Building the Best Food Pyramid
By Gordon Botting

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently unveiled its revamped Food Pyramid. This updated Food Guide Pyramid replaces the original food pyramid developed in 1992. Since that first food pyramid, a variety of health care institutions and organizations have tried to improve on the original concept. Over the last decade at least nine new variations have cropped up. Currently there are food pyramids for all types of diets and special interest groups, such as vegetarians, Asians, Latinos, overweight individuals, seniors over 70, and those who follow the glycemic index.

This issue we are dealing with being a steward of good health by talking about the New Food Pyramid© by the health screening company Wellsource. It modifies “The Healthy Eating Pyramid” developed by Walter Willett, MD, of the Harvard School of Public Health, which combines the latest in scientific journals, and then adds the best of the Adventist lifestyle.

The difference between the Wellsource pyramid and previous ones is that its foundation is not based on food, but on physical exercise. It is suggested that you start at a level that will not cause soreness of muscle and fatigue, and over time build up to a minimum of 30 minutes daily. Just taking a brisk walk of 15 minutes twice a day for a...
person of normal weight (BMI 25 or less) is perfectly okay. If you are overweight (BMI of 25-29) 60 minutes a day is recommended. Enjoy your fitness regime by including a variety of moderate activates such as racquetball, golfing, swimming, brisk walking, aerobics, cycling, and even mowing the lawn or planting a vegetable garden.

**Obey Your Mother — Eat Your Vegetables!**

The U.S. Dietary Guidelines affirm, “Eating a variety of whole grains, fruits and vegetables is the basis of healthy eating” (HHS, Dietary Guidelines 2000).

Most research shows that the major ingredients missing in the American lifestyle are fruits and vegetables. These are packed with nutrients and phytochemicals which are preventive protectors against chronic diseases such as stroke, cancer and heart disease. Of this core component it is recommended that each individual eat a minimum of nine servings daily. These not only add color and taste to food but assist in lowering blood pressure and cholesterol. Some of the best fruits are those that have a low glycemic index such as blueberries, strawberries, boysenberries, peaches, nectarines, and apricots.

**Heart Gains for Whole Grains**

Whole grains represent the third widest swath of this pyramid. Refined grain products convert blood sugar virtually at the same rate as pure sugar does, raising the risk of obesity and Type 2 Diabetes. In the 1999 report of the “Nurses’ Health Study,” non-smoking women who consumed a minimum of three servings of whole grains per day cut their risk of heart disease and had a lower risk for diabetes than those eating refined grains (American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 1999, Volume 70, pg. 312-419). Read food labels, especially when choosing breads and cereals. Check to be sure the ingredient list or label says “entire,” “whole,” or “100%” of a particular grain.

**Bean Up Your Diet!**

Legumes are probably the best source of fiber and they are rich in protein. The reason people do not eat more beans is that they are time consuming to prepare, have a reputation of being boring, and they can cause stomach gas. Try changing your view about legumes — and think, minestrone, curried dishes.

The “healthy” fats are included in this section. These are mainly the monounsaturated and polyunsaturated varieties such as nuts (almonds, walnuts, Brazil nuts and cashews), which are rich in protein and help to lower the risks of Type 2 Diabetes, heart disease and blood clots. Other healthy fats include avocados and vegetable oils, particularly olive and canola.

**The Peak of Imperfection**

The top sliver of the Pyramid is devoted to “not-so-good” and “real