

Healthy Aging

A photograph of an elderly man with a full white beard and hair, smiling warmly at the camera. He is wearing a light-colored, button-down shirt. He is holding a large, shallow wooden bowl filled with a variety of fresh vegetables, including broccoli, red and yellow bell peppers, cherry tomatoes, and a small pumpkin. The background is a rustic kitchen setting with wooden shelves holding various items like potted plants, pumpkins, and jars. Warm, ambient lighting is visible, with a string of Edison-style bulbs hanging in the upper right corner.

Dr Hossein Khosravi,
MSc, Ph.D in Nutrition and Dietetics
Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD)

Definition of Aging

Aging is the progressive physiological changes in an organism that lead to senescence, or a decline in biological functions and the organism's ability to adapt to metabolic stress. This process occurs at the cellular, organ, and whole-organism levels over time.

Muscle Mass



Digestion & Absorption

Aging also affects the body's ability to digest and absorb nutrients. The efficiency of the digestive system declines, leading to reduced absorption of essential nutrients like calcium, vitamin B12, and iron. This can result in deficiencies that impact overall health, including bone density and cognitive function.

Metabolism

- Metabolism tends to slow down with age due to several factors:
- **Decreased Muscle Mass:** Muscle tissue burns more calories than fat tissue, so a loss in muscle mass reduces the basal metabolic rate (BMR).
- **Hormonal Changes:** Changes in hormones like insulin and growth hormone can affect how the body processes and stores energy.

Dietary Considerations

- **Reduced Caloric Needs**
- Older adults generally need fewer calories due to decreased physical activity and muscle mass. However, nutrient needs remain the same or even increase

Healthy BMI Range:

- For older adults, a BMI between **23 and 27** is generally considered healthy. This range is higher than the standard BMI range for younger adults (18.5 to 24.9) because a slightly higher BMI can offer protective benefits against nutrient deficiencies and osteoporosis.

- **Nutrient-Dense Foods**

- Focus on foods that provide a high amount of nutrients without too many calories. This includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and low-fat dairy.

- **Avoiding Empty Calories**

- Limit foods high in added sugars, saturated fats, and sodium. These can contribute to weight gain and other health issues.

Nutritional requirement

Protein

- **Importance:** Helps maintain muscle mass and strength, which is crucial for mobility and overall health.
- **Sources:** Lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy products, beans, legumes, and nuts.

Calcium and Vitamin D

- **Importance:** Essential for bone health to prevent osteoporosis and fractures.
- **Sources:** Dairy products, fortified plant-based milks, leafy green vegetables, and supplements if necessary.

Vitamin B12

- **Importance:** Vital for red blood cell formation and neurological function.
- **Sources:** Meat, fish, and fortified cereals.
- Absorption can decrease with age, so supplements may be needed.

Fiber

- **Importance:** Aids in digestion and helps prevent constipation, which can be more common in older adults.
- **Sources:** Whole grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes, and nuts.

Potassium

- **Importance:** Helps maintain proper cell function and can help manage blood pressure.
- **Sources:** Fruits (like bananas and oranges), vegetables, beans, and dairy.

- **Supplements**

- Depending on individual health needs and dietary intake, supplements for vitamins and minerals like B12, D, and calcium might be necessary.

- **Hydration**

- The sensation of thirst diminishes with age, increasing the risk of dehydration. It's important to drink plenty of fluids, such as water, herbal teas, and soups.