

# Diet and Nutrition for Older Adults

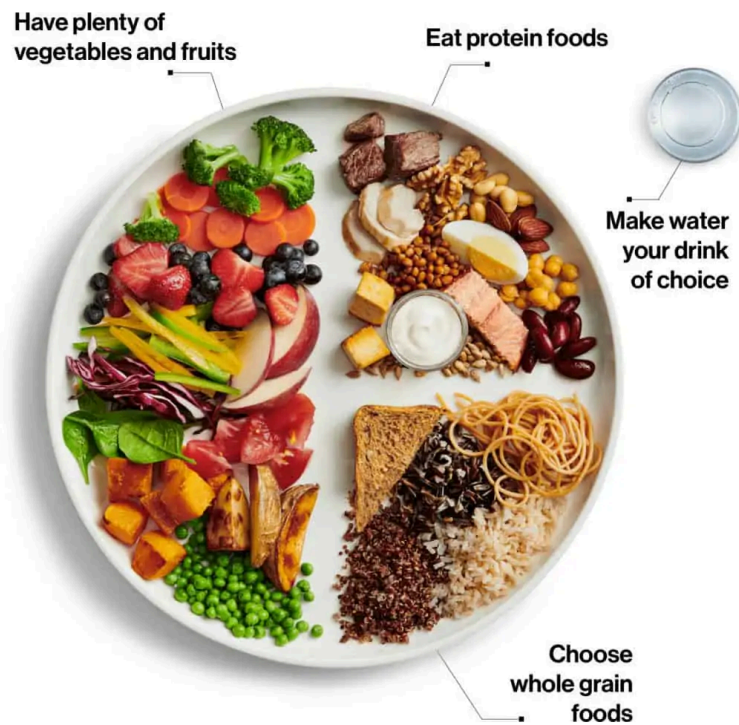
Healthy eating is a key part of aging well. Maintaining your health and strength is crucial for your independence and quality of life.

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## Nutritional needs change with age

As you age, it is crucial to eat a variety of healthy foods to make sure you get the different nutrients you need.



Source: Canada Food Guide

### Older adults:

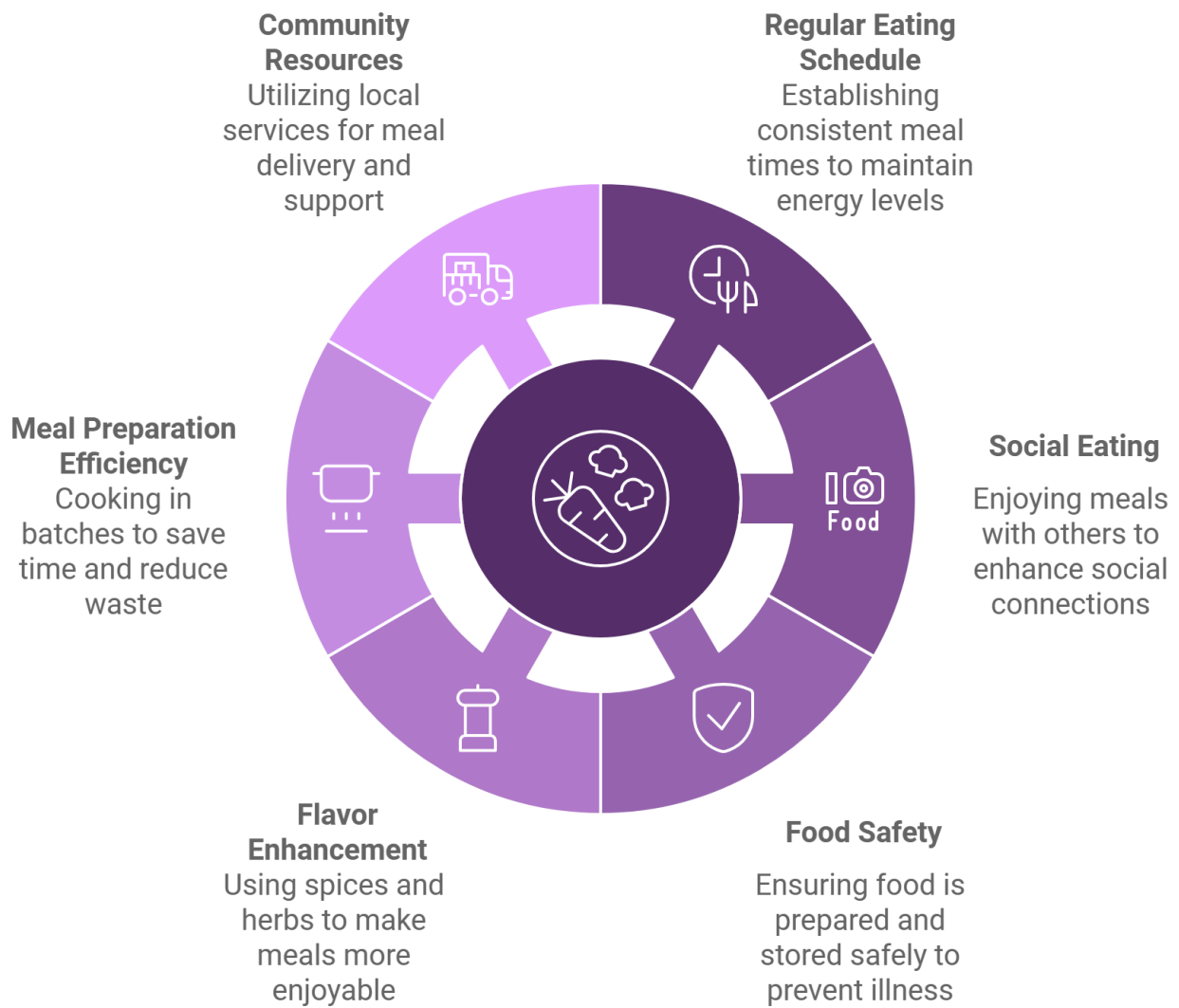
- Require fewer calories but need more protein, calcium, fiber, and specific vitamins and minerals.
- Often take medications that affect appetite or require dietary changes.
- May be frail, have decreased mobility, and need help with shopping and meal prep.
- Might experience reduced thirst and bladder issues.
- Can face social isolation, negatively impacting appetite.
- Often have a decreased ability to absorb nutrients with age.
- Typically have less income for healthy foods.

