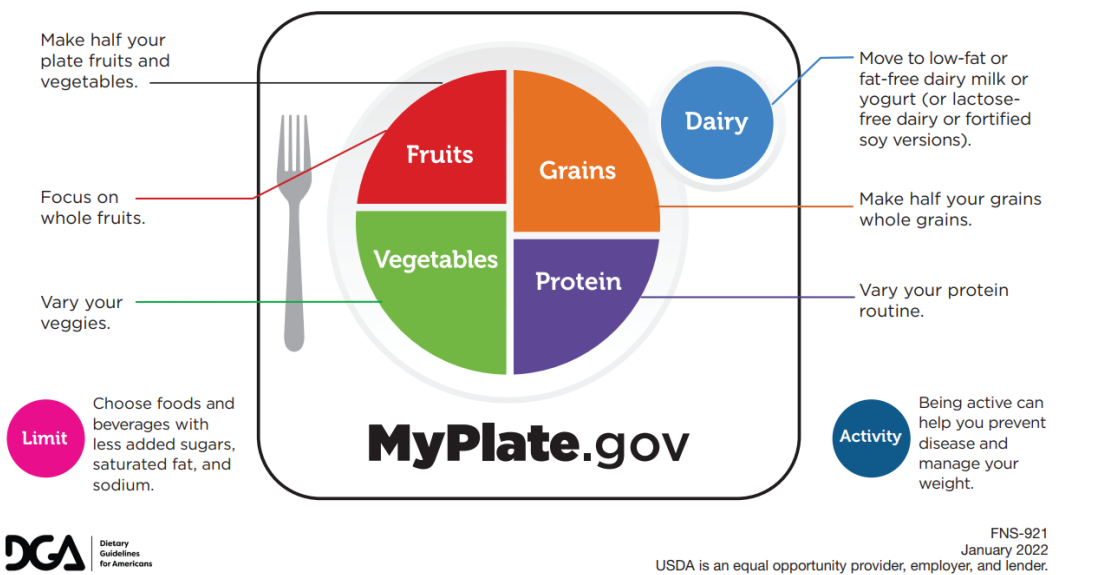
Picture Description: 1992 Food Guide Pyramid



Picture Description: 2005 MyPyramid Food Guidance System



Picture Description: 2011 MyPlate



Picture Description: 2020 MyPlate

And now, the 2025-2030 Guidelines include the pyramid again, but flipped!

Eat Real Food



Picture Description: The Eat Read Food inverted pyramid

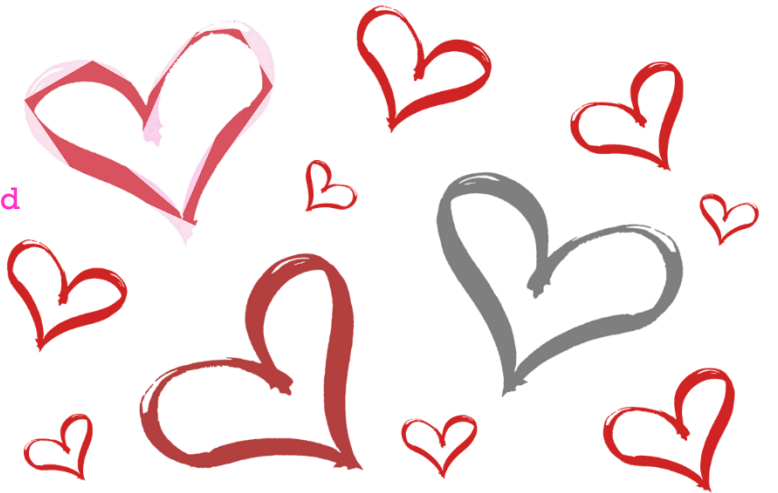
- Besides the former pyramid being flipped, what do the new guidelines entail? (USDA, 2026):
- 1. Eat What You Need:** It is recommended daily caloric intake match each individual's needs, based on age, height, weight, sex and physical activity.
 - 2. Portion Sizes & Hydration:** Pay attention to portion sizes, especially for high calorie foods and beverages, and hydrate! Hydration should come from water (still or sparkling) and unsweetened fluids.
 - 3. Prioritize Protein Every Meal:** Aim for 1.2 – 1.6 grams of kilogram of body weight, per day, and adjust based on individual needs (physical activity, breastfeeding, etc.). A variety of protein sources are recommended, including animal and plant-based sources (eggs, seafood, nuts, beans, soy, red meat, poultry, etc.) with little to no refined carbohydrates, starches, sugar or chemicals.
 - 4. Dairy:** Full fat dairy is actually recommended, likely because it is easier to find without added sugar, it often has less naturally-occurring lactose (type of sugar), and it retains more healthy fats, vitamins and minerals desired from dairy. Three servings of dairy are recommended, per day when eating 2,000 calories, but the amount may be adjusted based on caloric needs.

