

EMPHASIZING NUTRIENT-DENSE FOODS IN OLDER ADULTS

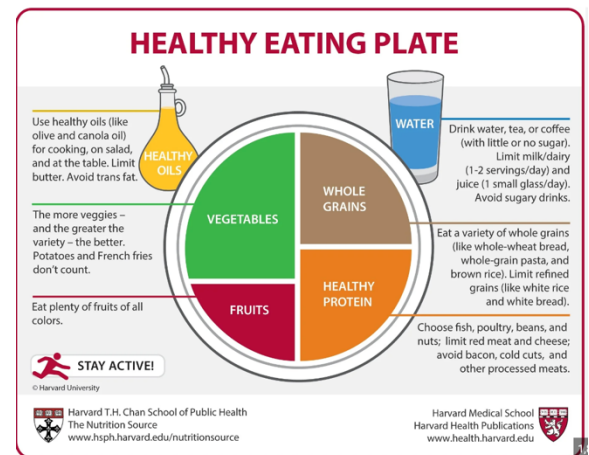
As we age, our bodies change, and our nutritional needs become different. Seniors are at an increased risk of malnutrition, which can lead to several health problems. Consuming a diet rich in nutrient-dense foods is crucial for their overall health and well-being.

Nutrient-dense foods are those that are packed with vitamins, minerals, and other essential nutrients. They are typically low in calories and high in fiber, making them a good choice for seniors who are trying to maintain a healthy weight. Nutrient-dense foods can also help seniors boost their immune system, reduce their risk of developing chronic diseases, and maintain muscle mass.



Nutrient-dense foods particularly beneficial for seniors:

- **Fruits and vegetables:** All fruits and vegetables are nutrient-dense, but some of the most beneficial for seniors include berries, leafy greens, and cruciferous vegetables. **Berries** are packed with antioxidants, which can help boost the immune system and reduce the risk of chronic diseases. **Leafy greens** are a good source of vitamins A, C, and K, as well as calcium and iron. **Cruciferous vegetables**, such as broccoli, cauliflower, and Brussels sprouts, are a good source of fiber, vitamins, and minerals. So fill half of your plate with vegetable and some fruits.
- **Whole grains:** Whole grains are a good source of fiber, vitamins, and minerals. A quarter of plate should consist of brown rice, quinoa, bulger, couscous, and oats. Fiber in whole grains promotes a feeling of fullness, prevents overeating, reduces constipation issues, and lowers the risk of several cancers
- **Lean protein:** Lean protein sources are low in saturated fat and calories, and high in protein. Another quarter of the plate should consist of lean protein. Good choices include chicken without skin, fish, beans, and tofu. Protein is essential for maintaining muscle mass, which is important for strength, balance, and mobility.
- **Healthy Fats:** Choose healthy fats found in plant-based oils, fish, avocados, and nuts. These provide essential fatty acids, including beneficial omega-3s for heart and brain health. Include them in moderation as they are also high in calories. Limit fats from whole milk dairy products like butter, lard, and margarine.
- **Hydration:** Older adults may have a reduced sensation of thirst, so ensure they drink enough fluids throughout the day to prevent dehydration. Aim for at least 1500 ml or 6 -7 glasses of water per day. Water, herbal teas, and low-sugar beverages are good choices. Dehydration can lead to various health issues, including constipation and urinary tract infections
- **Physical Activity:** Engaging in regular physical activities like walking, swimming, or gentle yoga is crucial for seniors. Aim for at least 150 minutes of exercise across 5 days per week, including 2 days of muscle-strengthening activities. Exercise preserves muscle mass, enhances balance, and boosts overall well-being. Keep moving for a healthier you!



Eating well is a cornerstone of senior health. By following the healthy eating plate guidelines, which involve filling half of the plate with fruits and vegetables, a quarter with whole grains, and another quarter with lean protein, along with incorporating healthy fats or oils from plants or nuts- small changes can lead to significant improvements

Essential Nutrients for Seniors:

Vitamin D: Crucial for bone health and immune function, seniors can obtain it from sunlight, fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, and trout, fortified dairy products such as milk and orange juice, breakfast cereals, fortified tofu, mushrooms, and supplements. Adequate vitamin D aids in calcium absorption, further supporting bone health.

