

# Steps to a Healthier ME

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## Background

- *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005* provides science-based expert consensus advice to promote health and to reduce the risk for major chronic diseases through diet and physical activity.<sup>1</sup>
- Since the *Dietary Guidelines* were written for professional audiences, *MyPyramid Food Guidance System* was developed to translate the advice for the general public.<sup>2</sup> However, the system relies on highly literate consumers independently accessing the internet website.
- According to research on the visual-spatial learning style, at least one-third of those studied were visual-spatial learners and another 30% strongly prefer visual-spatial learning.<sup>3</sup> Hence, over 63% favored visual-spatial learning as opposed to an auditory-sequential style.

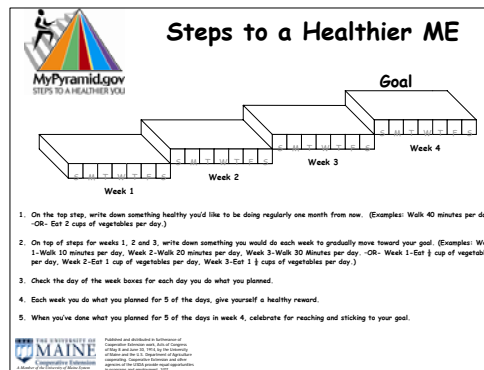


## Program Design

- The *MyPyramid; Steps to a Healthier You Food Guidance System* was adapted for use in Maine as *Steps to a Healthier ME*.
- A variety of innovative teaching methods and tools based on visual-spatial learning style were developed to convey concepts of *Steps to a Healthier ME*.
- The methods, tools and printed materials were designed for audiences of diverse ages and literacy levels.
- Individual goal setting and tracking was an integral component of the program.

## Program Delivery

The *Steps to a Healthier ME* program has been pilot tested with almost 1000 participants through elementary, middle and high schools; colleges; 4-H fairs; Extension Homemakers Associations; and community programs for families, disabled and elderly.

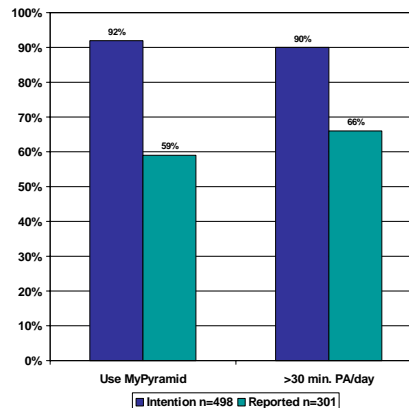


## Applications

- Over 100 volunteers, paraprofessionals, and teachers throughout Maine have been trained on use of the *Steps to a Healthier ME* program.
- Print-on-demand materials were made available through the internal University of Maine Cooperative Extension *Eat Well* website and the *Move More* public web site sponsored by Maine General Health..
- Both of the visual spatial-teaching tools were commercially manufactured and distributed throughout Maine.
- Plans are underway for a *Steps to a Healthier ME Supper Club* at Alford Youth Center in Waterville.

## Pilot Program Evaluation

Participants in pilot programs were surveyed immediately after completion of programs to assess behavioral change intentions and again four to eight weeks later for reported behavior change:



## References

1. United States Department of Health and Human Services, United States Department of Agriculture. *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005*. 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, January 2005.
2. United States Department of Agriculture. *MyPyramid: Steps to a Healthier You*. Available at: <http://mypyramid.gov> Accessed May 5, 2008.
3. Silverman, LK. Research on the visual spatial learner. <http://www.visualspatial.org/VSI/research.htm> Accessed May 5, 2008.