
STATEMENT

related to the update of the French Nutrition and Health Programme's dietary guidelines for adults for the period 2017-2021

16 February 2017

The High Council for Public Health (HCPH) received a written request from the Directorate-General for Health (DGH) dated 16 July 2015 regarding an update of the French Nutrition and Health Programme (FNHP4)'s dietary guidelines for adults for the period 2017-2021. The objectives of this request were reprised in a more general referral, dated 22 July 2016, which also entrusted the HCPH with the formulation of objectives and recommendations for the elaboration of FNHP4. The request by the DGH necessitates a response in two steps, with the first step relating to the update of the FNHP guidelines.

In response to the request by the Director-General for Health, the HCPH considered the following elements in the process of elaborating the new guidelines for food consumption for adults:

- the report provided by the ANSES (French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety) [1] on the update of FNHP food consumption guidelines for adults, in particular the results obtained with the optimisation tool developed by ANSES and tested in different scenarios;
- data from supplementary ANSES reports on the development of dietary references [2] and on the link between the consumption of different food groups and risk of chronic non-communicable diseases [3] ;
- hearings of experts in the field of nutrition;
- documents on dietary guidelines and nutritional recommendations existing at the national level in other western countries [4] : United States [5], Canada, The Netherlands [6], Iceland, Denmark [7], Finland [8], Germany, The United Kingdom [9], Switzerland. The most recently updated Guidelines (i.e. after 2012) were high-prioritied;
- results of general population studies on the understanding, knowledge, and also acceptability of existing dietary guidelines, studies carried out by Santé Publique France (the French Agency for Public Health) during the monitoring of FNHP.

The HCPH made the following choices:

- to maintain consistency between the current dietary guidelines and the new ones, provided that these remain relevant based on the studied documents and the information collected;
- to place the public health analysis of the epidemiological links between consumption of different foods and risk of chronic non-communicable diseases at the heart of the considerations enabling the definition of new dietary guidelines.
- to complete the guideline definitions by ensuring their consistency with the results of the different scenarios tested using the ANSES optimisation tool;
- and to pay particular attention to the convergence of nutritional and environmental aspects of food while finalising the dietary guidelines.

All in all, the HCPH has set the objectives of defining new dietary guidelines for adults and of supplying additional information necessary for the elaboration of messages, the formulation of which shall be finalised by Santé Publique France for subsequent use in various communication materials.

The HCPH recalls the essential aspects that must be taken into consideration by the future communication of dietary guidelines

- In keeping with the spirit of the FNHP, the “FNHP dietary guidelines” are quantitative and qualitative indicators for consumption of various food groups, intended to be made available to the general public and to professionals.

It appears vital that the notion of “guidelines” be kept, rather than “recommendations”, in order to ensure a better potential for understanding and adoption, and to minimise their perception as moralising or regulatory injunctions. Therefore, the approach taken is to provide advice in the form of “guidelines” to work towards and not normative standards that must be met by all, and at all cost.

- Communication must also ensure that the entire population is taken into consideration, and in particular groups experiencing serious economic difficulties.
- The final messages must be formulated in a manner that takes into account the notions of pleasure, conviviality, and the multiculturalism of the act of eating.
- Portion sizes and graphics which have meaning for the general population will need to be thought of with precision and adapted to food groups and foodstuffs during the development of communication tools.

The HCPH relied on the following elements in modifying the perimeter of some of the 8 food groups subject to current recommendations and to add new guidelines:

- Food groups and their respective perimeters are set when scientific data justify the creation of a guideline. Under such circumstances, no limit has been set for the total number of food groups provided that a scientific or public health reason exists.
- However, some foodstuffs or food groups are not subject to specific recommendations due to the fact that no scientific argument supports the creation of a guideline or a

specific limit for consumption. These can be consumed as long as such consumption is not an obstacle to respecting the other consumption guidelines.

- For each food group identified, and whenever supported by public health and scientific data, a main guideline has been set that corresponds, whenever possible, to a consumption frequency; otherwise a desired evolution in terms of consumption has been noted.
- Supplementary data are provided in addition to each main guideline, providing information that should be detailed in the final formulation of the messages or in the communication regarding the respective guideline. Thus, on a case-by-case basis, there can be found common examples of foods (which are more easily understood by the general public than are dietary formulations), portion sizes, information on consumption dynamics, food group components, any potential consumption limits, consideration of contaminants, the notion of sustainability, the method of consumption or preparation, use, etc.

The HCPH recommends the following dietary guidelines:

Food group	Main guideline	Additional data
Fruit and vegetables	At least 5 per day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⤴ The recommended portion size is 80 to 100g ⤴ It is recommended that consumption is increased, regardless of the initial level of consumption ⤴ No more than one glass of fruit juice per day, which can count as one portion of fruit and vegetables. Opt for freshly squeezed fruit ⤴ Dried fruit can also count towards fruit consumption. However, their consumption should be limited, and should not occur outside meals ⤴ All forms of fruit and vegetables are taken into consideration: fresh, frozen or canned. For canned fruit, opt for fruit preserved in light syrup, without consuming the syrup <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⤴ Favour fruit and vegetables that have been grown using production methods that reduce exposure to pesticides (as a precautionary principle).
Nuts without added salt Almonds, walnuts, peanuts, pistachios	A small handful per day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⤴ This food group contains many allergens, the consumption of which is not recommended for individuals with known allergies
Legumes Lentils, chickpeas, beans...	At least twice a week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⤴ Favour legumes that have been grown using production methods that reduce exposure to pesticides (as a precautionary principle). ⤴ Legumes can also be considered as substitutes for meat and poultry.
Wholegrain and unrefined cereal products Bread, pasta, rice and other non or minimally refined cereal products*	To be consumed every day, with a preference for non or minimally refined products over refined products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⤴ Favour cereals that have been grown using production methods that reduce exposure to pesticides (as a precautionary principle). ⤴ Only wholegrain unsweetened breakfast cereals can be included in this group

