

# Nutrition Tips for Older Adults



**GOD'S LOVE**  
**WE DELIVER®**



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The mission of God's Love We Deliver is to improve the health and well-being of men, women and children living with HIV/AIDS, cancer and other life-altering illnesses by alleviating hunger and malnutrition. We prepare and deliver nutritious, high-quality meals to people who are unable to provide or prepare meals for themselves.

We offer illness-specific nutrition education and counseling to our clients and families, care providers and other service organizations. All our services are provided free of charge without regard to income.

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# Introduction

In many parts of the world, people are living longer. In the U.S., the older population (persons 65 years or older) is rapidly increasing and is expected to double, reaching 24% of the total population by 2060. Aging Americans are also becoming more racially and ethnically diverse.

Obviously, the body changes as we age. Our cells do not function as well over time, leading to a natural decline in many areas. Many experience a decrease in appetite and in the quantity of food eaten; an alteration in the senses of smell and taste; and changes in how food is digested and used by the body. Poor oral health can also make eating painful. In addition, around 80% of older adults have at least one medical condition, which often means taking multiple medications. All of these factors make eating and keeping a healthy weight difficult, which can further complicate issues related to aging and nutrition.

“Successful” aging has been defined as longevity with the absence or avoidance of disease, maintenance of physical and cognitive functioning, and active life engagement. Aging itself can be difficult, and the added stress of illness can make it more challenging. However, eating right and remaining as physically and mentally active as possible can help you age well, manage symptoms and feel your best. This booklet will cover the nutritional issues that occur with aging and chronic conditions, helping you to maintain strength, a healthy weight, and quality of life.

# Keys to Healthy Aging



## MAINTAINING A HEALTHY WEIGHT

Nutrition issues related to aging, such as reduced appetite, thirst and sense of taste, are special considerations for the aging population. Many older adults take multiple daily medications that interact with each other and with food. These can cause changes in appetite, food intake, and hydration which result in unintentional weight loss, dehydration, decreased quality of life, increased dependence, poorer health outcomes, and sarcopenia (loss of muscle and strength).

*Unintentional or unplanned weight loss* may be a sign that a person is not getting enough calories and/or protein and can lead to frailty, falls, infections, non-healing wounds, and sarcopenia. Stressors such as chronic disease or aging itself can increase the body's need for energy from food.

*Sarcopenia* is age-related decline of muscle mass and strength that can contribute to poor quality of life, physical frailty, and disability. Risk factors include aging, poor diet, lack of physical activity, chronic disease, stress, and inflammation. A diet adequate in protein combined with moderate physical activity can reduce the risk of sarcopenia.

For both unplanned weight loss and sarcopenia, it is important to eat nutrient-dense foods high in protein on a daily basis to maintain healthy body weight and muscle mass. Examples are chicken, fish, beef, eggs, dairy products, tofu and beans. See page 27 for menu planning ideas.



## HYDRATION

Nearly 60% of our body is water. It is vital for many bodily functions, including removing toxins through urination. Staying well-hydrated is critical, as older adults are at a greater risk for dehydration. The key is to drink before you feel thirsty. Signs of dehydration include headache, dry mouth, dizziness, weakness, dry skin, and dark colored urine. Recommendations for fluid intake vary from person to person, but 6-8 cups per day is recommended. The best way to track your hydration is by the color of urine. Light yellow urine indicates adequate hydration; anything darker can be a sign of dehydration. (Note that some vitamins and medications can discolor urine.)

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### When to Drink:

When participating in an outside activity.

If you are hot.

If you sweat a lot.

Even if you are not thirsty, drink!

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Water and other beverages are good sources of fluids. However, fluid can also be found in foods that naturally contain water such as yogurt, soup, applesauce, ices, pudding, gelatin, ice cream, and all fruits and vegetables.

## EXERCISE

Exercise has shown to reduce the risk of falls by improving balance and overall quality of life among older adults. Additionally, it helps to regulate insulin, balance energy, normalize bowel movements, and reduce inflammation. The current recommendation for physical activity is 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise a week, which is approximately 20 minutes per day. Walking is an easy way to stay physically active and should be incorporated into your everyday activities such as shopping, running errands, or going to appointments. Your exercise routine should be personalized to your



needs, abilities, and medical condition, and lower intensity exercise may be necessary. Be sure to consult your medical provider before starting any physical activity or exercise program.

