

## ANH-Intl Feature: Re-thinking your food choices for 2015

ANH-Intl launches its 'Food4Health Plate' to help you live a longer and more healthful life



21 January 2015

You wouldn't be alone if you've decided 2015's going to be your year of upgrading the quality of your diet. Eating a healthy and balanced diet is key to improving the quality of your life, especially when coupled with regular physical activity and due attention to your emotional health, right? In this piece, we outline some of the reasons why government guidelines are simply not delivering, and why we felt compelled to produce, new for 2015, a guideline 'plate' that represents food group composition over a typical day.

### TOP FACTS

- If you want to start the year with a fresh and healthy approach to your diet, please read on
- We review some of the shortcomings of UK and US government guidelines
- We launch the ANH Food4Health Plate, taking into account some of the latest science and many years of input from clinical experience

Like all guidelines, government guidelines, like our own, are a crude yardstick. Different people's lifestyles and genetic make-up call for flexibility in any system of guidelines. They therefore should be seen as something of a starting point or a rough guide, not a 'bible'. Fine-tuning over time is generally needed, a process that can sometimes take years before you find your body's really singing! But, by contrast, getting your food composition into balance with your evolutionary heritage, avoiding damaged and ultra-processed foods, removing foods to which you're sensitive and reducing your dependence on refined carbs can deliver results that can often be felt in little more than a day.

### Government health warning

In 2010, the UK's Food Standards Agency (FSA) revised its [Eatwell Plate guidelines](http://collections.europarchive.org/tna/20100927130941/http://food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/public) (<http://collections.europarchive.org/tna/20100927130941/http://food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/public>). The guidelines are intended to help the average person "*eat a healthier diet*" which is intended to reduce their long-term risk of chronic diseases like obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease and cancer. You can find out more about the FSA's reasoning behind its guidelines by looking at its 2007 [nutrient and food based guidelines](http://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/multimedia/pdfs/nutrientinstitution.pdf) (<http://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/multimedia/pdfs/nutrientinstitution.pdf>).

It's no surprise that governments, faced with the same network of Big Food and Big Ag interests, end up with much the same advice the world over. That's why the [ChooseMyPlate](http://www.choosemyplate.gov) (<http://www.choosemyplate.gov>) guidance from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) is not far different to the UK guidelines.

What we do know is that government guidelines are doing little or nothing to buck the trend towards more obesity and other chronic diseases. Is that down to low levels of compliance, or is it because the guidelines are wrong? It's difficult to be categorically sure. But, interestingly, there is [surprisingly little evidence](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23665354) (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23665354>) that compliance with dietary guidelines will significantly affect the obesity crisis. This probably strengthens the notion that it's the guidelines that are defective, not so much public compliance.

For more background, we've [previously](http://anhinternational.org/news/anh-feature-uk-television-breaks-new-ground-with-'food-as-medicine'-concept) (<http://anhinternational.org/news/anh-feature-uk-television-breaks-new-ground-with-'food-as-medicine'-concept>) pointed out weaknesses in Western government recommendations.

## The need for new guidelines

It's of course coupling the most relevant published science with clinical experience that gives us the basis for making dietary recommendations. And that's where the integrative medicine sector, for want of a better name, is in a unique position to provide guidance. As far as we are aware, it is the only sector that is consistently having clinical success treating and preventing chronic disease using dietary interventions. It also routinely has success helping obese individuals to lose weight – and keep it off, even when they are so-called 'non-responders'. The sector is strongly plugged into, and plays a key role in, pushing forward the boundaries of nutritional science.

Clinical experience is the 'elephant in the room' of evidence-based medicine; decision-makers continue to ignore it, worshipping still at the altar of evidence-based medicine (EBM). That's despite clinical experience being central to the [original concept of EBM as proposed by Prof David Sackett](http://www.bmj.com/content/312/7023/71) (<http://www.bmj.com/content/312/7023/71>) and others back in the early 1990s, yet since then having been largely ignored.

