

Alzheimer's Disease

Alzheimer's disease (AD) is a complex disease that affects the brain, causing a gradual loss of brain cells. Approximately 5.2 million Americans have this illness, which is the leading cause of dementia. This number is expected to triple to 16 million by 2050.

Nutrition and AD

Providing a healthy diet for people with AD is often challenging for caregivers. However, maintaining good nutritional health not only has medical benefits, but also enhances quality of life. Additionally, it can help reduce caregiver burden. Some of the benefits of good nutrition include:

- Prevents weight loss.
- Maintains ability to perform daily activities.
- Reduces infections, skin breakdown and chance of falls.

Nutritional Strategies

Providing well-balanced meals and snacks, in accordance with individual food preferences, level of independence, and any existing medical conditions (including diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disease) is the focus of nutritional therapy for AD. Use MyPlate for Older Adults (see below) as a guideline in planning nutritious meals and snacks. Ensuring good hydration is another consideration. Aim for 64 ounces of water or fluids per day. If the person is not eating well and losing weight, try increasing the density of foods given. Some ideas are: add dry milk powder, protein powders, carnation instant breakfast powder, blended tofu or quality fats – nut butters, canola oil, olive oil – to foods.

Changes in hunger and thirst cues occur in people with AD. Depending on their disease progression, they may need either physical or verbal cues to guide the eating and drinking processes. Adapt feeding techniques only as needed in order to maximize independence.

Here are some general tips:

- Place utensil in person's hand and guide to mouth.
- Provide verbal cue, i.e., "This is your spoon."
- Keep fluids accessible in a clear dispenser.
- Prompt lower functioning people to drink every two hours.
- Remove individual utensils only as they no longer are used appropriately or present a danger.
- Incorporate finger foods – no utensils required.

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Tips to enhance the meal environment:

- Choose plates that provide contrast with food items.
- Use solid color placemats to avoid confusion.
- Remove non-food items (paper, bones, pits, condiments) that may be ingested otherwise.
- Offer smaller portions or items separately to minimize confusion.

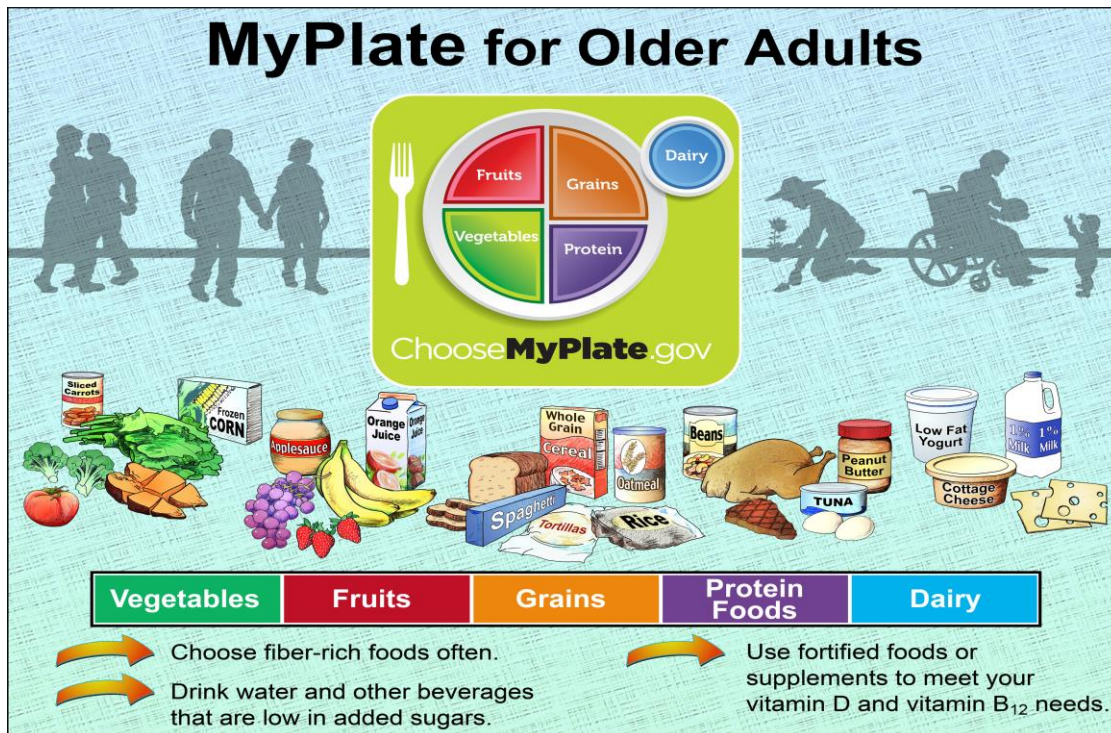
Throughout the progression of AD, the ability to chew and swallow safely becomes impaired and is eventually lost (dysphagia). This can be a life-threatening situation if food is aspirated into the lungs. Symptoms of dysphagia include: drooling, coughing during or after meals, choking or gurgly voice. Modifications in the consistency of food (soft, minced, pureed) can be used to maintain and improve the ability to eat. An evaluation by a Speech Pathologist is necessary to determine what alterations in food texture and liquid consistencies are appropriate. Here are some ideas for those needing softer foods:

Type of Food	Try these foods:
Bread and Cereal	Bread pudding, cooked cereals, pancakes, moist pastas, casseroles
Dairy Products	Butter, margarine, creamy or blenderized cottage cheese, soft cheeses, yogurt, thickened milk, ice cream
Eggs, Meat, Fish and Poultry	Poached or scrambled eggs and omelets, moist ground meat in casseroles, meatloaf, meatballs, tender fish without bones
Fruits	Soft ripe bananas, canned fruits without seeds, pits and skin; pureed fruits, soft fruits in gelatin
Vegetables	Soft canned vegetables; baked, mashed or boiled potatoes; mashed, creamed or thick pureed vegetables
Soups	Thick soups (blenderized)
Desserts	Fruit whip, gelatin, apple or peach crisp, moist cookies without fruit or nuts, pudding, sherbet, ice cream

Adapted from Krause's Food, Nutrition, & Diet Therapy, 9th Edition, 1996.



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MyPlate for Older Adults



Choose **MyPlate.gov**

Vegetables	Fruits	Grains	Protein Foods	Dairy
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 Choose fiber-rich foods often.
 Drink water and other beverages that are low in added sugars.

 Use fortified foods or supplements to meet your vitamin D and vitamin B₁₂ needs.

VEGETABLES	FRUITS	GRAINS	PROTEIN FOODS	DAIRY
<p>Vary your veggies</p> <p>Eat more dark-green veggies, like broccoli, salad greens, and cooked greens.</p> <p>Eat more orange vegetables, such as carrots and sweet potatoes.</p> <p>Eat more dried beans and peas, like pinto, black, or kidney beans, and lentils.</p>	<p>Focus on fruits</p> <p>Eat a variety of fruits, like bananas, berries, grapes, and oranges.</p> <p>Choose fresh, frozen, canned, or dried fruit.</p> <p>Eat fruit rather than drinking juice for most of your fruit choices.</p>	<p>Make half your grains whole</p> <p>Eat at least 3 oz. of whole-grain cereals, breads, rice, crackers, or pasta every day.</p> <p>1 oz. is about 1 slice of bread, 1 cup of cold breakfast cereal, or ½ cup of cooked cereal, rice, or pasta.</p> <p>Eat cereals fortified with vitamin B₁₂.</p>	<p>Go lean with protein</p> <p>Choose low-fat or lean meats and poultry.</p> <p>Bake, broil, or grill.</p> <p>Vary your protein sources. Include eggs, dried beans, tofu, fish, nuts, and seeds.</p>	<p>Get your calcium-rich foods</p> <p>Choose low-fat or fat-free milk, yogurt, and other milk products.</p> <p>If you don't or can't consume milk, choose lactose-free products or other calcium sources, such as fortified foods and beverages.</p>

For an 1,800-calorie diet, you need the amounts below from each food group. To find the amounts that are right for you, go to ChooseMyPlate.gov.

Eat 2½ cups every day	Eat 1½ cups every day	Eat 6 oz. every day	Eat 5 oz. every day	Eat 3 cups every day
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- ### Eat Right
- Choose foods rich in fiber to help keep you regular.
 - Drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated.
 - Limit sweets to decrease empty calories.
 - Get your oils from fish, nuts, and liquid oils such as canola, olive, corn or soybean oils.
 - Choose and prepare foods with less salt or sodium.
 - Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about supplements you are taking.

- ### Be Active
- Go for a walk.
 - Play with your grandchildren and/or a pet.
 - Work in your yard or garden.
 - Take an exercise or dance class at a community center or gym.
 - Share a fun activity with a friend or family member.
 - Remember: all activity adds up! You don't have to do it all at once.

Enjoy Life: Spend time with caring people doing things you enjoy.