## TYPES OF EXERCISE

**Aerobic exercise:** Walking, running, cycling, dancing, or swimming. Promotes fat loss, proper blood circulation, and strengthens the heart.

**Resistance exercise:** Calisthenics, yoga, and resistance training using bands or weights. Helps to build muscle mass to restore strength and balance.

**Stretching:** Increases flexibility and prevents injury. Should be done before (as a warm-up) and after exercise (cool down).

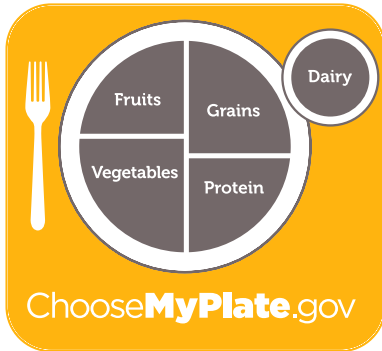
### Key Points to Remember

- Keeping track of weight and intake of food and fluids can help identify problems before they become serious.
- Managing your weight is an important part of your overall health care.
- Maintaining lifestyle habits such as eating a well-balanced diet (see page 27 for menu planning) can help you feel your best.
- Being active can have a positive impact on your overall health and well-being. Speaking with a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist to discuss what would be a healthy weight for you.



## PLANNING WELL-BALANCED MEALS

Knowing what types of foods you wish to prepare, and having the ingredients on hand, are key to successful meal planning. Bearing in mind any special dietary concerns, the MyPlate model can make this job easier.



### **Vegetables and Fruit:** $\frac{1}{2}$ of the plate

Serve vegetables with every meal as a side dish, mixed dish (soup or stew), or garnish for a sandwich. While it is important to select a wide variety of vegetables, green leafy vegetables should be served regularly. Fruit can be part of the meal, snack or dessert.

### **Protein:** $\frac{1}{4}$ of the plate

Look for lean cuts of meat (especially chicken and fish). Avoid processed meats, such as lunch meats and hot dogs. Try plant sources of protein, including beans and tofu.

### **Grain:** $\frac{1}{4}$ of the plate

Best choices are whole grains, such as brown rice, whole wheat pasta, barley, or quinoa. Starchy vegetables, including potatoes and corn, are other choices in this category.

### **Dairy:** 2-3 servings a day

Examples include milk, cheese, and yogurt.





## OLDER ADULTS AND FOOD SAFETY

Older adults are more likely to get food-borne illness (food poisoning), and face special challenges to preparing food safely. This group is at increased risk for multiple reasons: the immune system becomes less effective with age; stomach acid—a key defense against pathogens—decreases; kidneys are not as effective in filtering bacteria from the blood; and many older adults have multiple chronic diseases and take medications, further weakening the immune system. On top of this, older adults may struggle with eyesight and sense of smell, making it harder to identify unsafe food.

How to reduce your risk of food borne illness:

- **Wash** raw fruits and vegetables before preparing, but do not wash raw meat, poultry, eggs, or fish.
- **Cook** meats, eggs, poultry, and seafood thoroughly, using a thermometer to check for doneness. Cook beef to 160°F, poultry to 165°F, pork to 145°F, eggs to 160°F, fish to 145°F, and leftovers to 165°F.
- **Clean** your kitchen, including refrigerator, thoroughly and often. Use soap and water to remove dirt, and then follow up with a bleach-based household cleaning spray to sanitize. Use clean towels instead of sponges, which can harbor bacteria.
- **Label** all foods in your freezer and refrigerator with a date. Cook raw meats and poultry within 2 days or freeze for later use. Leftovers can be kept in the refrigerator for 2 days or for 3-4 months in the freezer.
- **Ask** for help when you need it.



## ORAL HEALTH

Many older adults experience oral health problems like missing or loose teeth, poor fitting dentures, dry mouth, and periodontal disease which can make eating painful and difficult. This discomfort can lead to avoiding certain nutritious foods, or worse, eating less, resulting in unintended weight loss.

How to keep your mouth healthy:

- See a dentist at least once a year.
- Brush and floss teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and a soft toothbrush, or clean your dentures daily with denture cleaner.
- Choose water rather than sweetened drinks like sodas.
- Eat good sources of calcium daily like yogurt, milk, cheese, and green leafy vegetables.
- Try saliva substitutes if experiencing dry mouth.