## 'Ten Terrible Tips' in government guidelines

In our deliberations with integrative medicine practitioners and nutrition science researchers over the last decade and a half, along with our continual review of the literature, we have consistently had our attention brought to problems with government guidelines. We've selected the 10 biggest gripes or 'terrible tips' that are consistently raised:

1. Starchy carbs are massively over-recommended
2. The effect of food processing technologies and cooking on glycaemic load is generally ignored

3. Low-fat is still advocated, despite it often being linked to diets high in refined carbs and sugars
4. Grains (e.g., cereals, bread, pasta) are recommended as the primary source of energy, despite numerous problems, especially with wheat and gluten, ranging from coeliac disease ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coeliac\\_disease](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coeliac_disease)), leaky gut syndrome (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22109896>), non-coeliac gluten-sensitivity (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25470868>) and numerous other related gastro-intestinal and autoimmune conditions (<http://physrev.physiology.org/content/91/1/151>).
5. Helping individuals out of food addiction, especially the combined effect of sugar and particular fats, is not adequately taken into account. This issue was graphically illustrated by a BBC experiment on doctor twins (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-2546975/One-twin-gave-sugar-gave-fat-Their-experiment-change-YOUR-life.html>), Alexander and Chris and van Tulleken
6. There is inadequate emphasis placed on certain food groups, such as healthy fats and concentrated nutrients such as in herbs and spices
7. There is little or no consideration of meal/food frequency
8. There is little or no consideration of processing, preparation or cooking methods
9. There is no provision for supplements, despite evidence of their value in many sub-populations (e.g. Omega-3 fatty acids (<http://circ.ahajournals.org/content/106/21/2747.short>), vitamin D (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=Singh+Bonham+vitamin+D>), multivitamin/minerals (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12069675>), etc.)
10. Governments push dairy products to ensure sufficient calcium is consumed. Evidence shows that calcium is not normally deficient in the diet, but rather it is co-factors such as vitamin D, vitamin K2, magnesium and other nutrients that are in too short a supply. Humans did not evolve to consume large quantities of milk from other animals and lactase deficiency is exceedingly common in some populations, ranging from 45-100% in Latin-American populations (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/3155250>), to around 90% in Japanese (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/475426>).

On this basis, and to help you with your dietary goals for 2015, we have updated our own advice and release today the 'ANH Food4Health Plate'. It gives an approximate distribution of the percentage by weight of daily consumption of key food groups. However, our guidelines use a different system of categorisation of food groups compared with government guidelines. Critical to our health is the relative amounts and quality of macronutrients, as well as micronutrients, along with the state of these at the point they enter our bodies.

Alongside this, we have to consider meal frequency, and it is now widely recognised (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15809664>) that the snacking culture, that has made it a norm to eat energy-dense foods between meals, not only contributes to excess calories, but also promotes low-grade inflammation (<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=8444567&fileId=S0007114511005460>) that is at the basis of most chronic diseases. Fasting for 5 hours between meals, as proposed by the Metabolic Balance (<http://www.metabolic-balance.com/us/home.aspx>) programme, is achievable for most people, albeit requiring a bit of self-discipline in the early stages of becoming a 'non-snacker'.

Moving from becoming an energy-dense consumer, to a nutrient-dense consumer, is another part of the journey. As is becoming less dependent on simple carbohydrates as your source of fuel. Throughout most of our ancestral past, we have utilised fats as a primary energy source, and rapidly expanding scientific research (<http://anhinternational.org/news/translational-nutritional-nuggets>), showing the weight loss, health and endurance benefits of a ketogenic (high fat/protein, low carb) diet can no longer be ignored.

