

Balancing Nutrition

To balance ENERGY IN, choose foods that will help you and your family maintain a healthy weight and provide the nutrients they need while keeping their calories under control. This can be easy if you keep in mind that calories DO count, no matter what kind of food or drink they come from. The trick is to find balance between food (ENERGY IN) and physical activity (ENERGY OUT). Important things to remember when balancing ENERGY IN are:

- Food Choices: Choose foods that are low to moderate in fat and calories
- Portion Size: Enjoy small portions at home and in restaurants
- Calories: Understand that calories count, no matter the source

Think about food choices. An easy way to eat foods lower in fat and calories is to think in terms of [GO, SLOW, and WHOA foods](#). GO foods are great anytime, SLOW foods are all right to have sometimes or less often, and WHOA foods should be eaten only once in a while, or on special occasions.

Think about portion size. Balancing your family's ENERGY IN is challenging because average portion sizes of foods served at restaurants and home or purchased in convenience stores have grown over the past 20 years. Learn about the difference between a [portion and a serving](#).

Think differently about calories, fat and sugar. Remember that energy balance begins with the understanding that calories count, no matter the source. [Read more about calories](#).

Food Intake Guidelines and the Nutrition Facts Label

The [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) has been published jointly every 5 years since 1980 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The Guidelines provide advice for people two years and older about how good dietary habits can promote health and reduce risk for major chronic diseases. They serve as the basis for Federal food and nutrition education programs.

The *Dietary Guidelines* contain [two sample eating plans](#) for you to consider:

- USDA Food Guide
- Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) Eating Plan

Either plan can serve as a guide to help you and your family get the nutrients you need, stay in energy balance, and maintain a healthy weight.

Most packaged foods have a [Nutrition Facts Label](#). The label can help you and your family choose foods that are lower in calories and fat.

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