## MANAGING GASTROINTESTINAL CHANGES

The gastrointestinal (GI) system includes the esophagus, stomach, liver, gallbladder, pancreas, intestines, and colon. Advanced age, certain medical conditions, reduced levels of stomach acid, digestive enzymes, and weak muscles are reasons why people may experience GI problems as they age. Additionally, reduced physical activity, use of multiple medications, alcohol, stress, and diabetes can worsen GI related issues.

Early symptoms, such as constipation and diarrhea, can be indicative of larger issues, so it is important to pay attention to



and discuss bowel function with your medical provider. Eating nutritious foods and beverages that are rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals can help to improve and/or prevent certain GI problems.

Here are some common gastrointestinal problems:

**Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD)** occurs when stomach acid rises into the esophagus. The use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen or naproxen, and excessive weight, can also increase the risk of GERD. Common symptoms include indigestion, burping, bloating, and heartburn. GERD can also lead to problems with swallowing. To manage symptoms:

- Limit intake of alcohol and caffeine, which may worsen the condition.
- Avoid foods known to cause reflux, such as fatty, spicy foods, or acidic foods (citrus and tomatoes), mint, chocolate, onions, and carbonated beverages.
- Have small meals throughout the day instead of large meals, which can fill the stomach and make GERD symptoms more likely.
- Do not lie down after eating. Wait at least 3 hours after a meal.
- Manage stress by walking, meditation, or taking a warm bath.

**Constipation** occurs when people have trouble moving their bowels. Common causes are dehydration, certain medications, and inadequate fiber consumption.



- Drink at least 6-8 cups of water per day.
- Aim for 25-35 grams of fiber per day by gradually increasing intake of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

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### Important:

Consume sport drinks, coconut water, or any beverage with electrolytes (sodium + potassium) during periods of fever, diarrhea, or vomiting.

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**Diarrhea** has many causes and can be serious. See a medical provider to determine the cause, and a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist for an individualized nutrition care plan.

- For immediate relief, avoid high fiber foods such as whole grains, raw fruits and vegetables, as well as caffeine and alcohol.
- Drink plenty of fluids and increase consumption of starchy foods like bananas, white bread, white rice, applesauce, and potatoes.

**Nausea** is associated with many different conditions and is often a sign of problems in the GI tract.

- Take medications and supplements with a meal, not on an empty stomach, unless otherwise instructed by your medical provider or pharmacist.
- Settle the stomach with remedies, such as ginger, saltines, plain water, and peppermint or chamomile tea.

**Vomiting** is a natural defense mechanism of the body but can have harmful effects. With excessive vomiting, it is important to consult your medical provider immediately.

- Do not eat immediately after vomiting, even if hungry. Instead, sip water or suck on ice chips to replenish fluids.
- When feeling a little better, drink diluted fruit juice or eat plain bread.

# Managing Chronic Conditions



## CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

**Cardiovascular disease (CVD)** refers to a group of conditions that affect the heart and blood vessels. The most common causes of CVD are atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries) and hypertension (high blood pressure). Both are related to a number of factors, some of which cannot be changed (like genetics and age), and some of which can be modified (such as smoking, weight, diet, and physical activity). Focusing on these lifestyle factors will help to avoid further worsening of the disease.

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, silently damages the heart and arteries. It may cause heart attacks, heart failure, stroke, and kidney disease. There are often no symptoms of high blood pressure, so it is important to ask your medical provider about your blood pressure. In older adults, as with the rest of the population, blood pressure should be no higher than 120/80 mmHg. A well-balanced diet, healthy weight, and consistent exercise can normalize blood pressure and decrease the need for medication.



With CVD, it is essential to follow a heart-healthy eating plan to maintain good health. Here are some things to consider:

*Focus on healthy fats*

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**USDA  
Definitions  
of Extra  
Lean and  
Lean Beef  
and Pork**

**Lean:**  
3.5 oz serving  
contains less than  
10 grams total  
fat, 4.5 grams  
saturated fat,  
95 milligrams  
cholesterol

**Extra Lean:**  
3.5 oz serving  
contains less  
than 5 grams  
total fat, 2 grams  
saturated fat,  
95 milligrams of  
cholesterol

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- Select monounsaturated fats such as olive oil and avocado.
- Favor polyunsaturated fats such as canola oil and nuts.
- Favor omega-3 fats, which are found in cold water fish such as salmon, mackerel, and tuna.
- Choose fat-free and low-fat dairy products.
- Eat fewer saturated fats; such as fatty meats, poultry skin, full-fat dairy products. Better choices include skinless poultry, extra lean or lean cuts of beef or pork, fish or tofu.
- Avoid trans-fats, which are found in processed foods and many commercially baked goods.

