



There are several shortcomings in the 2019 Canada's Food Guidelines such as a lack of direction on how much to eat other than providing the 50/25/25% proportions. Because all sources of protein are clumped into a single group that accounts for 25% of all food, and plant-based protein is recommended over animal protein, it feels close to a vegan lifestyle. Replacing most fish, lean meat, poultry and dairy products with plant-based proteins (e.g., legumes, nuts, seeds) could be challenging and may require a willingness to research recipes and try unfamiliar foods (e.g., tofu, edamame, spirulina).

Dr. Dariush Mozaffarian, a cardiologist and Dean of the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University, objects to promoting a "plant-based diet". He cautions people about, "a dangerous history of oversimplifying complex food and nutrition issues into magic bullets" and says, "Much of what harms—refined grains, starches, sugars, trans fats—are plant-based, while fish, yogurt, eggs, poultry, cheese are healthy". (via twitter, Jan. 30, 2019 @Dmozaffarian).

The Guidelines mention mindful eating but don't provide practical suggestions for improving self-awareness. Studies show that most people under-report how much they eat. Could you list everything you ate yesterday and would you be able to identify whether that equated to 50% fruits and vegetables, 25% protein and 25% grains? A food diary template or app would be useful as a short-term tool to log what you consume.

As for the types of foods we're advised to avoid (e.g., candy, cake, fast food, soda, and other foods and beverages high in sugar, sodium and saturated fat), I think there should be a Junk Food group for recording all the junk we eat. Most of us, after all, eat these unhealthy foods. Even if we eat a small percentage of junk—which is calorically dense but nutritionally low—it can account for a significant percentage of our overall calories.

Another shortcoming is that it may be hard to separate foods into distinct groups since many foods are comprised of ingredients from more than one group (e.g., lasagna can contain protein (cheese and meat), vegetables (tomato sauce and other vegetables) and grains (noodles)).

The simplest rule-of-thumb to improve eating habits is to eat more whole foods, avoid processed foods as much as possible and eat a variety of foods. If you're unable to maintain a healthy weight or you have, or want to prevent, lifestyle-related health issues, you're likely eating the wrong amounts of food or too many unhealthy foods. A registered dietician can help you figure out a healthy and realistic way to eat that suits your individual health needs and goals. Remember to incorporate regular exercise into your lifestyle! A personal trainer such as myself can help get you on the right track.

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**Have you read the
2019 guidelines?**

**Send me your
thoughts at**

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