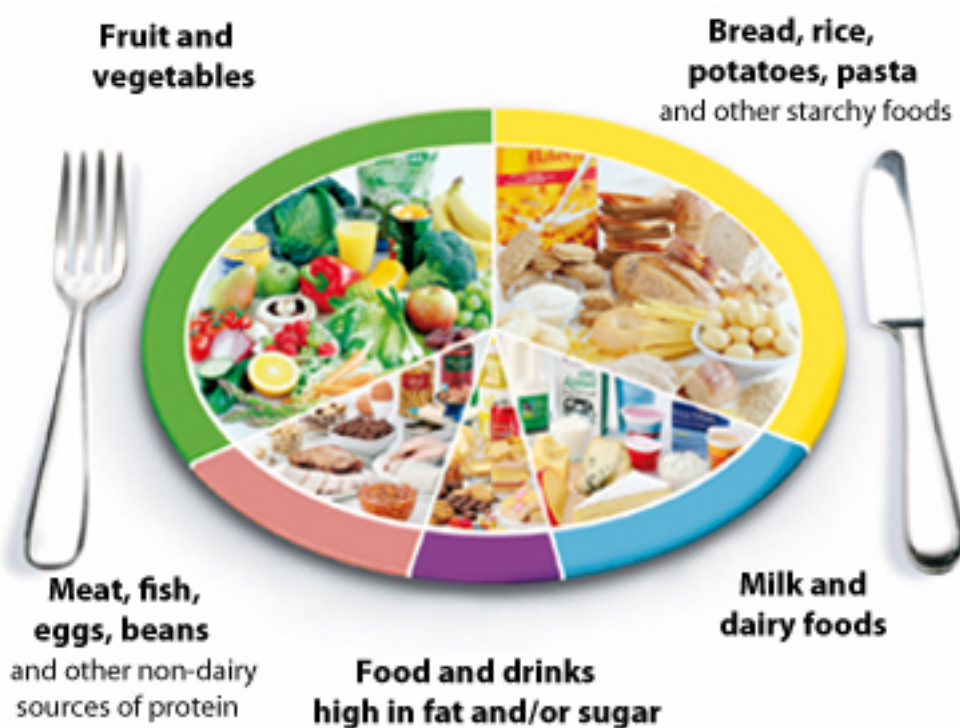
## Three guidelines: you choose

At ANH-Intl, we've always been great advocates of choice. Guidelines should allow choice and flexibility, especially to take into account huge differences between individuals in relation to their needs and genetics.

We therefore, offer you below, the UK's Eatwell Plate, the US ChooseMyPlate and now, the ANH Food4Health Plate.

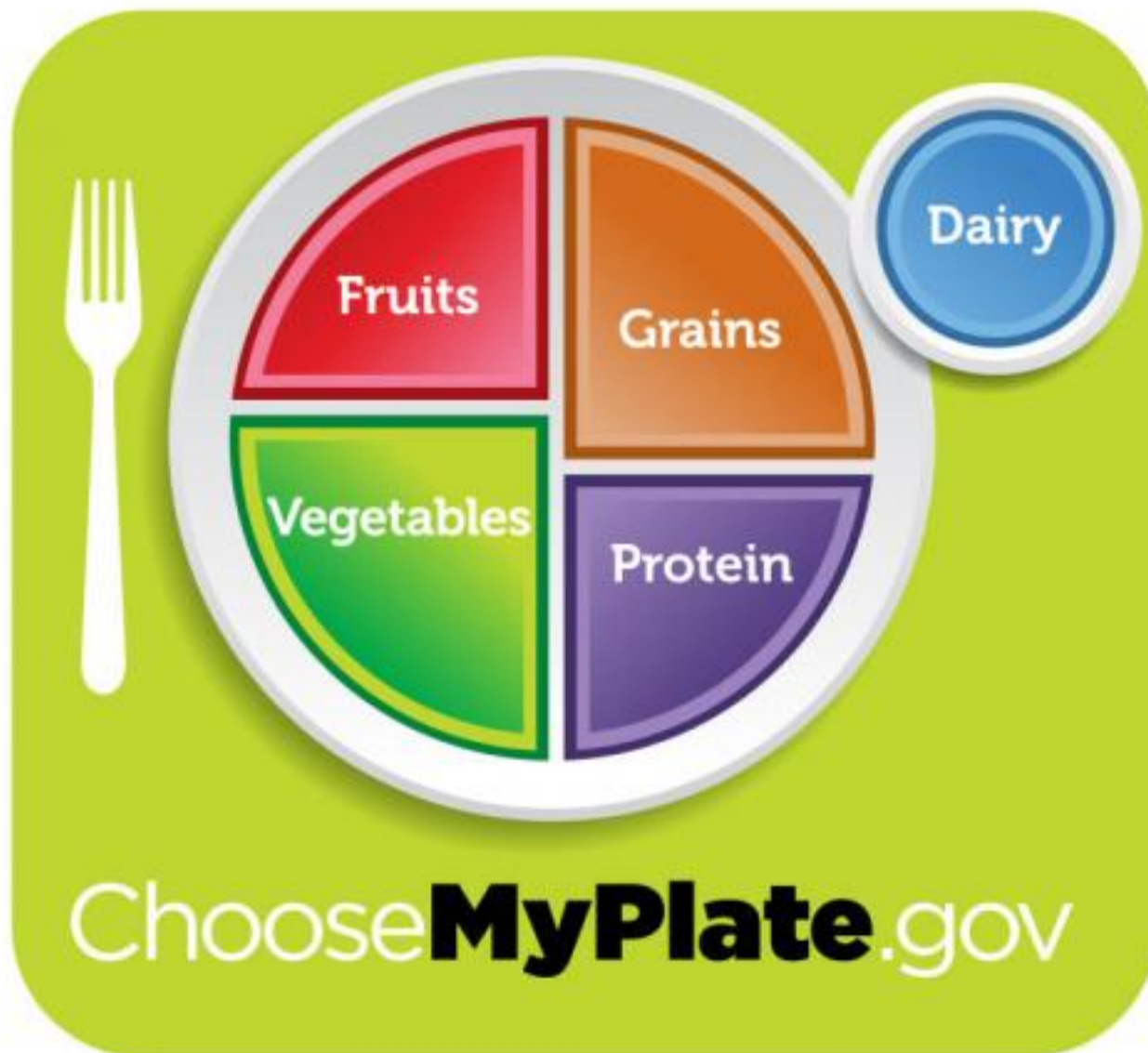
You choose, and not just the plate, but what's on it! And please give us your feedback by email (<mailto:info@anhinternational.org?subject=Food4Health%20Plate>).