*Monitor sodium intake*

- In general, limit sodium to 1,500 - 2,300 mg per day. Ask your medical provider for recommendations for your specific situation.
- Check ingredient labels for salt-containing ingredients such as sodium chloride, monosodium glutamate (MSG), baking soda, baking powder, sodium benzoate, sodium nitrate, and sodium sulfite.



- Choose fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables when possible (they contain less sodium).
- When using canned goods, drain and rinse the contents well in cold water, or purchase low-sodium products.
- Avoid items that are pickled, brined, smoked, or cured. They are all high in sodium.
- Season food with fresh or dried herbs or spices instead of salt.
- Snack on fruits, vegetables, unsalted nuts and crackers, and low-fat yogurt.
- Processed and prepared foods may contain large amounts of sodium; eat fewer of these items and read food labels to make better choices (see page 14).

## Use the Food Label to Make Heart Healthy Choices

When buying packaged foods, check the food label for the amount of fat and sodium. Look at the % Daily Value column to determine whether the item contains a high or low source of each nutrient.

### The 5%-20% rule of thumb:

- 5% or less is low. Keep total fat, saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, and sodium low.
- 20% or more is high. Keep vitamins, minerals, and fiber high.



# Nutrition Facts

8 servings per container

**Serving size** 2/3 cup (55g)

**Amount per serving**

**Calories** 230

**% Daily Value\***

<b>Total Fat</b> 8g	<b>10%</b>
Saturated Fat 1g	<b>5%</b>
<i>Trans Fat</i> 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 160mg	<b>7%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 37g	<b>13%</b>
Dietary Fiber 4g	<b>14%</b>
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	<b>20%</b>
<b>Protein</b> 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%

\* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.





## DIABETES MANAGEMENT

The number of older adults with diabetes is increasing due to longer lifespan. In addition to common complications related to the eyes, nerves, and kidneys, older adults with diabetes may also suffer from depression, reduced cognition, muscle weakness, falls, fractures, and physical frailty. Complications increase for adults over the age of 75 who are also at risk for malnutrition and reduced muscle strength and mass, which can result in physical limitations. Older adults with diabetes and cognitive impairment are at risk for hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) and treatment-related issues.

If you have diabetes, maintaining a healthy lifestyle and weight are keys to controlling your blood glucose (blood sugar) and preventing complications. Choosing foods wisely, along with engaging in regular physical activity, can prevent blood glucose from spiking or going too low. Some helpful daily practices are:

- Plan meals and snacks ahead of time. Try to eat around the same time every day.
- Eat balanced meals that contain carbohydrates (grains, vegetables, and fruit), fat, and protein.
- Keep portion sizes for carbohydrates consistent and moderate; avoid eating a large portion at any one meal or snack. The chart on page 16 will help you identify which foods are high in carbohydrates.
- Eat whole foods and whole grain products rather than processed foods. They contain more fiber and nutrients and



do not raise blood sugar as much. See “whole foods swap” below for some ideas.

- Exercise as regularly as you are able.
- Achieve and maintain a healthy body weight.
- Consume adequate amounts of water to avoid dehydration.
- Take your medications and insulin, and self-monitor your blood glucose, as recommended by your medical provider.

## WHAT FOODS HAVE CARBOHYDRATES

### High-Carb Foods:

rice, cereal, pasta, bread, crackers, milk, fruit, fruit juice, starchy vegetables (potatoes, corn, beans, peas), soda and sweetened beverages, desserts, candies

### Low-Carb Foods:

most vegetables (except starchy ones)

### No-Carb Foods:

meat, poultry, fish and oils

## THE WHOLE FOODS SWAP

Here are a few examples of how to increase whole foods.

