

Dietary Reference Intakes: Too Little, Too Much?

What are Dietary Reference Intakes?

Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs) are a comprehensive set of nutrient reference values used by nutrition and health professionals. There is a set of different values for each nutrient. Each type of DRI refers to the average daily nutrient intake for the general population over time. The Older Americans Act requires that each meal served contains one-third of each nutrient's DRI.

Can the meal provide MORE or LESS than 1/3 of a DRI?

- **Follow your state guidelines!**
- State guidelines may include maximum amounts per meal for certain nutrients like sodium that are shown to have harmful effects when we consume too much.
- State guidelines may also include minimum amounts per meal for nutrients that many of us need to consume more of, like fiber or potassium.

Example: Sodium

- The DRI for sodium for the older adult population is 2300 mg/day.
- Excess sodium is shown to have harmful effects on older adults.
- Also consider that other meals your participants may be consuming may be pre-packaged meals containing high amounts of sodium.
- Therefore, you should not provide more than one-third of the DRI for sodium – and it's okay to provide less than 1/3 of this DRI!
- Most states will allow for some flexibility, but within reason.

Example: Fiber

- The DRI for fiber is 21 g/day for older adult females and 30 g/day for older adult males.
- Additional fiber is shown to have health benefits for older adults.
- Thus, you could provide more than one-third of the DRI for fiber.

Check Your State's Requirements!

- Each state has their own requirements and will often have acceptable ranges for each nutrient.

Further Resources

- Health.gov, "[Dietary Reference Intakes](#)"
- National Institutes of Health, "[Nutrient Recommendations and Databases](#)"

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