

The Food Guide Pyramid

Many governments have agencies that make **recommendations** to help citizens maintain healthy **diets**. They first consider the **nutrition** that the human body needs for energy and growth—vitamins, proteins, and minerals. They use this information as the **source** for their recommendations. These agencies inform people of what food they should eat to meet their nutritional requirements. The governments hope that the recommendations will have a positive **influence** on what people eat.

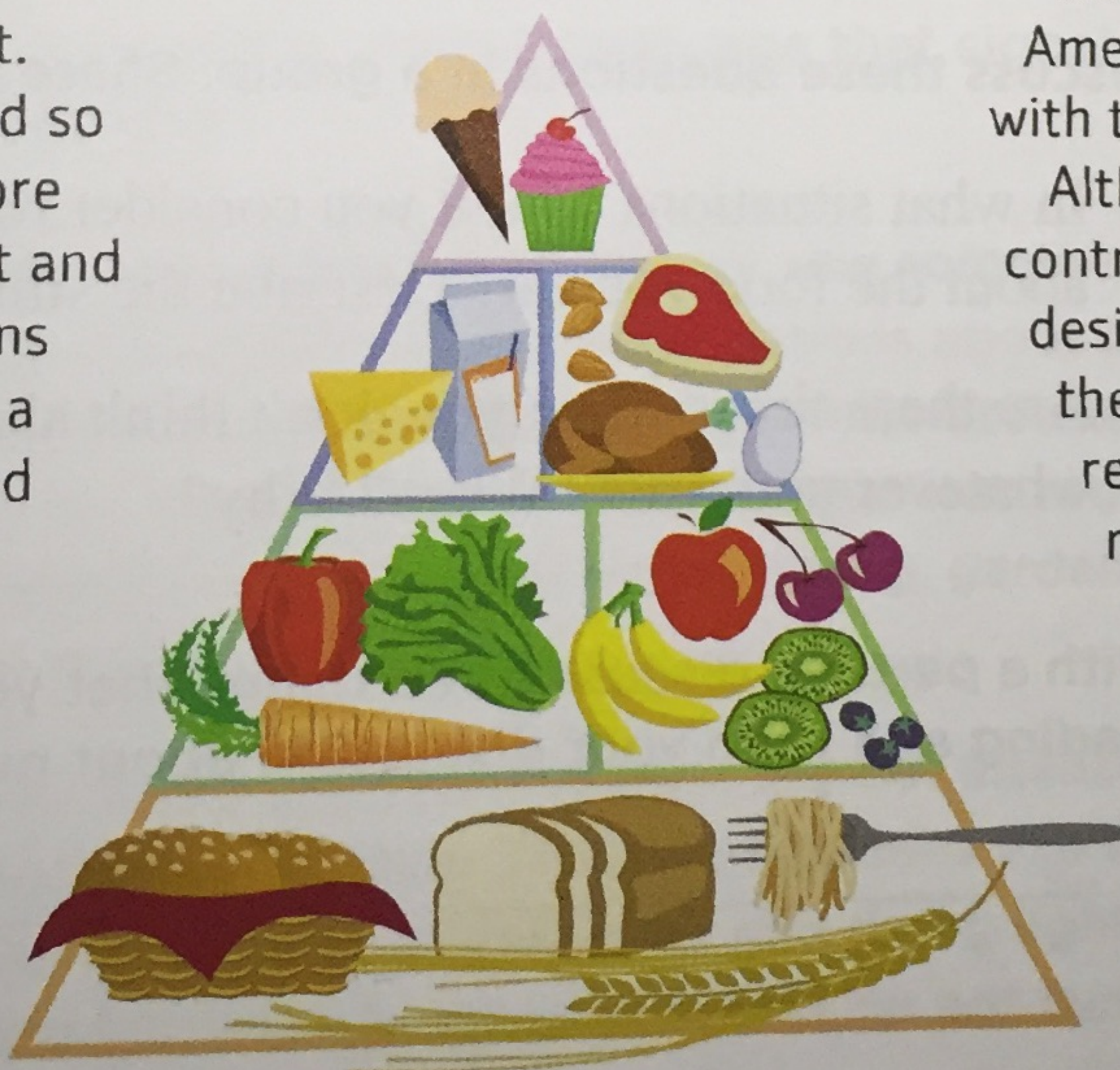
In 1992, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) created the Food Guide Pyramid to share their recommendations with people. The pyramid was a simple diagram representing many pages of recommendations. In 2005, diet was considered a serious issue in the United States because 65 percent of adults ages 20 to 74 were overweight. The USDA updated the pyramid so that each person could get more personalized advice about diet and exercise. There were 12 versions of the diagram, depending on a person's activity level and need for calories.

A number of governments use food pyramids, including the Philippines and Poland. The UK and Mexico have a plate design for their nutrition guidelines. Some countries have more creative designs like

China's Food Pagoda. All of these diagrams are similar in terms of the food groups they include: grains, fruits and vegetables, and proteins (meat, beans). Most also include dairy (milk) products and vegetable oils. The agencies also encourage drinking water and exercising. Many discourage eating fatty and sugary foods.



China's Food Pagoda



U.S. Food Guide Pyramid

There was some **controversy** about the recommendations on the 2005 USDA pyramid. Some people thought it should say more about the foods to avoid, not just the foods to choose. Others were happy to see that the recommended serving sizes were more specific. The **debate** continued as scientists, researchers, and the public voiced their opinions. Then in 2011, the U.S. government introduced a new plate design, similar to ones used in Mexico and the UK. However, many Americans are still more familiar with the pyramid.

Although there may be controversy and a variety of designs, people should not use these as reasons to ignore the recommendations. True, it might be hard to follow them sometimes, but people should not **give up** on their health.

The goal of all nutrition diagrams is to encourage people not to eat only for **pleasure**, but to think about how to get the nutrients and exercise their bodies need.