



From the Nation's Doctor—Surgeon General, Dr. Richard H. Carmona

A Healthier Nation starts with a Healthier You.

One key to improving the health of our nation is to ensure individuals can access, understand, and use health-related information and services to make appropriate health decisions. Even the seemingly simple things we can do—such as eating healthy foods in healthy portions and being physically active every day—are sometimes difficult for us and our families. That is why the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) developed this book for all Americans.

This book about healthy eating and physical activity is based on the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans (Dietary Guidelines)* and is full of practical, useful information.

A Healthier You brings together nutrition science and expertise to help Americans make smart choices from every food group, find balance between food and physical activity, and get the most out of the calories we consume.

A Healthier You is also a one-stop, easy-to-use resource for:

- science-based nutrition and physical activity guidance
- ways to use food labels to make smart purchase decisions
- healthy eating plans and worksheets to track your progress
- nearly 100 heart-healthy recipes
- helpful Web sites and tips.

Small, simple steps can often prevent or control chronic health problems such as diabetes, obesity, asthma, cancer, heart disease, and stroke. Prevention includes healthy eating habits and regular physical activity.

The choices you make about prevention are vital—for you and your family. Remember to help the children in your life learn healthy habits. Every day, when you interact with kids, you have an opportunity to be a role model. That is why there is a chapter in ***A Healthier You*** that is specific to children's needs.

It's great to develop healthy habits early in life, but it's also never too late to start. At any age, at every stage of life, everyone can make healthier choices.

As a doctor, too often I see that when someone has a health scare, he or she will change health habits for the better. But why wait until you get sick? Any time is a good time to start. You'll have the health benefits for the rest of your life!

Some of our unhealthy choices are the result of family traditions or convenience. Sometimes, we make unhealthy trade-offs because of what culture teaches us or because we're trying to save time in our busy lives.

Again, it's up to family leaders and community leaders to be role models...by eating healthy foods in healthy portions and by being physically active each day.

The *Dietary Guidelines* are for all of us.

These guidelines have a unique purpose in our nation. Federal nutrition programs are based on the *Dietary Guidelines*. And the *Dietary Guidelines* are not just one person's idea of science or health—they are the "state of the science."

Top scientists and health experts across our nation have studied the science and determined what works when it comes to nutrition and physical activity. Science is the heart and soul of the *Dietary Guidelines*.

As the United States Surgeon General, my job is to protect and advance the health of the nation. It's a tremendous responsibility to help improve the well-being of the American people.

Many Americans are living longer, primarily because of advances in technology. We want those years to be fulfilling, quality years. The reality is that better individual health will lead to stronger, healthier communities and a stronger nation.

Today, the United States spends more on health care than any other nation in the world. More than 125 million Americans live with chronic health problems. Chronic diseases, which are largely preventable through attention to healthy lifestyles—good nutrition, physical activity, preventive screenings, and making healthy choices—and preventive care, are factors in 70 percent of deaths each year and account for 75 percent of our \$1.4 trillion in health care costs.

If current policies and conditions hold true, by the year 2011 our nation will spend over \$2.8 trillion each year on health care.

That is one reason why HHS, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, developed the *Dietary Guidelines*.

A Healthier You is all about feeling better today and staying healthy for tomorrow. As a doctor, husband, parent, and public servant, I know firsthand that staying healthy is important to us in everything that we do and in everything that we can be.

Remember, the health of our nation begins...with a Healthier You.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard H. Carmona". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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