



American Society for Nutrition  
*Excellence in Nutrition Research and Practice*

**Testimony to the 2020 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee**  
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The American Society for Nutrition (ASN), a professional society with more than 7,000 members who advance excellence in nutrition research and practice, appreciates the opportunity to provide input to the 2020 DGAC.

ASN emphasizes the importance of the strength of the evidence to drive dietary guidance, particularly as all new recommendations are developed for ages birth to 24 months (B-24) and for women who are pregnant and/or lactating. Making B-24 recommendations that are practical to meet the needs of today's families and caregivers is vitally important, as is basing B-24 recommendations on the overall balance of scientific evidence. As the Committee looks at beverage consumption, recommendations regarding the importance of water consumption as part of healthy dietary patterns is of particular importance for these subgroups. We also urge the Committee to address the nutritional status of women prior to conception, as well as the different nutritional needs during pregnancy for age groups such as adolescence and advanced maternal age.

Of equal importance, the Committee should prioritize that practical, evidence-based nutrition guidance be established for the rapidly growing aging population. A recent U.S. Government Accountability Office report recommended that the 2025-2030 DGAs focus on the nutritional needs of older adults, but we shouldn't wait until then! Although modern medicine has increased the lifespan, the incidence of disease does not decrease as we age. Up to half of all older adults are at risk of malnutrition and nearly 25% of those in their 60s and older have sarcopenia. A continued focus on "shortfall" nutrients, such as dietary fiber, particularly for the aging population is important, as well as information on the various sources and practical ways Americans can fill these gaps.

Nutrition research provides the strength of the scientific evidence upon which answers to the DGAC's questions can be built. Therefore, ongoing and future nutrition research is of utmost importance to the development of the DGAs. Nutrition research will also help us investigate the important research needs and gaps identified by the DGAC. As a nation, we need continued support for the key national sources of dietary intake data, including NHANES, USDA's Economic Research Service reports, and the Dietary Reference Intakes, without which we could not sufficiently develop DGAs. A lack of dedicated support for nutrition research stifles both the development of the DGAs, as well as the next generation of nutrition scientists who will make up future DGACs. We encourage the DGAC to reference in its final report the importance and need for ongoing support for nutrition research and dietary intake data to continue to produce relevant DGAs. Thank you!