EAT THIS:	INSTEAD OF THIS:
whole wheat bread	white bread
brown rice	white rice
orange	orange juice
old-fashioned oats	instant oats



## BONE HEALTH

Everyone who ages faces issues of bone loss and may be at risk of osteopenia (weak bones) and osteoporosis (very weak bones), especially post-menopausal women. People with these conditions are at high risk for fractures. Bone loss can be the result of a combination of changing hormones, decreased physical activity, certain medications, and an inadequate diet.

While it seems as if our bones are solid and never change, this is not the case. Bones peak in length and density at about age 30. After that, they follow a process of breaking down and building up. The trick is to keep these two opposing activities equal. If the breakdown occurs at a faster pace than the build-up, a person will experience bone loss or osteoporosis. Calcium and vitamin D are particularly important to bone health. Other nutrients play a role as well.



## BONE BUILDERS

	Function	Recommended Amount Per Day	Sources	Examples
<b>Calcium</b>	Most abundant mineral in the body; 99% of it is in the bones.	Aged 50+, 1200 mg	Dairy products, fortified soy milk or juice, tofu, canned fish with bones	1 cup milk = 300 mg; 1 cup yogurt = 375 mg
<b>Vitamin D</b>	Helps in the absorption of calcium.	Aged 50-70, 600 IU; Aged 70+, 800 IU	Sunshine, fortified milk, eggs, fish	1 egg = 41 IU; 1 cup milk = 120 IU; 3 oz salmon = 566 IU
<b>Protein</b>	Builds, repairs and replaces tissue.	Needs vary by age, gender, weight, and medical condition	Meat, poultry, fish, dairy, soy, beans	3 oz chicken = 27 g; 1 egg = 6 g; 1T peanut butter = 5 g
<b>Vitamin K</b>	Aids in the formation of proper bone structure and strength.	Adult Male, 120 mcg; Adult Female, 90 mcg	Green leafy vegetables, e.g., kale, spinach	1 cup cooked spinach = 889 mcg; 1 cup cooked collards = 772 mcg
<b>Magnesium</b>	Improves bone density and helps process calcium.	Men 50+, 420 mg; Women 50+, 320 mg	Green leafy vegetables, potatoes, nuts, seeds, whole grains, dark chocolate	1 oz roasted pumpkin seeds = 73 mg; 1 oz almonds = 75 mg; 1/2 cup boiled spinach = 79 mg; 1 oz dark chocolate = 41 mg

### TIP:

Be sure to include the calcium rich bones when using canned salmon by crushing the bones into whatever you are making.

Skip this if you have a swallowing problem.



BONE BUILDERS				
	Function	Recommended Amount Per Day	Sources	Examples
<b>Fruits and vegetables</b>	Maintains alkaline level in the body – needed to keep calcium from leeching from the bones.	2 servings of fruit; 5-7 servings of vegetables	All fruits and vegetables	1 serving = 1 cup raw or cooked vegetable, 2 cups raw leafy greens; 1 cup fruit , 1 medium piece of fruit or 1/2 cup dried fruit.

*Sources: Institute of Medicine, Vitamin D Council, Nutrition Care Manual, USDA National Nutrient Database*

### Other Considerations

- Engage in moderate weight bearing (resistance) exercise. See page 5 for ideas and always speak to your medical provider before starting a new regimen.
- Make sure that you are getting enough calcium and vitamin D through food and, if necessary, supplements. A Registered Dietitian Nutritionist can help you analyze your diet.
- Use alcohol moderately, if at all. Chronic alcohol use is linked to an increase in fractures.
- If you smoke, try to quit. Cigarette smoking is associated with decreased bone density.
- Avoid drinking soda. Soda may interfere with bone health by interfering with calcium absorption due to its high phosphorus levels.



## Vitamin D and Sunshine

Your body makes vitamin D from the sun's ultraviolet rays. During the summer months, 10-15 minutes sun exposure at least 3 times a week on the face, arms, back, and hands without sunscreen, is adequate.

- Darker skin needs 5-10 times more exposure than fair skin to make the same amount of vitamin D.
- In northern climates from October through March, the sun's rays are not strong enough to make sufficient vitamin D.
- In people over fifty, the ability to make vitamin D is diminished.
- Older individuals, those who get little year-round sun exposure, and people in northern climates during the winter should include good food sources (eggs, fish, and fortified milk) and possibly a supplement in their diets. See your medical provider for individual recommendations.

