



CHOOSING HEALTHY MEALS AS YOU GET OLDER

Making healthy food choices is a smart thing to do—no matter how old you are! Your body changes through your 60s, 70s, 80s, and beyond. Food provides nutrients you need as you age. Use these tips to choose foods for better health at each stage of life.



Drink plenty of liquids

With age, you may lose some of your sense of thirst. Drink water often. Low-fat or fat-free milk or 100% juice also helps you stay hydrated. Limit beverages that have lots of added sugars or salt. Learn which liquids are better choices.



Know how much to eat

Learn to recognize how much to eat so you can control portion size. When eating out, pack part of your meal to eat later. One restaurant dish might be enough for two meals or more.



Eat for your teeth and gums

Many people find that their teeth and gums change as they age. People with dental problems sometimes find it hard to chew fruits, vegetables, or meats. Don't miss out on needed nutrients! Eating softer foods can help. Try cooked or canned foods like unsweetened fruit, low-sodium soups, or canned tuna.



Ask your doctor about vitamins or supplements

Food is the best way to get nutrients you need. Should you take vitamins or other pills or powders with herbs and minerals? These are called dietary supplements. Your doctor will know if you need them. More may not be better. Some can interfere with your medicines or affect your medical conditions.



Keep food safe

Don't take a chance with your health. A food-related illness can be life threatening for an older person. Throw out food that might not be safe. Avoid certain foods that are always risky for an older person, such as unpasteurized dairy foods. Other foods can be harmful to you when they are raw or undercooked, such as eggs, sprouts, fish, shellfish, meat, or poultry.



Use herbs and spices

Foods may seem to lose their flavor as you age. If favorite dishes taste different, it may not be the cook! Maybe your sense of smell, sense of taste, or both have changed. Medicines may also change how foods taste. Add flavor to your meals with herbs and spices.



Read the Nutrition Facts label

Make the right choices when buying food. Pay attention to important nutrients to know as well as calories, fats, sodium, and the rest of the Nutrition Facts label. Ask your doctor if there are ingredients and nutrients you might need to limit or to increase.



Vary your vegetables

Include a variety of different colored vegetables to brighten your plate. Most vegetables are a low-calorie source of nutrients. Vegetables are also a good source of fiber.



Make eating a social event

Meals are more enjoyable when you eat with others. Invite a friend to join you or take part in a potluck at least twice a week. A senior center or place of worship may offer meals that are shared with others. There are many ways to make mealtimes pleasing.



IMPORTANT NUTRIENTS TO KNOW: PROTEINS, CARBOHYDRATES, AND FATS

PROTEINS



Proteins are often called the body's building blocks. They are used to build and repair tissues. They help you fight infection. Your body uses extra protein for energy. Good sources of protein are seafood, lean meat and poultry, eggs, beans and peas, soy products, and unsalted nuts and seeds. Protein is also found in *dairy products*. Protein from plant sources tends to be lower in fat and cholesterol and provides fiber and other health-promoting nutrients.

CARBOHYDRATES

Carbohydrates are the body's main source of energy. There are two types of carbohydrates: *simple and complex*.

SIMPLE CARBOHYDRATES

found in fruits, vegetables, and milk products, as well as in sweeteners like sugar, honey, and syrup and foods like candy, soft drinks, and frosting or icing.



COMPLEX CARBOHYDRATES

found in breads, cereals, pasta, rice, beans and peas, and starchy vegetables such as potatoes, green peas, and corn.



Many carbohydrates also supply fiber. Fiber is a type of complex carbohydrate found in foods that come from plants—fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, beans, and whole grains. Eating food with fiber can prevent stomach or intestinal problems, such as constipation. It might also help lower cholesterol and blood sugar. It is better to get fiber from food than dietary supplements. Start adding fiber slowly. This will help avoid gas. Here are some tips for adding fiber:

- ➔ Eat cooked dry beans, peas, and lentils often.
- ➔ Leave skins on your fruit and vegetables if possible, but wash them first.
- ➔ Choose whole fruit over fruit juice.
- ➔ Eat whole grain breads and cereals.

FATS

Fats also give you energy and help you feel satisfied after eating. Oils, shortening, butter, and margarine are types of fats, and mayonnaise, salad dressings, table cream, and sour cream are high in fat. Foods from animal sources and certain foods like seeds, nuts, avocado, and coconut also contain fat. There are different categories of fats—some are healthier than others:

Monounsaturated	Polyunsaturated	Saturated	Trans fats (trans fatty acids)
These include canola oil, olive oil, peanut oil, and safflower oil. They are found in avocados, peanut butter, and some nuts and seeds.	Some are corn oil, soybean oil, and flaxseed oil. They are also found in fatty fish, walnuts, and some seeds.	These fats are found in red meat, milk products including butter, and palm and coconut oils. Regular cheese, pizza, and grain-based and dairy desserts are common sources of saturated fat in our meals.	Processed trans fats are found in stick margarine and vegetable shortening. Trans fats may be used in store-bought baked goods and fried foods at some fast-food restaurants.

You can tell *monounsaturated* and *polyunsaturated fats* because they are liquid at room temperature. These types of fat seem to lower your chance of heart disease. But that doesn't mean you can eat more than the Dietary Guidelines suggest. *Trans fats* and *saturated fats* are usually solid at room temperature.