

Willett-Empfehlung

„eat less, move more, eat colors“

Walter Willett

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Departments of Nutrition and Epidemiology

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- **[Bücher von Walter C Willett](#)**

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- **[Büchereule.de | Kochen & Lifestyle | Eat, Drink and be Healthy ...](#)**

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Education

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M.P.H. 1973, Harvard School of Public Health

Dr.P.H., 1980, Harvard School of Public Health, Epidemiology

Chair, 1991, Department of Nutrition, Harvard School of Public Health

Research Interests

Our research primarily involves the investigation of dietary factors, using epidemiologic approaches, in the cause and prevention of cardiovascular disease, cancer, and other important conditions. Fundamental to this work has been the development of methods to measure dietary intake in large populations. Thus we have devoted substantial ongoing effort to the creation and refinement of standardized dietary questionnaires that can be completed repeatedly by subjects over a number of years. Such questionnaires have now been demonstrated to provide reasonably accurate assessments of a wide spectrum of dietary factors. In addition, we continue to work on the development and evaluation of biological markers of dietary intake, particularly using plasma and toenail samples. These biological indicators are primarily utilized in nested case-control studies using the large specimen banks collected prospectively as part of our ongoing studies.

The primary studies conducted by our group involve several large ongoing prospective cohorts, the 121,700-member Nurses' Health Study, initiated by Dr. Frank Speizer at the Channing Laboratory; the Health Professionals Follow-up Study, a cohort of 52,000 men; and the Nurses' Health Study II, a cohort of younger women numbering 116,000. Dietary data have been collected from all of these populations, including seven cycles in the Nurses' Health Study. As examples of the relationships we have studied, we have described a positive association between alcohol consumption and breast cancer but no relation with fat intake, a positive association between animal fat and red meat consumption and risk of colon cancer, strong inverse associations between vitamin E consumption and risk of coronary heart disease in both men and women, a positive association between partially hydrogenated vegetable fats and coronary heart disease incidence, and inverse association between intake of calcium and kidney stones. Other endpoints being examined in the study with regard to diet include diabetes, cataracts, glaucoma, gallstones, and other malignancies.

In addition to investigations regarding nutritional factors, we are evaluating relationships between the use of exogenous hormones in the form of oral contraceptives and post-menopausal estrogens to risks of breast cancer and other diseases. Also, other lifestyle factors, such as physical activity, are being examined in relation to occurrence of important diseases.

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International Research Projects

- [Low Glycemic Diets and Post Partum Weight Gain](#) (Brazil)

Web Site(s)

- [Nutrition Book Author Rebuilds USDA Food Pyramid](#) -- from Harvard Public Health NOW
- [Nurses' Health Study](#) -- The Nurses' Health Study, established in 1976 by Dr. Frank Speizer and the Nurses' Health Study II, established in 1989 by Dr. Walter Willett, are among the largest prospective investigations into the risk factors for major chronic diseases in women. The studies have grown to include a team of clinicians, epidemiologists and statisticians at the Channing Laboratory along with collaborating investigators and consultants in the surrounding medical community of the Harvard Medical School, Harvard School of Public Health, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Dana Farber Cancer Institute, Boston Children's Hospital and Beth Israel Hospital.
- [NutritionSource](#) -- Harvard School of Public Health and Nutrition Research covers latest information on fiber, fats, calcium, carbohydrates, eggs, nutritional pyramids, and fruits and vegetables

In his new book, *Eat, Drink, and Be Healthy*, [Walter Willett](#), chair of the Department of Nutrition, disassembles the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Pyramid and replaces it with one based in part on years of research done at HSPH and the Harvard Medical School. *Harvard Public Health NOW* asked Willett why he thinks the official pyramid is wrong and what consumers can do:

What prompted you to write *Eat, Drink, and Be Healthy*?

"We now have more than 20 years of research looking at the long-term health consequences of diets. This work has been published in many scientific journals, but I wanted to gather the material together in one place that was accessible and understandable."

It also seems that you wanted to clarify conflicting information about nutrition for consumers.

"Yes. There's lots of misinformation out there. The public has received messages that have not been borne out by research or did not deliver promised health benefits. For example, women have been told to drink milk to strengthen their bones and prevent osteoporosis, but long-term studies have not shown reduced risk of fractures with high dairy intake. Women can get calcium just as easily from supplements."

The USDA Food Pyramid has been around for nearly a decade. In the book, you write that it was based on "shaky scientific ground." What do you mean?

"The Food Pyramid is tremendously flawed. It says all fats are bad; all complex carbohydrates are good; all protein sources offer the same nutrition; and dairy should be eaten in high amounts. None of this is accurate."

Then why hasn't the USDA Food Pyramid changed?

"The Food Pyramid is meant to be based on dietary guidelines released by the USDA every five years. The guidelines actually have changed a bit to include more current information, but the Food Pyramid has never been revised. Whether the USDA is capable of doing the revision without being influenced by meat and dairy lobbying groups remains to be seen."

