



# No One Eats a Cholesterol Sandwich—It’s Meat, Milk, and Eggs That Make Us Sick

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The USDA’s recent proposal to eliminate dietary cholesterol guidelines has positive and negative repercussions. It also reminds us why government nutritional recommendations are not reliable.

In a way, we like the USDA’s change, because it supports the notion we should not be viewing what we eat in terms of individual substances, since what we eat is rarely one nutrient or one chemical. For example, have you ever had a bowl of cholesterol?

Indeed, focusing on foods as “cholesterol” or “protein” or “calcium” has led to a great deal of confusion about what constitutes healthy food. For instance do we avoid meat because it’s high in cholesterol, or eat it because it’s high in protein? The actual answer, by the way, is that we should avoid or minimize it, because *as a food*, in any significant amount, it’s harmful to human health.

The problem in changing the dietary cholesterol recommendation is that it suggests that foods that contain cholesterol—animal products such as meat, milk, and eggs—are healthy to consume. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Every day we are learning how these foods contribute to heart disease, type-2 diabetes, and increased cancer risk.<sup>1-7</sup> Indeed one study recently published in *Cell Metabolism* showed that diets high in animal products (even controlling for fat) increase overall mortality by 75%, cancer death by 400%, and diabetes death by 500%.<sup>8</sup>

We would be okay if health officials eliminated the focus on cholesterol as a culprit in poor health—if, and only if, these officials warn consumers to minimize or eliminate animal foods. The elimination of cholesterol guidelines, we worry, will provide the animal industries the cover they need to falsely argue that meat, milk, and eggs are healthy.

The inherent politics of the matter bring us to an important point. We shouldn’t be relying on government nutritional guidelines in the first place, because they are subject to the influence of political and financial interests. Instead, we should search for the truth on our own.

In our search, we have found that it’s best to focus on

foods and not constituent parts like protein or calcium. And the overall evidence of what foods to eat is clear: fruit, vegetables, tubers, whole grains and legumes bring about good health and vitality, while animal and highly processed foods should be minimized or eliminated.

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## References

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