



The Dietary Guidelines for Americans are the cornerstone of Federal nutrition policy and nutrition education activities. The Dietary Guidelines are jointly issued and updated every 5 years by the Departments of Agriculture (USDA) and Health and Human Services (HHS). They provide authoritative advice for people two years and older about how good dietary habits can promote health and reduce risk for major chronic diseases. The 2005 Dietary Guidelines remain the current guidance until the 2010 Dietary Guidelines are released in December 2010. The 2005 Dietary Guidelines include alcohol in moderation in adults 21 years of age and older. Alcohol in moderation is defined as two drinks daily for men and one drink daily for women. One drink equals 12 fl. oz. of regular beer, 5 fl. oz. of 12% alcohol wine, or 1.5 fl. oz. of distilled spirits.

The evidence-based analysis of the science formed the basis for 9 major Dietary Guidelines messages that resulted in the 41 Key Recommendations, of which 23 were for the general public and 18 were for special population groups.

On June 15, 2010, a Federal Register notice announced the release of the Report of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010. The last meeting of the 2010 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee was on May 12, 2010. Public written comments were accepted from June 15, 2010 – July 15, 2010 and oral comments were accepted at a meeting on July 8, 2010.

Within the report, excessive alcohol consumption is noted to cause liver cirrhosis, hypertension, cancers of the gastrointestinal tract, injuries, and violence. Moderate alcohol consumption was noted to have prevented an estimated 26,000 deaths due to reductions in heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

Evidence since the 2005 guidelines were published show a dose response relationship between alcohol and breast cancer and alcohol and colon cancer. In moderate consumers of alcohol, there is an increased risk of liver cancer, decrease risk of diabetes, modulation of blood sugar control in diabetics, decrease risk of total stroke, ischemic and hemorrhagic stroke, and no increase risk of hypertension. Amongst heavy consumers, poor metabolic control in diabetics and increased risks of total stroke, and hypertension have been shown. The “J-curve” showing a decrease in mortality with moderate alcohol consumption and an increase in mortality with heavy consumers was reiterated.

The committee is recommending patterns of alcohol consumption meaning a per week or per month metric in lieu of a daily amount. You can view the chapter on alcohol at:

<http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/Publications/DietaryGuidelines/2010/DGAC/Report/D-7-Alcohol.pdf>
or simply go to:

<http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/DGAs2010-DGACReport.htm> to read the entire report.

The Guidelines policy document is due for release to the public by December 2010. A consumer-focused outreach campaign to broadly publicize Guidelines-related educational materials is being planned for Spring 2011.