

The Swiss Society for Nutrition's fully revised and updated Food Pyramid was published in its new form on 11th April. The pyramid is the result of one and a half years of preparatory work.

Project: 339

Pascale Mühlemann, SGE, Fachbereich Ernährungswissenschaft, Bern
Paolo Colombani, ETH, Ernährungsbiologie

Work on the revision of the food pyramid began in the autumn of 2003. The first step was to call in an internal group of experts belonging to the Swiss Society for Nutrition (*Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Ernährung SGE*). This group first carried out a comprehensive discussion of the scientific need to revise the food pyramid which was published by the Swiss Association for Nutrition (*Schweizerische Vereinigung für Ernährung SVE*, renamed to SGE in 2004) in 1998. Following this discussion, the group worked out a set of basic scientific documents, in collaboration with ETH Zürich and the financial support of the Swiss Foundation for Nutrition Research, and also with various Swiss nutrition experts. These documents were to form the basis for the first proposals for changes in the content and graphic presentation of the pyramid.

The food pyramid resulting from this first preliminary work was presented to a wide-ranging public forum of experts in the autumn of 2004, with discussion invited. Specialists and institutions working in the field of nutrition were given the opportunity to adopt a position and make known their suggestions for adaptation by 15th December 2004. The scientifically relevant proposals for changes to content and graphic presentation were implemented and appear in the SGE's completely revised Food Pyramid published on 11th April, which is available since that date at www.sge-ssn.ch.

The revised Food Pyramid is designed for healthy adults and presents the two basic principles of a balanced and enjoyable diet – variety and relative quantity – in a way that is easy to understand. A diet that conforms to the Food Pyramid ensures a sufficient intake of energy and of the nutrients and protective substances necessary to life, and contributes significantly to our wellbeing.

A new feature of the Food Pyramid is the stress on physical activity in the maintenance of a healthy body weight. A balanced diet alone is not enough to ensure a healthy lifestyle and good energy balance; this requires, above all, sufficient exercise. This theme appears in both the pyramid diagram and the accompanying text.

Nuts are a new addition to the oils and fats category of foods, which moves down a level in the pyramid. This change emphasises the important place of nuts and vegetable oils in our diet as providers of essential fatty acids. Confectionery remains at the tip of the pyramid, where it is joined by salty snacks and energy-rich drinks (soft drinks and alcoholic beverages).

The cereal food category now appears under “wholegrains & legumes, other cereal products & potatoes”, in order to place greater emphasis on the importance of wholegrains for a healthy diet. Legumes had previously been categorised together with meat, but they have now also been assigned to this category because they are of vegetable origin and have a similar nutrient profile to wholegrain products.

The recommendations for the consumption of milk, milk products, meat, fish, eggs and other sources of protein such as tofu or Quorn have been grouped together to highlight the interchangeability of these foods.

Further information on the Food Pyramid can be found at www.sge-ssn.ch.