



Guiding Stars Algorithm Update Fact Sheet

Rationale for an update to the Guiding Stars algorithm:

Whenever national or international nutrition policy such as the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) are revised, the Guiding Stars scientific advisory panel carefully reviews those recommendations and the most current scientific evidence to ascertain whether any revisions should be made to the Guiding Stars algorithm. This procedure was followed when the 2015 DGA were released in early 2016.

The new 2015 version of the DGA no longer includes a quantitative dietary cholesterol intake recommendation. In light of this change, and since cholesterol is included as an evaluated nutrient in the Guiding Stars algorithm, the scientific advisory panel spent time analyzing the ramifications of altering the algorithm to align with the new DGA. After much careful consideration and testing, the panel determined that removing the graduated cholesterol debits from the algorithm would more closely reflect the current scientific consensus on dietary cholesterol. The Guiding Stars scientific advisory panel did establish an upper limit “kick-out” rule for foods that contain more than 300 mg cholesterol per 100 kcal serving thus preventing such foods from receiving a star rating. This is similar to the approach used to evaluate foods with high amounts of added sugars and/or sodium. By establishing an upper limit for dietary cholesterol, the panel recognized that certain foods should be recognized as outside of the scope for a typically healthy population.

Summary of current science on dietary cholesterol:

Dietary cholesterol is cholesterol found in animal foods, such as meat, poultry, eggs, dairy products and shellfish. Our bodies also synthesize cholesterol, and hence there is no need to consume any dietary cholesterol at all. Elevated blood cholesterol is a known risk factor for serious health issues like heart disease and stroke.

The previous version of the DGA (2010) recommended that dietary cholesterol be limited to no more than 300 mg/day in an effort to minimize the risk of cardiovascular disease. However, the current 2015 DGA eliminated this recommendation, stating *“Adequate evidence is not available for a quantitative limit for dietary cholesterol specific to the Dietary Guidelines.”*

In addition, the DGA suggest that more research is needed regarding the dose-response relationship between dietary cholesterol and blood cholesterol levels as the most current scientific evidence does not support a direct link between dietary and blood cholesterol. This revised position on dietary cholesterol is in contrast to the DGA recommendations for saturated fats (which call for a quantitative limit of less than 10% of total calories per day) and *trans* fats (consumption should be as low as possible), which are more definitively linked to increased blood cholesterol levels.

The change in emphasis away from dietary cholesterol and onto saturated and *trans* fats is not unique to the DGA. In 2013, the American Heart Association and the American College of Cardiology released new guidelines about diet and other lifestyle changes for the management of cardiovascular disease risk factors

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in adults. Their recommendations also did not call for a specific limit on dietary cholesterol, and instead emphasized restricting saturated fat and *trans* fats intake.

It's important to note that the removal of a quantitative limit on dietary cholesterol from either the DGA or the Guiding Stars algorithm does not mean that dietary cholesterol intake is no longer important. It's still prudent to try to minimize intake of dietary cholesterol as part of an overall eating pattern that supports cardiovascular health, especially among at-risk populations such as individuals with type 2 diabetes.

Expected impact of algorithm changes on food products' Guiding Stars ratings:

As a result of the removal of the limit on dietary cholesterol, many whole foods and hundreds of packaged foods will either increase star values or receive a star for the first time. The breakdown of changes is as follows: 861 items gain a star which includes 357 packaged foods, 61 single ingredient whole foods and 443 Guiding Stars recipes. Eggs and shrimp, two popular, nutritious foods stand out as a result of this change. Both will now receive stars. Foods with excessive amounts of dietary cholesterol (>300 mg per 100 kcals) will not qualify for a star due to the upper limit "kick-out" rule. There are a handful of foods, such as beef, lamb and pork kidneys, pork brains, quail eggs, and turkey liver that exceed this threshold.

Timeline for Guiding Stars algorithm changes:

Changes to the Guiding Stars algorithm are implemented on June 8, 2016 and effective immediately. Supermarket partners will receive updated ratings information and will process new shelf tags as soon as possible. Recipes appearing on guidingstars.com will also reflect star changes immediately.

Questions?

For other questions or more information regarding this change to the Guiding Stars algorithm, please contact the GSLC team at info@guidingstars.com

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