# The (Big, Fat) American Dream

Recently arrived Latinos are healthier than those who have been living here.

December 1, 2007 By Leonardo Peralta

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Recent Hispanic immigrants have low incidences of diabetes, hypertension and high cholesterol, according to a study from the University of Southern California. But those incidences skyrocket once they adapt to American ways of eating. How can we return to our healthy roots?

**Balance the nutrients.** The Latino Nutrition Coalition created a Hispanic-specific food pyramid. According to this pyramid, a healthful plate should contain 50 percent fruits and vegetables, 25 percent cereals or starches and 25 percent protein (meat, legumes or nuts).

**Get moving!** Although some Latinos have jobs that require physical effort, this may not be enough to prevent diabetes and heart disease. A recent study found that walking as little as 30 minutes, five times a week improves health in general.

**Don't overeat.** In the U.S., "recent immigrants encounter diets they don't recognize, with enormous portions and processed ingredients with high concentrations of sugar and calories," says Dr. Héctor Bourgues, a Mexican nutritionist. "We should only eat until we're satisfied."

**Go back to the traditional.** In her book *Gordito Doesn't Mean Healthy*, nutritionist Claudia González recommends eating corn tortillas, since they have more fiber and less fat than the flour kind.

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