



Guiding Stars®

Nutritious choices made simple™

Guidance on Understanding the Science

The Guiding Stars® nutrition guidance program is based on national and international dietary recommendations and aligns with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The Guiding Stars® program evaluates the nutrient density of foods using the data gleaned from the Nutrition Facts panel and the ingredient list on product packaging. For products that do not have labels such as fresh produce and meats, nutrition data is obtained from the USDA National Nutrient database. Moreover, USDA data is used for foods that contain only a single ingredient or a single ingredient plus water in order to generate consistent ratings for such products. All foods are standardized to a 100 calorie (kcal) serving size. This standardization allows the consumer to compare products side by side. Four (4) separate algorithms are used to generate the Stars® ratings – 1) general foods and beverages, 2) meats/seafood/dairy/nuts, 3) fats and oils, and 4) infant and toddler foods.

The Guiding Stars® program is a point based system. The program awards credit points to products for positive nutrient attributes and assigns debit points for negative nutrient attributes. The net score of a product is then translated into a Guiding Stars® rating of 0, 1, 2, or 3. Following is a general summary of the positive and negative nutrient attributes included in the Guiding Stars® algorithms. The tables contain the core elements of the algorithm at their base levels standardized to 100 calories. (Please note that meeting these base levels would result in a 3-Star® rating. Products that meet some but not all of these criteria might still rate 1 or 2 Stars® if the positive attributes outweigh the negative attributes.)

General Foods and Beverages:

Per 100 kcal – each product or recipe must have:		
Positive Attributes	Vitamins and Minerals	Greater than or equal to 10% of the daily value of two vitamins or minerals. There are numerous vitamins and minerals beyond the 4 required by law (Vitamins A and C, Calcium and Iron) that could be included on the food label to increase a products star potential. Please note that points for vitamins & minerals are capped. Fortified products are not guaranteed to earn Stars®.
	Dietary Fiber	Greater than or equal to 3.75 grams of dietary fiber.
	Whole Grains	Greater than or equal to 1.5 grams of dietary fiber, <i>plus</i> the presence of a whole grain key word in the ingredient list.
Negative Attributes	Trans Fat	0 grams listed on the Nutrition Facts panel <i>and</i> no partially hydrogenated oil listed as an ingredient.
	Saturated Fat	Less than or equal to 1 gram.
	Cholesterol	Less than or equal to 15 mg.
	Added Sugar	No added sugar. Added sugars include different names for sugar or sweeteners including 'natural' sugars such as honey and molasses. Non-caloric sweeteners are not debited.
	Added Sodium	Less than or equal to 120 mg of added sodium.

As noted above, Guiding Stars® recognizes that there are different types of foods with inherently different nutrient profiles. In addition to the General Foods and Beverages algorithm described above, there are three (3) other algorithm variations to address these inherent differences.

Meats/Seafood/Dairy and Nuts: Meats and seafood have intrinsically higher levels of certain nutrients such as saturated fat and cholesterol, and do not contain fiber and whole grains. Nuts likewise naturally contain higher levels of saturated fat, but do contain naturally occurring fiber. The Food and Drug Administration, along with other major health organizations, specifies different standards of saturated fat and cholesterol for meats and seafood in their definition of 'healthy.' The dietary guidelines and MyPyramid currently categorize nuts with meat items.

Meats/Seafood/Dairy and Nuts:

	Per 100 kcal – each product or recipe must have:	
Positive Attributes	Vitamins and Minerals	Greater than or equal to 10% of the daily value of two vitamins or minerals, or, greater than or equal to 20% of the daily value of one vitamin or mineral. Please note that points for vitamins and minerals are capped. Fortified products are not guaranteed to earn Stars®.
	Dietary Fiber	Greater than or equal to 1.25 grams of dietary fiber. Dietary fiber is treated more as a bonus point here since the majority of foods in these categories do not naturally contain fiber.
Negative Attributes	Trans Fat	0 grams listed on Nutrition Facts panel <i>and</i> no partially hydrogenated oil listed as an ingredient.
	Saturated Fat	Less than or equal to 1.5 grams.
	Cholesterol	Less than or equal to 60 mg.
	Added Sugar	No added sugar. Added sugars include different names for sugar or sweeteners including 'natural' sugars such as honey and molasses. Non-caloric sweeteners are not debited.
	Added Sodium	Less than or equal to 120 mg of added sodium.

Fats and Oils: This model was created because the other models do not include nutrients such as omega-3 fatty acids that must be considered to differentiate fats and oils. Guiding Stars® rating for fats and oils are based on data from the USDA National Nutrient database. The USDA 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends that fat intake be between 20% and 35% of total calories.

Fats and Oils:

	Per 100 kcal – each product or recipe must have:	
Positive Attributes	Monounsaturated fat	Greater than or equal to 6.7 grams.
	Omega-3 fatty acids	Greater than or equal to 1.14 grams.
	DHA and EPA	A bonus point is awarded to items that contain both DHA and EPA.
Negative Attributes	Trans Fat	No partially hydrogenated oil listed as an ingredient.
	Saturated Fat	Less than or equal to 2.2 grams.
	Cholesterol	Less than or equal to 15 mg.
	Added Sugar	No added sugar. Added sugars include different names for sugar or sweeteners including 'natural' sugars such as honey and molasses. Non-caloric sweeteners are not debited.
	Added Sodium	Less than or equal to 120 mg of added sodium.

Infants and Toddler Foods: Infants, less than 12 months old, and toddlers, between 12 and 24 months old, have unique nutritional needs. Vitamins and minerals as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics', and central to federal feeding programs such as WIC, are given more prominence. There are no recommendations for saturated fat, cholesterol or trans fat for infants and toddlers under the age of 24 months, thus these nutrients are not included in this algorithm. Baby formula is not rated by the Guiding Stars® program.

Infants and Toddler Foods:

	Per 100 kcal – each product or recipe must have:	
Positive Attributes	Vitamins and Minerals	Greater than or equal to 10% of the daily value of two vitamins or minerals, or, greater than or equal to 20% of the daily value of one vitamin or mineral. The only nutrients considered for this credit include Vitamins A and C, Calcium, Iron and Zinc.
Negative Attributes	Added Sugar	No added sugar. Added sugars include different names for sugar or sweeteners including 'natural' sugars such as honey and molasses. Non-caloric sweeteners are not debited.
	Added Sodium	Less than or equal to 100 mg of added sodium.