## LIVER HEALTH

Your liver is one of the most powerful organs in the body. It performs hundreds of functions, including digesting fat, processing medications, and removing harmful toxins from the body (detoxification). Liver function declines with age due to a decrease in size and reduced blood flow to this vital organ. Decreased liver function can change how medications are processed, which is important to older adults who take multiple medications. If you have hepatitis, cirrhosis, or liver cancer, it is especially important to keep your liver as healthy as possible. Below are some tips on how to keep your liver working its best.



### What to include:

- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables in a rainbow of colors. Fruits and vegetables contain antioxidants, vitamins and minerals that are crucial for liver function, especially detoxification.
  - Leafy green vegetables - kale, spinach, and collard greens
  - Allium vegetables - onions, garlic, and shallots
  - Red and orange fruits and vegetables - tomatoes, melons, peppers, oranges, and beets
  - Unsalted, raw nuts, especially walnuts and Brazil nuts
- Drink plenty of water.

### What to avoid:

- Alcohol, if you are taking multiple medications; drinking alcohol interferes with their metabolism, leaving medications to circulate in your body for longer than they necessary. Excessive alcohol intake can also damage liver cells, which reduces the liver's overall function.
- Fatty foods, which are harder to digest and for the liver to process.
- Too much caffeine. Because the liver breaks down caffeine, it can interfere with the liver's ability to detox.



## DEMENTIA

Dementia is a progressive decline in memory and thinking skills that reduces a person's ability to communicate and perform everyday activities. Common symptoms of dementia are increasing memory loss, disorientation, and personality and emotional changes. These can seriously affect a person's nutritional and medical status. For example, a person with dementia may forget to eat meals or take medication. Disorientation, agitation, and personality changes can also make mealtimes tedious and unenjoyable, resulting in eating less and malnutrition.

The ability to chew and swallow food safely diminishes as the disease progresses. When swallowing ability is lost (dysphagia), food can aspirate or enter the lungs, becoming a life-threatening issue. Symptoms of dysphagia include drooling, coughing during or after meals, choking, or a "gurgly" voice. If a swallowing problem is suspected, inform a medical provider immediately and consider a referral to a Speech Language Pathologist (SLP). A SLP can evaluate the problem and recommend any needed modifications to foods and liquids. Changes to the texture of foods can be used to maintain and improve the ability to eat safely.





People with dementia often rely on caregivers to prepare and serve their meals. Mealtimes can be challenging for caregivers, however, food can also be a source of comfort and connection. Here are some tips to enhance mealtimes and encourage eating:

- Provide a calm, quiet environment for meals. Turn off the TV and radio.
- Make mealtime “person centered.” Focus on the person rather than the task.
- Remove utensils only when a person is confused or they are unsafe.
- Give verbal and physical eating cues; for example, place spoon in person’s hand and say, “this is your spoon;” guide hand to plate and say, “these are your potatoes.”
- Offer small portions of each food one at a time. This can reduce confusion.
- Use solid pattern tableware in contrasting colors for less distraction. For example, use a white plate against a blue placemat.
- Use non-skid bowls and plates to encourage independent eating.
- Remove all non-food items from area – wrappers, pits, and packets.
- Keep in mind the time of day. Appetite and functioning may be best early in the day.
- Honor food preferences as much as possible.
- Provide water to sip throughout the day in a clear glass or mug. This way you can easily watch how much a person is drinking.

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### What is dysphagia?

Dysphagia is difficulty eating/ swallowing that occurs at any point from the mouth to the esophagus. It affects as many as 15 million Americans.

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# Managing Stress

Often the aging process and its associated stress can diminish quality of life. There are various reasons for increased stress among older adults. Life events such as retirement, illness, and loss of loved ones (and the accompanying grief) can lead to long-term activation of the body's stress response. This can impair the immune system's ability to fight disease and increase the risk of physical and mental health problems. Stress and anxiety in older adults are associated with increased physical problems and difficulty in carrying out activities of daily living (ADLs); increased health problems; and decreased sense of well-being and satisfaction with life.

Coping with stress and anxiety is *essential* for older adults and it comes in many forms. Here are some suggestions to help manage stress:

- **Physical activity** contributes to the prevention and management of many chronic illnesses, and improves overall quality of life among older adults.
- **Engaging in social and community activities** can enhance self-esteem and reduce stress.
- **Participating in activities** you enjoy or learning something new will keep you enjoying life experiences.
- **Reading** and/or participating in a book group can stimulate your brain and keep you connected with others.