## The UK Eatwell Plate



Source: The UK's Eatwell Plate. (<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/eatwell-plate.aspx>)

## The US ChooseMyPlate



Source: *USDA Choose My Plate* (<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/about.html>).

## The ANH-Intl Food4Health Plate

Download (<http://anhinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/160921-Food4Health-Guidelines-poster.pdf>), a PDF copy.

### End note: get physical, be mindful and rest properly

Nutrition is of course just one of the pillars of health and wellness. You shouldn't forget to exercise regularly and manage your emotional health.

Government guidelines on physical activity are a little less contentious than the food guidelines. Here's the [UK advice](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Pages/physical-activity-guidelines-for-adults.aspx) (<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Pages/physical-activity-guidelines-for-adults.aspx>), and the [US guidelines](http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/pdf/paguide.pdf) (<http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/pdf/paguide.pdf>).

Better than this, you can get consumer-friendly advice, monitoring and lots of background on how to get the best from all three of the major pillars of wellness: food, physical activity and rest, via our sister organisation, [Bite the Sun](http://www.bitethesun.org) (<http://www.bitethesun.org>).

Please help others to benefit from the ANH Food4Health guidelines and share this story widely.

**[A selection of key references supporting the ANH Food4Health guidelines.](http://anhinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/160921-Selected-references_Food4Health-guidelines-1.pdf)**  
([http://anhinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/160921-Selected-references\\_Food4Health-guidelines-1.pdf](http://anhinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/160921-Selected-references_Food4Health-guidelines-1.pdf))

Read:

8th April 2015 [ANH-Intl's four plate shoot-out \(http://anhinternational.org/news/anh-four-plate-shoot-out\)](http://anhinternational.org/news/anh-four-plate-shoot-out)

12th Feb 2015 [ANH-Intl Feature: Fuel efficiency and the Food4Health Plate \(http://anhinternational.org/news/anh-intl-feature-fuel-efficiency-and-the-food4health-plate\)](http://anhinternational.org/news/anh-intl-feature-fuel-efficiency-and-the-food4health-plate)

4th Feb 2015 [ANH Food4Health Plate: the starting point for metabolic flexibility \(http://anhinternational.org/ANH\\_Food4Health\\_Plate\\_the\\_starting\\_point\\_for\\_metabolic\\_flexibility\)](http://anhinternational.org/ANH_Food4Health_Plate_the_starting_point_for_metabolic_flexibility)

**[ANH-Europe Homepage](http://anhinternational.org)** (<http://anhinternational.org>)

## Comments

1.  **Barbara** (<http://www.barbarakarafokas.com>) says:

14 July 2016 at 3:33 pm (<http://anhinternational.org/2015/01/21/re-thinking-your-food-choices-for-2015/#comment-4936>)

Love the ANH Food4Health Plate. Do you have a pdf format of the poster so that we can share at schools and to Nutritionists that can share it with clients ?

[Reply \(http://anhinternational.org/2015/01/21/re-thinking-your-food-choices-for-2015/?replytocom=4936#respond\)](http://anhinternational.org/2015/01/21/re-thinking-your-food-choices-for-2015/?replytocom=4936#respond)

1.  **Susie Crone** says:

14 July 2016 at 4:27 pm (<http://anhinternational.org/2015/01/21/re-thinking-your-food-choices-for-2015/#comment-4937>)

Hi Barbara,

We are so glad to hear that you like it. We certainly do have a PDF version available. It can be found on the Food4Health campaign page:

<http://anhinternational.org/campaign/food4health/>

(<http://anhinternational.org/campaign/food4health/>) under the Food4Health plate and Food4Kids plate links at the top of the page.

I hope this is helpful.

All the best,

Susie

[Reply \(http://anhinternational.org/2015/01/21/re-thinking-your-food-choices-for-2015/?replytocom=4937#respond\)](http://anhinternational.org/2015/01/21/re-thinking-your-food-choices-for-2015/?replytocom=4937#respond)

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