



USDA Nutrition Dataset Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What are the units for each of the food groups and nutrients in the database?

A: For Added Sugars, Alcohol, Solid Fats, and Calories, the unit is “Calories.” The unit for the MyPyramid equivalents is “cup equivalent” or “ounce equivalent” depending on the food group discussed. Please see below for more information.

Food Group/Nutrient	Unit	Explanation
Added Sugars	Calories	Calories from added sugars for the specified “Portion Amount” (column F) and “Portion Display Name” (column H)
Alcohol	Calories	Calories from alcohol for the specified “Portion Amount” (column F) and “Portion Display Name” (column H)
Calories	Calories	Amount of total calories in the “Portion Amount” (column F) and “Portion Display Name” (column H)
Dark Green Vegetables	Cups	Number of (MyPyramid) cup equivalents of dark-green vegetables found in the specified “Portion Amount” (column F) and “Portion Display Name” (column H)
Dry Beans & Peas	Cups	Number of (MyPyramid) cup equivalents of cooked dry beans and peas found in the specified “Portion Amount” (column F) and “Portion Display Name” (column H)
Fruits	Cups	Total number of (MyPyramid) cup equivalents from the fruits group found in the specified “Portion Amount” (column F) and “Portion Display Name” (column H)
Grains	Ounces	Total number of (MyPyramid) ounce equivalents from the grains group found in the specified “Portion Amount” (column F) and “Portion Display Name” (column H). Includes ounce equivalents from non-whole grains (not shown in this database) and Whole Grains (column Z)
Meat	Ounces	Ounces of cooked lean meat from beef, pork, veal, lamb, game, and fish found in the specified “Portion Amount” (column F) and “Portion Display Name” (column H)
Milk	Cups	Total number of (MyPyramid) cup equivalents from the milk group found in the specified “Portion Amount” (column F) and “Portion Display Name” (column H). Includes cup equivalents from milk, yogurt, and cheese
Oils	Grams	Grams of discretionary oil from the food found in the specified “Portion Amount” (column F) and “Portion Display Name” (column H)
Orange Vegetables	Cups	Number of (MyPyramid) cup equivalents of orange vegetables found in the specified “Portion Amount” (column F) and “Portion Display Name” (column H)
Other Vegetables	Cups	Number of (MyPyramid) cup equivalents found in the specified “Portion Amount” (column F) and “Portion Display Name” (column H). Not Dark Green Vegetables (column L), Orange Vegetables (column S), or Starchy Vegetables (column X)
Saturated Fats	Grams	Number of saturated fat grams found in the specified “Portion Amount” (column F) and “Portion Display Name” (column H)

Solid Fats	Calories	Calories coming from solid fats for the specified “Portion Amount” (column F) and “Portion Display Name” (column H)
Soy	Ounces	Number of ounce equivalents from soybean products found in the specified “Portion Amount” (column F) and “Portion Display Name” (column H). NOTE: One cup of soy milk, 1/4 cup of cubed tofu, 1/4 cup of soy nuts, and one ounce of meat analog are one ounce equivalent of cooked lean meat each
Starchy Vegetables	Cups	Number of (MyPyramid) cup equivalents of starchy vegetables (including white potatoes) found in the specified “Portion Amount” (column F) and “Portion Display Name” (column H).
Vegetables	Cups	Total number of (MyPyramid) cup equivalents from the vegetables group. Includes cup equivalents found in the specified “Portion Amount” (column F) and “Portion Display Name” (column H) from: Darkgreen Vegetables (column L), Orange Vegetables (column S), Other Vegetables (column T), and Starchy Vegetables (column X)
Whole_Grains	Ounces	Number of (MyPyramid) ounce equivalents of whole grains from the grains group found in the specified “Portion Amount” (column F) and “Portion Display Name” (column H)

Q: In the “Food Display Table” file, what is the measure of each food?

A: It is “Portion Amount” of “Portion Display Name” (for example, “0.25” of “cup”).