Calcium: Vital for maintaining strong bones and teeth, seniors should include low-fat dairy products, fortified soy milk or yogurt, leafy greens, and fortified foods in their diet to ensure sufficient calcium intake.

Potassium: Vital for heart health, and muscle function. Good sources are bananas, oranges, potatoes, spinach, milk, fish, nuts, and beans.

Vitamin B12: The body's ability to absorb vitamin B12 can decrease with age and due to certain medicines. Vitamin B12 is essential for nerve function, red blood cell formation, and preventing anemia in seniors. Good sources include meat, fish, eggs, dairy, and fortified foods for vegetarians and vegans.

Fiber: Essential for digestive health, seniors can benefit from fiber-rich foods like whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and seeds such as chia or flax seeds. These foods aid in digestion, prevent constipation, and support gut health.

Limit or Avoid for Better Health:

Saturated Fat: Limiting saturated fat is crucial for heart health. Choose lean cuts of meat, opt for low-fat dairy, and incorporate healthier fats from nuts and avocados. Red meats like beef and pork should be limited, and processed meats like bacon and deli meats should be avoided. Replacing meat with beans 2-3 times per week can be a healthy alternative. The general recommendation is to consume less than 7% of total calories from saturated fats.

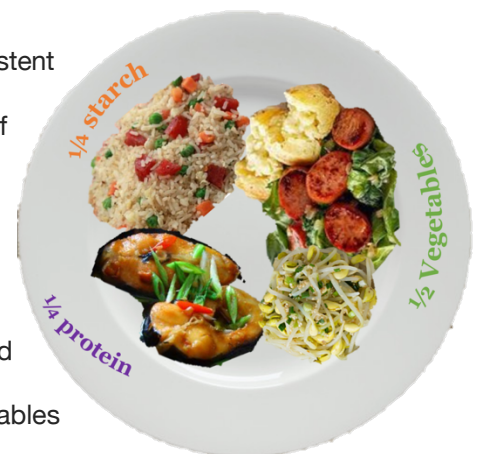
Sodium Intake: Seniors should limit sodium intake to no more than 2,300 milligrams per day to reduce the risk of high blood pressure and heart disease. Choosing fresh foods and cooking at home can help control sodium levels.

Added sugar: Limit added sugar found in sugary beverages, processed foods, desserts, and candies. The American Heart Association advises limiting added sugars to 6% of daily calories (around 6 teaspoons for women and 9 teaspoons for men). USDA suggests less than 10% of total calories from added sugars.

Processed Foods: Minimize the consumption of processed foods, which often contain high levels of sodium, unhealthy fats, and additives. Opt for fresh, whole foods to enhance overall health and well-being.

Tips for Nutrient-Dense Eating:

- Aim for regular mealtimes and avoid skipping meals to maintain consistent energy levels.
- Start your day with a nutrient-rich breakfast. A good option is a bowl of oatmeal with berries and nuts, or a yogurt parfait with fruit and granola.
- Include fruits and vegetables at every meal. Aim for at least five servings per day.
- Choose whole grains over refined grains. When possible, choose brown rice over white rice, quinoa over pasta, and whole-wheat bread over white bread.
- Choose lean protein sources. Good options include chicken, fish, beans, and tofu.
- Include low-fat dairy products like yogurt, milk as well as calcium-rich vegetables such as broccoli, kale, and bokchoy, in your diet.
- Choose healthy snacks like nuts, fruits, or yogurt instead of processed snacks.
- Minimize intake of sugary foods and drinks. Opt for natural sweetness from fruits. Reduce salt usage; use herbs and spices for flavor.



Seniors should aim to eat a variety of nutrient-dense foods from all food groups. This will help them ensure that they are getting all the nutrients they need to stay healthy. Remember, making gradual adjustments and maintaining consistency in these changes can indeed pave the way for better health outcomes.