- **Being** present, mindful and using techniques like deep breathing and meditation can help ease stress and promote wellbeing.
- **Staying connected** with the people who are most important to you can help you adjust to life changes.
- **Having a buddy**, since buddy-style activities can help you stay on track with your interests.



# Food as Medicine

Making good food choices can help you maintain a healthy weight, strength, independence, and the best possible quality of life as you age, especially if you are living with a chronic illness. Not only is food a source of comfort and connection to others, it is also an important part of your healthcare. Consider your food as medicine: it helps to manage an illness, can help you feel better, and stay healthier at home. If you are not able to shop or cook food for yourself, and/or need help obtaining food or meals, please see page 28 for available resources.

# Menu Ideas



Here are some ideas to get you started with planning nutritious meals.

## BREAKFAST:

- 1 cup cooked oatmeal with 1/4 cup cooked fruit, 1 oz. ground almonds and 1 Tbsp. flax, OR
- 2 scrambled eggs with 1/4 avocado sliced and 2 slices whole wheat toast, OR
- 2 Tbsp. peanut butter with 1 whole banana sliced on 2 slices whole wheat toast, OR
- 1 cup cottage cheese with 1/2 cup fruit

## LUNCH:

- 4 oz. tuna on 2 slices whole wheat toast with 3-4 large leaves lettuce and 2 thick slices tomato, OR
- 4 oz. tuna salad or shredded chicken with 1/3 - 1/2 cup whole wheat pasta, OR
- 1 cup spinach or green salad with 4 oz. diced chicken, canned salmon, sardines, or chickpeas, OR
- 1 cup low sodium soup: lentil, chicken, or other, OR

- Grilled cheese: 2 oz. cheese on 2 slices whole wheat toast or English muffin with 1/2 cup berries or cut fruit

## SNACK:

- 6 oz. yogurt, OR
- 1 oz. unsalted nuts, OR
- Piece of fresh fruit

## DINNER:

- 4 oz. baked salmon or other fish with 1/2 cup sautéed green leafy vegetable, OR
- 1 4-oz. turkey burger with 1/2 cup sautéed or roasted broccoli, OR
- 4 oz. roasted chicken breast, 1/2 cup green beans and 1/3 cup brown rice, OR
- One serving of a protein dish with side of 1/2 cup roasted beets and 1/3 cup cooked barley tossed with 1 tsp. olive oil, OR other roasted vegetables and whole grain, OR
- One of the above meals with 1 oz dark chocolate or 1/2 cup cut fruit as dessert



# Resources

## **AARP**

[aarp.org/home-family/caregiving](http://aarp.org/home-family/caregiving)

## **Alzheimer's Association**

800-272-3900

[alz.org](http://alz.org)

## **Alzheimer's Disease Education & Referral Center (ADEAR)**

800-438-4380

[alzheimers.nia.nih.gov](http://alzheimers.nia.nih.gov)

## **CaringKind**

### **The Heart of Alzheimer's Caregiving**

646-744-2900

[caringkindnyc.org](http://caringkindnyc.org)

## **Eldercare Locator**

800-327-1111

[eldercare.gov](http://eldercare.gov)

## **Family Caregiver Alliance**

800-445-8106

[caregiver.org](http://caregiver.org)

## **God's Love We Deliver**

800-747-2023

[glwd.org](http://glwd.org)

## **Hospice Foundation of America**

800-854-3402

[hospicefoundation.org](http://hospicefoundation.org)

## **Meals on Wheels**

888-998-6325

[mowaa.org](http://mowaa.org)

## **National Coalition on Aging**

571-527-3900

[ncoa.org](http://ncoa.org)

## **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**

[fns.usda.gov/snap](http://fns.usda.gov/snap)

## **ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT RESOURCES**

### **AMeds – Home Medical and Supplies & Equipment**

866-802-6337

[ameds.com](http://ameds.com)

### **The Alzheimer's Store**

800-752-3238

[alzstore.com](http://alzstore.com)

### **Best Alzheimer's Products**

877-300-3021

[best-alzheimers-products.com](http://best-alzheimers-products.com)

### **Dysphagia Plus**

800-581-8127

[dysphagiaplus.com](http://dysphagiaplus.com)

## Acknowledgments

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