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July 19, 2004

Food Guide Pyramid Reassessment Team
USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 1034
Alexandria, VA 22302

Dear Team Members,

I am writing to urge you to consider the effects that the old pyramid has had on my generation of Type 2 diabetics.

Having been born into a family where all the adults on both sides (all four grandparents, aunts and uncles, brother and most cousins) have, or died from the complications of, Type 2 diabetes, I expected that I would also eventually show the disease. I had gestational diabetes and was moderately overweight most of my adult life. As I reached 50, my physician became insistent on treatment with oral antidiabetics, one of which was later taken off the market. I thought long and hard about the rationale of taking medications while eating the high fiber, low fat diet I had been on (lots of oatmeal and pasta) and analyzed the rationales as tightly as I would if I were sitting on a dissertation committee of someone studying the problem.

My conclusion was that it made no sense to eat foods that required medications to counter their effects on my blood sugar. I was concerned about fats too, since my cholesterol levels required medication too, but I decided to try eating a low carbohydrate diet. I stayed below about 30 grams per day, primarily from vegetables and nuts, and over the first few weeks dropped some weight and showed normal fasting blood sugars. My physician scoffed at these results and I found a new physician, an endocrinologist at a major university hospital with research experience. Since then I have maintained my normal blood sugars (I stay under 50 grams of carbohydrate per day, mostly from vegetables, berries and some nuts) and have experienced the bonuses of returning to my teenage weight (I am 58) with excellent blood fats. (With the new recommendations for 70 for LDL, I am taking 10 mg of Lipitor a day instead of the 40 I once needed, with better results.) I am deeply saddened by seeing my friends and family who follow their misguided physicians continue to deteriorate, however I am heartened by seeing those who give up the old pyramid thrive by eliminating the grains they once thought they could never give up.

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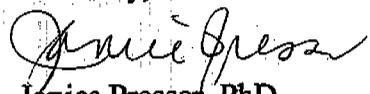
Toll free:

TGI is a professional services company and innovator in assessment, strategic planning and training.

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Our company designs assessments and training programs to change behavioral outcomes. We would be happy to discuss with you how to approach this growing national health problem.

Sincerely,



Janice Presser, PhD
President & CEO

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To whom it may concern:

Over three years ago, when I incurred a severe bout of bronchitis, I felt tired and dragged-out. Once, when my brother-in-law's mother sent over some meatballs, I perked up within five minutes of eating them. Since then, I've made red meat a centerpiece of my diet. I replaced my lunch of chicken, rice, and vegetables, with a half-pound hamburger with lettuce, tomato, and onions. Not only did I maintain the 10-pound weight loss I incurred during bronchitis, I went on to lose another 10+ pounds without even intending to do so, the only time in my life in which I've lost this much weight without even trying. So far, I've maintained the weight loss.

I think there might be three reasons that red meat has contributed to my weight loss and maintenance:

- 1) It satisfies my hunger for up to six hours. I may be eating less than before without even being aware of it and without going hungry.
- 2) It diminishes my taste for sweets significantly. It may be that I don't have a sweet tooth as much as I have a fat tooth, a taste for fat. Once my taste for fat is satisfied, I feel less of a craving, if any at all, for sweets.
- 3) It gives me a long-lasting surge of energy: I want to go out and exercise.

You currently recommend only *two to three servings total* of meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, and nuts. Perhaps more than that is beneficial. You might consider recommending red meat as a dietary staple, at least for some people. It's possible that not everyone will thrive on red meat as I have, because no two people, not even twins, react exactly the same way to food. Nevertheless, such a recommendation may prove to be helpful for some. In addition to the half pound of red meat for lunch, I eat three eggs daily, in all getting a hunger-satisfying amount of protein and fat. Traditionally, Americans started off their day with bacon and eggs or sausage and eggs. It wasn't until the twentieth century that people switched to toast, cereal, and fruit juice for breakfast. It also wasn't until the twentieth century that the number and size of fat people in America increased significantly. There may be various reasons for this - ready availability of food, less exercise, etc. Nevertheless, the change in breakfast from protein and fat to carbohydrates may also be a significant factor. Which meal would satisfy your hunger longer and give you a longer-lasting surge of energy - bacon and eggs, or toast, cereal, and fruit juice?

Second, the recommendation to eat *six to eleven servings* of grain, especially in contrast to the *much smaller recommendation* for the high-protein-and-fat group mentioned above, is irresponsible and fattening. Some nutritionists now claim that by a serving of grain, they meant half a bagel, that the problem lay not with their recommendation but, rather, with the public's misunderstanding of their use of the word "serving". But if that's the case, then what did they mean by a serving of red meat, fish, poultry, eggs, nuts or beans? And why did they put grains at the base of the pyramid, while placing the red-meat-etc. group much higher up, near the apex of the pyramid, just below fats, oils, and sweets? Clearly, they recommended a disproportionately high amount of grains and a disproportionately small amount of the red-meat-etc. group, a recipe for weight gain for a number of people.

