

Healthy Eating for Seniors

Specific nutritional recommendations for seniors

Yes. Some of the factors described above, like changes in the digestive system, as well as health concerns like the increased risk of fragile bones, means that nutritional needs change as you age. Periodic review of your diet is always helpful, particularly if you have specific medical conditions. Your doctor can help you assess your nutritional needs and make suggestions for meeting them.

In general, some important guidelines for seniors include:

- reduce sodium (salt) to help prevent water retention and high blood pressure,
- monitor fat intake in order to maintain healthy cholesterol levels,
- consume more calcium and vitamin D for bone health,
- eat more fiber-rich foods to prevent constipation,
- cut back on sugar and on dry foods,
- make sure you get the recommended amount of important vitamins and minerals,
- increase your water intake, and
- participate in regular physical activity.

Additionally, because of lifestyle changes and a lower metabolism, it is important to consider *how* you eat as well as what you eat. To manage your weight and maintain optimum health, focus on eating efficiently. This means choosing foods that maximize nutritional value, not calories.

Whole, natural, fresh foods such as fruits and vegetables, whole grains, nuts, legumes, healthy sources of protein (poultry, fish, eggs, tofu) and dairy products that contain calcium constitute efficient eating. Highly processed and refined foods usually contain more calories and fewer nutrients, which is why people often still feel hungry after consuming them.

Creating a healthy, well-balanced diet

The first step to eating well is to learn what your body needs right now. Knowing what to eat, and how much or little, is key to achieving and maintaining nutritional health. Begin by familiarizing yourself with the general dietary guidelines and recommendations in [Healthy Eating: New Food Pyramids and Tips for a Healthy Diet](#). It may also be wise to consult your health care professional, who can evaluate your specific nutritional needs based on your medical history and current health profile, assess whether you need to follow a special diet, and recommend any necessary supplements.

Commit to making dietary choices that are:

- nutrient-dense: low in fat and sodium, high in fiber and calcium, with a moderate calorie content;

- flavorful, so you'll look forward to mealtimes;
- easy to chew, swallow and digest;
- simple to prepare;
- appealing to the eye as well as the palate.

Sound like a tall order? Eating well as you age is easier than you think. Here's how:

- **Focus on good carbs.** Opt for whole grain nutrition (brown rice, whole wheat bread, rolled oats, barley, millet), not refined "white" products, such as white bread, white rice, or products made with white flour.
- **Raw equals roughage!** Aim to eat at least one daily serving of your fruits and vegetables raw. This not only preserves their nutritional value, it's an easy way to eliminate constipation. Raw fruits and veggies are loaded with fiber, vitamins, minerals, and enzymes to aid digestion. Plus, there's no preparation involved. If you have difficulty biting or chewing, cut your apple or carrot into bite-sized pieces. Or try a green salad with grated zucchini.
- Steaming is the best way to cook vegetables; it preserves nutrients. Light sautéing is next. Boiling leeches nutrients—but you can use the leftover cooking water as soup stock!
- **Go lean on protein.** Fish, poultry, eggs, beans, peas, nuts and tofu all count as protein, so it's easy to vary your healthy protein choices. Try skinless turkey or chicken, or fish, baked, broiled, grilled, steamed or poached, and you'll savor the flavor while adding healthy, low-fat, low cholesterol nutrition to your diet. Go easy on red meats, which contain saturated fat, and on salty meats such as bacon or ham.
- **Bone up on calcium.** All dairy products are not created equal. Milk, cheese and yogurt retain their calcium content; cream cheese, cream and butter do not. As part of a healthy senior diet, choose fat-free or low fat dairy products. If you're lactose-intolerant, consider lactose-free and lower-lactose products, such as hard cheeses and yogurt. Or, a calcium supplement might be a better way for you to meet your calcium requirement.
- **Choose first-rate fats.** Get your "good" fats from oils such as olive oil and sunflower oil, avocados and avocado oil, nuts and seeds.
- **Keep it moist.** In addition to drinking enough water each day, aim to consume foods with a high water content. Staying properly hydrated flushes toxins from your body, relieves constipation, helps keep your joints flexible and your mind clear. High water content foods include melons, grapes, cucumbers, onions, apples, cabbage, and, of course, soup!

- **THIRTEEN WAYS TO STAY FIT WHEN THERE'S NO TIME TO EXERCISE**

While looking at an article by a leading fitness guru, I was struck by her emphasis on making exercise a priority and finding a way to fit in your gym time at any cost. Although she's right in principle, I couldn't help thinking that this woman cannot possibly be a working mom with small children!

Those of us who are balancing multiple roles – as parent, worker, spouse, school volunteer, household manager, and responsible citizen -- often find that 24 hours per day simply aren't enough. Fitness gets put on the back burner.

Even if you're lucky enough to be able to set aside time to work out, things like school holidays, childhood illnesses, and teacher conferences have a way of eating up these extra hours along with our best intentions.

You may not have time to go to the gym, but you can still be physically active and boost your metabolism by using a bit of creativity in planning your day. During a recent week when my kids were side-lined by a nasty cold, I started thinking about ways to be physically active when going to the gym was out of the question. I also asked some trainers for their advice. We came up with the following ways to fit exercise into a packed-full day:

1. If you've got a young sports enthusiast in the family, play along. Shooting baskets and kicking a soccer ball around the yard are great ways to get your heart pumping. Thirty minutes of cardio training are recommended, but even five to ten minutes will elevate your energy and speed your metabolism.
2. Take the kids for a walk. If their pace is too slow, add some lunges, jumping jacks, or running in place every few minutes to make yourself work harder.
3. Pull young children in a wagon through the neighborhood. Or give them a ride in a jogging stroller.
4. Let little children ride bicycles or tricycles while you jog behind.
5. Get into some vigorous sweeping, mopping, or vacuuming. These types of housekeeping chores can burn a significant number of calories.
6. We've all heard the benefits of taking the stairs instead of the elevator. Everything you've heard is true.
7. Likewise, getting off the bus or subway a stop or two before your destination on a regular basis adds up to a lot of heart-healthy walking.

Section: Thirteen Ways to Stay Fit When There's No Time to Exercise Visit

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8. Do yoga or Pilates while you, or the kids, unwind in front of a movie. While watching TV, do push-ups or sit-ups during commercials. Even one per commercial during a two-hour movie can give you some good exercise.
 9. In a sedentary job, take your breaks outdoors and have a brisk, short walk. You'll also improve your concentration and mood.
 10. Dance or do aerobics at home. No one's watching, anyway. If you like, include the little ones and turn it into a game.
 11. Practice stretching or light yoga moves while talking on the phone, listening to the news, or while dinner is cooking.
 12. Find the high-energy items on your to-do list and tackle these when you need physical activity. Think about washing the car, digging the garden, mowing the lawn, or reorganizing a closet.
- 13. Get up 15 to 30 minutes earlier than the rest of the family and use this time for a run, a walk, or some stretching and yoga.