So you ended up including a food pyramid of your own in the book that illustrates the recommendations you make based on current research?

"Yes."

What do you see as some of the biggest problems in a typical American's diet today?

"The number-one problem is too many calories, whether from fat or carbohydrates, in relation to our level of physical activity."

"Trans fat is also a major problem. This kind of fat is found in many kinds of margarine and other foods, especially fast food, but it is actually worse for your arteries than lard. Americans, particularly teens, are eating large amounts of it in the form of fried, fast food. Trans fat developed from the notion that saturated fats are not good for you, so therefore, anything else must be better, and margarine was promoted.

"Trans fat not only increases levels of 'bad' cholesterol in the bloodstream, but it also decreases levels of 'good' cholesterol."

What are some of the other problems?

"A relatively new concern is glycemic load, which results from carbohydrates that increase blood sugar levels. The USDA Food Pyramid promotes eating complex carbohydrates without differentiating among them, but there are major differences between carbohydrates.

"For example, the body breaks down glucose in a potato more rapidly than pure sugar, spiking glucose levels in the blood and increasing the risk of diabetes."

What is a common mistake people make when they are trying to eat a healthier diet?

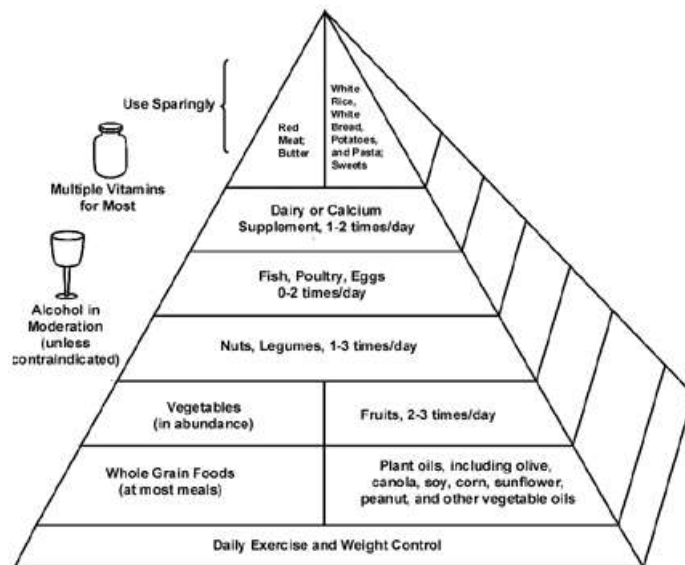
"Getting rid of all of the fat in their diets. The USDA has promoted the strategy, but it can be really dangerous. Not all fats are bad and, in fact, some should be required in any diet. Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats found in foods such as nuts, avocados, fish, olives, and most oils help lower 'bad' cholesterol levels without affecting 'good' cholesterol levels.

"People also tend to replace fat in their diets with foods high in sugar or refined carbohydrates. A lot of people think that a plain bagel with jam can be a healthy thing to eat in the morning, but actually that is one of the unhealthiest duos you can eat because it has a high glycemic load. You'd be better off with scrambled eggs cooked in corn oil or a whole-grain cereal."

What did you eat when you were growing up?

"I grew up in farm country in Michigan and had an all-American diet: lots of red meat and potatoes. As I got older and more involved in nutritional research, I couldn't ignore the data that those foods are not the best kinds to eat."

What do you typically eat in any given day?

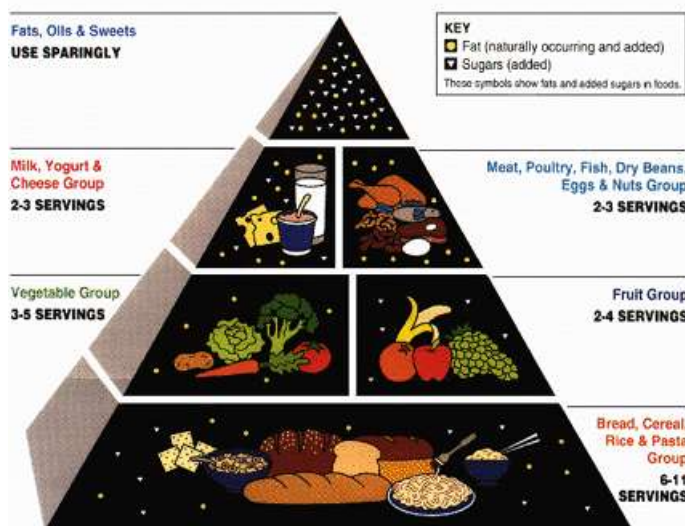


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rains with fruit. Lunch may be leftover grains
ner is usually salad or vegetables with tofu,
created recipes for healthy meals that are also

ed at the end of the day. You can eat good food
fined carbohydrates and sugars and keep an eye
e is very important. You should develop a plan

ated a new food pyramid, top, based
ood pyramid is at the bottom.



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