People may become fat eating like that, unless they eat that much less of something else, possibly shortchanging themselves nutritionally, or unless they exercise that much more, or unless they're exceptions to the rule, the kind of people who can eat as much as they want of any food and still stay slim. Consider this: lions, tigers, cheetahs, leopards and jaguars all eat red meat. Cows eat grain. Who would you rather look like? A better recommendation is three to four servings of grain.

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Third, you currently recommend eating butter and oils sparingly. Actually, such foods, in moderation, may be good for you, may satisfy your taste buds and hunger, and, if my theory noted above is correct, may diminish your cravings for sweets. A better recommendation is to eat refined sugar sparingly, a recommendation that you do make. If you still struggle with your weight, however, perhaps you should also cut down on sugar that exists in nature, including the sugar present in fruit and fruit juice. You currently recommend *two to four servings* of fruit. A recommendation of one to two servings may be wiser for some people, especially in light of the fact that you also recommend *three to five servings* of vegetables. How much fruit did our ancestors eat? Probably not two to four servings of fruit daily. It is more likely that they relied on vegetables for vitamin C and other nutrients and ate fruit sparingly. A change from that to significantly more fruit may be more than some bodies can handle. I myself have found that if I eat more than one piece of fruit a day during the week and two pieces of fruit a day over the weekend, I end up struggling with my weight. The same may be true of some others.

Fourth, you recommend *three to five servings* of vegetables, without making any distinction between low-calorie, low-carbohydrate vegetables such as lettuce, tomatoes, onions, salad greens, and cabbage on the one hand and higher-calorie, high-carbohydrate potatoes on the other hand. Do you mean to imply that the two are equal? They're not. For me, the former is slenderizing; the other, fattening. While the occasional potato may not necessarily contribute to weight gain, the Food Guide Pyramid, by making no distinction between the two groups of vegetables, currently allows for as many as 3 to five servings of potatoes daily, which *can* put on the weight in some people (unless, as noted above in the paragraph on grains, they eat that much less of something else, again possibly shortchanging themselves nutritionally, or unless they exercise that much more, or unless they're genetically slim, the kind of people who can eat as much as they want to of any food and still remain thin). A better recommendation might be to add the specification that if people are struggling with their weight, they try eating potatoes only occasionally or sparingly. In other words, for weight control, eat more of the crucifer vegetables and less of the tubers! Some years ago, when I used to eat a baked potato with broccoli and cheese for lunch at 1:00 to 1:30 p.m., I'd be painfully hungry only two-and-a-half hours later, at 4:00 p.m. In contrast, my current lunch of a half-pound burger keeps me pleasantly, comfortably full until 7:30 p.m., too full to eat a potato!

Fifth, water should be at the base of the pyramid. It is the single greatest nutritional need we have. Water, when if you've had sufficient food to eat, can help you feel full, in addition to providing many other benefits.

Sixth, the Food Guide Pyramid is a low-fat, high-carbohydrate diet. This is not a diet that has worked for me, anymore than it appears to have worked for a number of other people; on the contrary, it worked against me. Instead, I've discovered what works best for me is to eat a hunger-satisfying amount of protein and fat, along with a limited amount of unrefined carbohydrates. Perhaps the basic low-fat, high-carbohydrate philosophy of the food pyramid should be rethought.

Seventh, there is no one set of dietary guidelines that will work for *everyone*. A food pyramid should be accompanied by the recommendation that people discover, through trial and error, what works best for them as individuals.

With these changes, there may be less of a basis for the joke that Jay Leno made in his monologue last week: "The Food Guide Pyramid isn't working. More and more people are looking like pyramids."

Yours truly,

Batya Jundef

Batya Jundef

S. Euclid, OH

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JUL 21 2004



Shellie Metz

Newport, M.

Food Guide Pyramid Reassessment Team
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3101 Park Center Drive, Room 1034
Alexandria, VA 22302

July 17, 2004

Dear Reassessment Team:

Thank you for opening your reassessment of the food pyramid to the public. I would like to take the opportunity to share my ideas about nutrition education with you. Enclosed please find a rough sketch of the way I see the "Food Pyramid". If you like the direction of my ideas, please let me know. I have many other educational ideas related to nutritional education of the public.

Thank you for the opportunity.

Sincerely,


Shellie Metz

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Bread, cereal, rice +
pasta

meat

Dairy

fruit

Vegetable

oil
fat
processed
fast
foods

The
Nourishment
Tree

Shellie Metz

WATER

H₂O

WATER