Q: In the “Food Display Table” file, what are the purposes of the “Factor,” “Increment,” “Multiplier,” and “Portion Default” fields?

A: The purpose of each of these fields is as follows:

Factor	This field is not needed for data set use. It is a “check” field for developers that indicates the difference between the standard measure code and the default portion provided in the dataset. For example, a standard measure for 1 fluid ounce is “3000,” and if the factor is 8, then the default portion should be 8 x 1 fluid ounce, or 8 fluid ounces.
Increment	This field tells what increments portion options should be provided for users to choose from. An increment of .25 with a default portion of 1 cup would move the portion options up or down in ¼ cup increments, while an increment of 1 for a default portion of 8 fluid ounces would move the portion options up or down in 1 fluid ounce increments.
Multiplier	This field tells what factor to multiply all of the food group and nutrient values by, and then add or subtract from the default amounts, for a single increment change in the portion option. For example, if the increment is .25, the food group values will be multiplied by .25 and then added to the default value if the increment moves up by one unit, or subtracted if the increment moves down.
Portion Default	The portion default field indicates which of the various portion options should initially show up as the default when the user selects a food. This is given a “1.” All other portions for the same food have a “2” and this means the user must select them from a pull-down menu.

Example: A user chooses food # 11111000, whole milk. The portions that are provided are 1 cup or 8 fluid ounces. The user selects the fluid ounce option and selects 10 fluid ounces rather than the default of 8 fluid ounces. The program could calculate that the user has moved the portion up 2 increments

(increment =1 for the fluid ounce portion), and multiply the milk group value by 2 (the # of increments) x .125 (the multiplier) x the milk group value of 1, to get .25, and then add this to the default of 1 to get 1.25 cups of milk in 10 fluid ounces.

Q: In “lu_Condiment_Food_Table,” how do I use the “Portion Code?”

A: The “Portion Code” field is not needed for dataset use. The USDA Nutrition Dataset used in the Apps for Healthy Kids Competition is part of broader database known as the Food and Nutrient Database for Dietary Studies ([FNDDS 3.0](#)). “Portion Code” is a field used in the FNDDS 3.0. The “Portion Code” is a unique 5-digit number that identifies which portion description goes with a foodcode. The “Portion Code” links to portion descriptions in a separate Food Portion Descriptions file.

Q: In “lu_Condiment_Food_Table,” I’d like to break the “Portion Size” field into multiple fields similar to that in “Food Display Table.” Is that okay to do?

A: As long as the correct portion code/gram weight data is found in the Food and Nutrient Database for Dietary Studies ([FNDDS 3.0](#)) then yes, you can break the “Portion Size” field down. Keep in mind that the calories and other MyPyramid equivalent data are for the “Portion Size” shown and would need to be adjusted for other portions.

Q: Is data available indicating the recommended daily intake for people of different sizes?

A: The following document identifies the calorie levels for males and females by age and activity level. Calorie levels are provided for each year of childhood, from 2-18 years, and for adults in 5-year increments: http://www.mypyramid.gov/downloads/MyPyramid_Calorie_Levels.pdf.

Additional recommendations, such as food groups, are available for each calorie level at: http://www.mypyramid.gov/professionals/food_tracking_wksht.html. Alternatively, and individual’s calorie and food group needs can be determined by inputting his or her age, sex, weight, height, and activity level on the MyPyramid Plan site at <http://www.mypyramid.gov/mypyramid/index.aspx>.

Q: I pulled down a dataset called the USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 22. I notice a lot of other interesting data in there, for example Vitamin E, Vitamin B-12, Calcium, etc. Is any of that data something we want to use for the Challenge?

A: The Food and Nutrient Database for Dietary Studies ([FNDDS 3.0](#)) would be the nutrient database to use in this case since the 8-digit “Foodcodes” match up with the 8-digit “Foodcodes” in the “Food Display Table” - MAD excel file. The Standard Reference “Foodcodes” are 5-digit codes and will not match with the 8-digit “Foodcodes” found in the “Food Display Table” - MAD excel file.