Food group	Main guideline	Additional data
Dairy products Milk, yoghurt, cheese and dairy products contained in cooked products	2 dairy products per day	The recommended portion sizes are: 150ml for milk, 125g for yoghurt, 30g for cheese The number of dairy products can be increased to three per day when portion sizes are reduced Opt for cheeses that are rich in calcium and low in fat Given the risks related to contaminant exposure, ensure a variety of dairy products consumed
Meat and poultry	Limit the consumption of red meat* and opt for poultry * <i>beef, pork, veal, mutton, goat meat, horsemeat, wild boar, venison</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ For red meat consumers, limit consumption to a maximum of 500g per week
Fish and seafood	Twice a week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Including one oily fish ▲ Vary species and sources (in particular for consumers of large quantities of these products), to limit exposure to contaminants
processed meat	Limit consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ For processed meat consumers, do not consume more than 150g per week ▲ Favour cooked ham
Added fats	Avoid excessive consumption Opt for rapeseed oil, walnut oil (high in ALA) and olive oil, without increasing usual quantities of added fats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ In comparison to oils low in ALA (including sunflower oil, peanut oil) ▲ Animal oils and fats should be reserved for use in raw or spreadable form and should be used in limited amounts
Sugar/sweetened products	Limit consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Sweetened beverages belong to this group. ▲ Breakfast cereals are usually sweetened, or sweetened and fatty. ▲ Limit the consumption of sweetened and fatty foods (pastries, chocolate, milk-based desserts and ice cream)
Beverages	The only recommended beverage is water (without restrictions in quantity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Limit the consumption of sugary and sweet tasting drinks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Their ought to be consumed as an exception; for consumers - limit to one glass per day. In this product category, opt for fruit juices. ○ Artificially sweetened beverages present the advantage of not providing any calories in comparison to naturally-sweetened beverages, however, given that they maintain the taste for sugar, their consumption should be limited ▲ Tea (including herbal teas) and coffee, when not sweetened, can contribute towards water intake ▲ Alcohol: the consumption guideline has been set by Santé Publique France
Salt	Limit intake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Be vigilant regarding the cumulation throughout the day ▲ Salted foods and added salt: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Salted foods include foods that are high in salt and foods that are major vectors of salt intake (e.g. bread) ○ Limit adding salt during cooking and eating

Food group	Main guideline	Additional data
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Taste dishes before adding salt ○ Do not add salt when preparing canned products ▲ Use iodised salt
<p>Some foodstuffs or food groups are not the subject of specific recommendations (for example, potatoes, eggs or refined cereal products). For these foodstuffs or food groups, no scientific argument supports the creation of a guideline or a specific limit for consumption. Such foodstuffs or food groups can be consumed as long as their consumption is not an obstacle to respecting the other consumption guidelines.</p>		

In addition, the HCPH highlights the need for useful cross-sectional concepts, constituting general advice:

- Ensure that the day's food intake is overall as close to the guidelines as possible, without each meal being necessarily so. Whilst the consumption of some products should be limited (in terms of frequency and quantity of intake), such consumption should not be prohibited. Intake of such products can be included as part of a healthy diet.
- Opt for variety in all its forms: diversify the supply sources, procurement and product origins. These elements are important not only for nutritional balance but also in terms of limiting exposure to environmental contaminants and working towards food sustainability.
- Avoid excessive portions and intake. When occurring as an exception, excess eating is not liable to disrupt overall dietary balance.
- Take enough time to eat and enjoy meals.
- Avoid snacking and particularly the consumption in between meals of fatty, salty and sugary/sweetened products.
- To work towards sustainability in nutrition¹ in keeping with the consumption guidelines: opt for raw (unprocessed) food products, that are in season, rely on short supply chains² and environmentally-friendly production methods, i.e. with a restriction in inputs.
- Organic farming³ is a production method that limits inputs and, as such, is a means of minimising exposure to pesticides. However, it does not allow for the complete elimination of some contaminants that are present in the environment (heavy metals, dioxins, mycotoxins, organophosphate pesticides, etc.). Furthermore, recourse to organic products is supplementary to the main dietary guidelines, which contain priority criteria regarding food choice: for example, for fruit and vegetables, the dietary guideline is at least 5 per day, whether organic or not; if they come from organic farming, it is an added benefit. A fatty and/or sugary organic product is still a fatty and/or sugary product.
- Grilled or charbroiled products (using barbecue or toaster) should not be consumed on a regular basis. In any event, it is better to remove the burnt parts having been in contact with the flame, or that are too charred.

¹ Sustainable development = development that is economically efficient, socially fair and ecologically sustainable.

² Short supply chains: supply chains involving a limited number of economic operators, committed to local economic cooperation and development; these chains also imply close geographical and social ties among producers, processors and consumers.

³ Organic: certified agriculture, following the specifications of organic agriculture.

- Dietary supplements are not recommended unless medically prescribed, in particular for certain specific populations (pregnant women, infants, elderly people, people suffering from certain chronic diseases, etc.).
- Restrictive slimming diets should be avoided unless medically prescribed and, in any case, should be closely monitored by a health professional.

The Expert Committee on Health prevention, education and promotion held a meeting on 16 February 2017: 7 members out of 13 qualified members were present, no conflict of interest was noted, the text was approved by 7 voting members, 0 abstention, 0 votes against.

References

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