

## **The Dietary Guidelines Alliance**

### **Mission, History and Current Activities**

#### **Mission**

The Dietary Guidelines Alliance is a private-public partnership among leading food, nutrition and health organizations and societies, food industry organizations and the government, dedicated to providing consumers with science-based, practical advice on how to apply the Dietary Guidelines for Americans to their lives.

The mission of the Alliance is to provide positive, simple and consistent messages to help consumers achieve healthy, active lifestyles. The Alliance's strengths are its commitment to a consumer-focused research program and its network of partners for carrying the mission.

#### **Members of the 2012 Dietary Guidelines Alliance**

- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
- American Society for Nutrition
- Food Marketing Institute
- Grain Foods Foundation
- Grocery Manufacturers Association
- International Food Information Council
- Institute of Food Technologists
- The Beef Checkoff
- National Dairy Council
- National Pork Board
- National Restaurant Association
- Produce for Better Health Foundation
- Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior
- The Sugar Association
- Wheat Foods Council

#### **In Liaison With:**

- United States Department of Agriculture
  - Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion
  - National Institute of Food and Agriculture
- United States Department of Health and Human Services
  - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  - Food and Drug Administration
  - National Institutes of Health
  - Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
  - President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition

#### **History**

Early in the formation of the Alliance, a memorandum of understanding was signed by the founding members, including the International Food Information Council, Food Marketing Institute, The Beef Checkoff through the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and the United States Department of Agriculture Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, outlining the purpose and mission of this partnership. Additional members were added to represent the food groups as well as food and nutrition communicators working in the field.

In 1996, the Dietary Guidelines Alliance launched the It's All About You campaign in order to build nutrition message platforms that consumers could understand and use to positively affect their health. Five core messages were developed after extensive qualitative research conducted with consumers. The purpose of these messages was to motivate Americans into rethinking and changing their eating and activity routines. Each message was accompanied by simple, action-oriented tips, which provide easy and manageable ways for consumers to change their behaviors.

In 1999, the Alliance introduced the It's All About You Nutrition Communicator's Tool Kit, which built upon the nutrition message platforms developed by the Alliance's original It's All About You campaign. The Tool Kit provided food and nutrition communicators with a powerful teaching tool to help them convey positive, simple and consistent nutrition and health messages to consumers. The components of the Tool Kit were extensively pilot tested with health professionals and consumers.

In 2002, the Alliance identified portion size and dietary fats (saturated fats and trans fats) as priorities for consumer message development. Given the growing concern with obesity, energy balance emerged as a main priority of the partnership. Consumer research on energy balance messaging was conducted in 2004.

In 2005, the sixth edition of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and *MyPyramid* food guidance system were released. Subsequently, the Tool Kit was evaluated and updated based on the new science and dietary guidance. In 2006, the materials were tested with dietitian and consumer audiences to ensure relevance.

### **Helping Families to Lead a Healthier Lifestyle in 2011 and Beyond**

In 2010, the Alliance reconvened and determined that additional consumer research was needed to help Americans achieve a healthy weight and active lifestyle. Research was initiated to assess Americans' current knowledge and attitudes regarding critical diet and health topics discussed by the 2010 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee.

The Alliance identified the following priorities for consumer message development and evaluation, focusing primarily on parents with children 2-17 years of age:

- Achieving energy balance (contribution of calories in and out, including physical activity);
- Recognizing the impact of portion size on calorie intake;
- Meeting nutrient recommendations/making nutrient-rich choices within the context of personal calorie needs; and
- Managing higher-calorie food and beverage choices within the context of personal calorie needs.

The Alliance completed a three-phase research project including ethnographies, focus groups and a quantitative, message-testing Web survey. The Alliance released the research results in December 2010 and continues broadly share the findings with multiple food and nutrition communicators, including journalists. In addition, the Alliance is developing a manuscript to publish the findings in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (JAND)*.

In 2011, the 2010 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and *MyPlate* food guidance system were released. In 2012, the USDA's SuperTracker, a free online tool designed to help Americans make healthful food and physical activity choices, was released. Alliance consumer insights and expertise will continue be used to develop additional concept communications that are consistent with the *Guidelines* and inspire action toward a healthy, active lifestyle.