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A new report shows that, despite knowing what constitutes a healthy diet, American's rarely eat a diet consistent with the principles outlined by the new Federal Dietary Guidelines.

THE DIET OF TYPICAL AMERICANS IS RARELY IN LINE WITH NEW FEDERAL DIETARY GUIDELINES AND MYPLATE ICON

Recently the USDA Food Guide Pyramid was replaced as the government's method of portraying a healthy diet. The graphic interpretation of the new federal dietary guidelines is now called MyPlate, and depicts a plate with quadrants, half of which are fruits and vegetables, and the other quarters being proteins and grains. The dairy group is portrayed by a glass aside the plate.

New recommendations are simplified and include the following: Balancing Calories - enjoy your food, but eat less, and avoid oversized portions; Foods to Increase - make half your plate fruits and vegetables, make at least half your grains whole grains, and switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk; Foods to Reduce - compare sodium in foods like soup, bread, and frozen meals — and choose the foods with lower numbers, and drink water instead of sugary drinks.

The recommendations seem simple enough and common sense. However, according to NPD, a leading provider of reliable and comprehensive consumer and retail information, there is a vast difference between the new federal dietary guidelines and what typical American's are actually consuming. NPD's food and beverage market research finds that for the average consumer, only two percent of their days (about 7 days a year) come close to resembling the USDA's MyPlate.

Using NPD's National Eating Trends® (NET®) research, MyPlate days were calculated based on consumers who, on the same day, achieved at least 70 percent of the daily recommended intake for dairy, fruit, grains, proteins and vegetables. It was also discovered that even when consumers did achieve a MyPlate day, they were very likely to have consumed more than three meals to do so.

The analysts noted that there is clearly a need for consumers to change their eating habits, especially in light of the fact that more than 65 percent of adults are classified as overweight or obese.

Ongoing research has shown that consumers are generally aware of what constitutes a healthy diet, but what they know and what they do when it comes to eating are often different. The take home message is that everyone should be enjoying their meals but eating less while still adhering to healthy nutritional guidelines.

The NPD Group/National Eating Trends® (NET®); 5 Years Ending Feb 2011.