## The effects of poor nutrition

- Poor nutrition weakens our immune systems and leaves us vulnerable to infections.
- It also causes unhealthy weight and muscle loss that can lead to frailty, falls, broken bones, and a loss of independence.
- A poor diet can also lead to nutrition-related diseases and conditions.

## Tips for eating well as you age

### Healthy Eating Strategies for Aging



Maintain a **regular eating schedule** and **don't skip meals** -having a specific mealtime to look forward to daily can be good for your physical and mental well-being.

**Eat with others** - it makes mealtime more enjoyable and is just as important for our mental health as what we eat is for our bodies.

**Older adults should prioritize food safety**, as they are more susceptible to foodborne illnesses like Listeria and Salmonella. Aging weakens the immune system and reduces the kidneys and liver's ability to filter toxins effectively.

If your sense of taste or smell has changed, try different spices and herbs to add more flavour.

If certain foods have become harder to eat, consider preparing them differently. For example, for a softer texture, try cooking vegetables instead of consuming them raw.

**Cook once and eat twice** - prepare meals and snacks when you have energy. Prepare extra to eat later or freeze leftovers.

**Stock your pantry** with a variety of non-perishable food items. You can use these items to make meals when you cannot get to the store.

**Keep a food diary** to track what you eat.

**Read food labels** to learn what's in your food.

Be aware of how many calories you need per day.

**Check out the resources in your community** - explore resources such as:

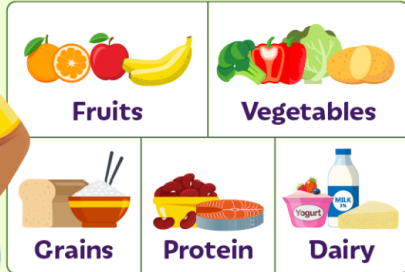
- meal and food delivery services
- group meal programs
- community kitchens
- volunteer shopping support services

# 5 Tips for Choosing Healthier Foods as You Age

Follow these tips to help you maintain a healthy weight, get needed nutrients, and lower your risk of developing certain diseases.



**Eat a variety of foods each day.**



**Read food labels to learn what's in your food.**



**Choose foods that don't have a lot of sugar, saturated fats, and sodium.**



**Be aware of how many calories you need per day.**

**Keep a food diary to track what you eat.**



Learn more about healthy eating as you age at [www.nia.nih.gov/healthy-eating](http://www.nia.nih.gov/healthy-eating).



Women 60+		Men 60+	
Physical activity	Calories	Physical activity	Calories
Not active	1,600	Not active	2,000-2,200
Moderately active	1,800	Moderately active	2,200-2,400
Very active	2,000-2,200	Very active	2,400-2,600

source: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/healthy-eating-nutrition-and-diet/5-tips-choosing-healthier-foods-you-age>

## What should an older adult's diet consist of?

**Get your fiber:** Add fiber to meals with food like whole grains, raw fruits, and vegetables.

**Eat healthy fats:** Reduce your cholesterol and fat intake by preparing food with healthy fats like olive oil, avocados, salmon, and walnuts.

**Reduce salt consumption:** Season dishes with garlic, herbs, and spices rather than salt. Choose foods that are low in sodium or have no added salt.

**Limit "white foods" and "empty carbs":** White foods typically refer to processed and refined items such as flour, rice, pasta, bread, cereal, and simple sugars like table sugar and high-fructose corn syrup. Obtaining carbohydrates from "smart

carbs," such as fruits, vegetables, legumes, low-fat dairy, and whole grains is healthier.

**Stay hydrated:** Aging can put you at an increased risk of dehydration. Adults who are not adequately hydrated may age more quickly and face a higher risk of chronic diseases, such as lung disease, heart failure, diabetes, and stroke. Drink eight or more glasses of water or other beverages daily. Limit drinks that contain caffeine and alcohol.

[View our Dehydration in Older Adults Information Tool](#)

**Get your vitamin D** - eat foods high in vitamin D, such as fatty fish, canned tuna, egg yolks, fortified milk, and cereal. The Canada Food Guide recommends that older adults take a vitamin D supplement every day.

Eating healthily is essential for aging well. Keeping your health and strength is vital for maintaining your independence and quality of life.

#### **Sources:**

The Role of Nutrition in Healthy Aging

<https://www.agingresearch.org/video/food-for-thought-the-role-of-nutrition-in-healthy-aging/>

Nutrition for Older Adults: Why Eating Well Matters as You Age

<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/how-to-age-better-by-eating-more-healthfully>

Eating Healthy for Seniors

<https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/tips-for-healthy-eating/seniors/>

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