

- Eating customs

DIANE WEEKS, GLASGOW

WHAT IS A FOOD PYRAMID AND CAN IT HELP ME EAT A HEALTHY DIET?

The food pyramid is a visual representation of a balanced diet, illustrating the types and proportions of foods that contribute to overall health. Imagine a pyramid divided into sections, with each section representing a different food group. While the specific design can vary, a classic food pyramid typically includes the following categories from the base to the top:

BASE (GRAINS) The widest section at the bottom includes grains like bread, rice and pasta. These provide complex carbohydrates, a primary energy source. Whole grains are good for added fibre too.

SECOND LAYER (FRUIT AND VEG) Next come fruits and vegetables, rich in vitamins, minerals, fibre and antioxidants. Aim for a colourful variety to ensure a diverse range of nutrients and at least five portions every day.

THIRD LAYER (PROTEINS) This section includes proteins such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans and nuts.

Proteins are crucial for muscle maintenance, immune function and growth, and can help you stay fuller for longer.

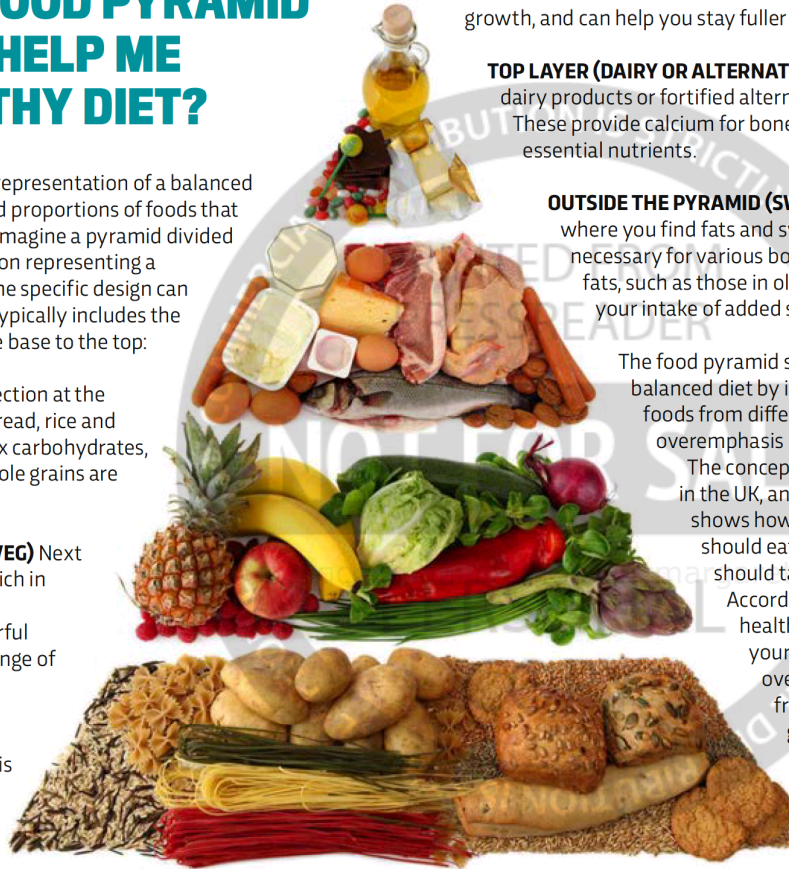
TOP LAYER (DAIRY OR ALTERNATIVES) This section represents dairy products or fortified alternatives, such as soy milk. These provide calcium for bone health and other essential nutrients.

OUTSIDE THE PYRAMID (SWEETS AND FATS) Here's where you find fats and sweets. While fats are necessary for various bodily functions, opt for healthy fats, such as those in olive oil and avocados. Limit your intake of added sugars and sweets.

The food pyramid serves as a guide to creating a balanced diet by incorporating a variety of foods from different groups, while preventing overemphasis on one category.

The concept has been shaped into a plate in the UK, and is called the Eatwell Guide. It shows how much of each food group you should eat based on how much space it should take up on your plate.

According to the Eatwell Guide, healthy eating means balancing your choices from five food groups over the day or week: one-third fruits and vegetables, one-third grains and starches, and the final third a mix of dairy products, proteins and fats, from both animal and plant sources. **NM**



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