- 5. **Fruits & Vegetables:** Three servings of vegetables and two servings of fruit are recommended per day, to be eaten throughout the day. Whole fruits and vegetables are preferred without added sugar and limited, or no, processing. If fruit/vegetable juice is consumed, it’s recommended to dilute it with water (I recommend unsweetened sparkling water with a little juice, if you really want juice). For processed options (frozen, dried, canned, etc.), seek those with little to no added sugars.
- 6. **Eat Healthy Fats:** It is recommended healthy fats, found in whole foods, like eggs, meat, poultry, seafood, nuts, seeds, full fat dairy, olives and avocados, be incorporated. These can include added fats when cooking, like olive oil, beef tallow and butter (keep smoke points in mind...for example, butter and avocado oils can be cooked at higher temperatures than olive oil). It is still recommended we limit saturated fats to 10% per day or less. Saturated fats should decrease by limiting or avoiding highly processed foods.
- 7. **Whole Grains:** Eat fiber-rich whole grains and decrease highly processed and refined carbohydrates significantly! Two to four servings of whole grains are recommended per day, adjusting for caloric needs. Examples of processed, refined carbohydrates to decrease include white bread, pre-packaged breakfast foods, flour tortillas and crackers.
- 8. **Limit Highly Processed Foods, Added Sugars & Refined Carbohydrates:** Processed foods and added sugars were mentioned above, and they can be limited by simply checking labels and eating whole, real foods instead. Refined carbohydrates are those that have lost fiber and nutrients due to processing and likely to result in quick blood sugar increases and decreases, often causing fatigue, weight gain and insulin resistance.
- 9. **Limit Alcohol:** Less is best regarding alcohol, and some should completely avoid it, including pregnant women, those recovering from alcohol addiction/issues, and people taking medications that are affected with alcohol consumption.

Another change in the new guidelines is sodium recommendations. Guidelines recognize sodium and electrolytes as essential for hydration, but most people (14 years old and above) need to limit it to 2,300 mg/day (Recommended sodium intake is lower for those younger than 14 years old). However, those who are very physically active may need more. And, avoiding highly processed foods that are high in sodium, as recommended, should decrease sodium intake a lot (USDA, 2026)!

The MIND diet and 2025-2030 Guidelines for Americans have a lot in common. Primary differences between the MIND diet and the 2026-2030 Guidelines for Americans include DGA’s recommendations for red meat, butter and cheese versus the MIND Diet considering these foods unhealthy for brain health. Red meat, butter and cheese are high in saturated fats and both DGA guidelines and the MIND diet acknowledge that saturated fats should be limited. Overall, nutrition trends are moving in a good direction with hopes to decrease rates of chronic disease, obesity and cognitive decline. A good diet is one way to improve overall wellness, increase energy, and help us feel better physically and mentally.

KSC Fitness and HEWP wish you a happy and healthier New Year!



References

Morris, M., Tangney, C., Wang, Y., Sacks, F., Barnes, L., Bennett, D., & Aggarwal, N. (2016, September 1). *MIND diet slows cognitive decline with aging*. Retrieved from National Library of Medicine: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4581900/#S15>

Realfood.gov. (2025). *Real Food Starts Here*. Retrieved from realfood.gov: <https://realfood.gov/#resources>

USDA. (2026). *Dietary Guidelines For Americans*. 10.