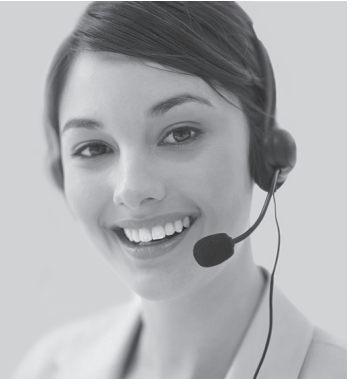


“It was great to talk with you.

Thank you for your interest in ‘healthy eating for seniors.’
I hope you find this tip sheet helpful.

Please give me a call if you have more questions about this or other topics.

As your health coach, I am ready to help in any way I can.”



Healthy eating can help older adults:

- Prevent or improve many health problems, including high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer, osteoporosis, arthritis, and dementia.
- Reach and keep a healthy weight.
- Stay independent longer.
- Have enough energy to be active and to enjoy life.

What gets in the way?

Healthy eating can be a challenge for seniors for many reasons:

- **Poor appetite.** The senses of taste and smell decline with age. This may make it harder to enjoy food. Also, some medicines cause nausea, changes in the way foods taste, or poor appetite. Feeling depressed or lonely can also cause poor appetite.
- **Not drinking enough fluids.** As seniors age, their sense of thirst declines and their bodies dehydrate more quickly. Seniors with incontinence may want to drink less to avoid frequent urination. Older adults with physical problems may avoid getting up to get a drink of water.
- **Dental problems.** Dentures that don't fit, jaw pain, missing teeth, or mouth sores are problems that can make it hard to chew.
- **Poor digestion and constipation.** With age, the body digests food more slowly. Other factors may include not getting enough fiber, fluids, or exercise.
- **Fixed or limited income.** Seniors may buy too little food or make poor food choices to save money.
- **Lack of transportation.** Driving to a grocery store in traffic, snow, or ice may be hard. Seniors may not want to pay or wait for a bus or taxi. Walking from a parking space to the store entrance may also be a challenge.

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- **Poor memory.** Some seniors may forget to eat at regular times. They may eat the same foods over and over and not know it. They may find it hard to remember what foods to buy.
- **Physical problems.** Many older adults have pain or are disabled. Some become dizzy or feel weak. They might find it hard to open a can, peel fruit, or stand to cook a meal.
- **Overweight or underweight.** Gaining too much weight with age is common. The metabolism slows down, and fewer calories are needed. But nutrient needs remain high. At the same time, many seniors become less active, so they burn fewer calories. Losing too much weight is also common. Poor appetite and the other factors listed above may make it hard to eat enough calories.

What can seniors do to eat healthier?

Are you an older adult? Do you care for an elderly relative or friend? You can take many steps to maintain good nutrition for yourself or your loved one.

Check one or two of the tips below that you are willing to try this week:

- Choose foods that are rich in nutrition.** Experts recommend that adults ages 50 or older choose these foods every day:
 - 5-10 ounces of grain foods (Make at least half of them whole grains, such as whole-wheat bread, oatmeal, whole-grain cereals, whole-grain pasta, or brown rice.)
 - 2-3½ cups of vegetables (fresh, frozen, or canned without salt)
 - 1½-2½ cups of fruit (fresh, frozen, or canned; include prunes or prune juice if you have constipation)
 - 5-7 ounces of lean protein foods (fish; poultry without skin; cooked dried beans, split peas, and lentils; lean meats; eggs; and small amounts of nuts and seeds)
 - 3 cups of nonfat or 1-percent milk, yogurt, or low-fat cheese
 - Small amounts of vegetable oils, salad dressings, liquid or tub margarine, nuts, or seeds
- Limit foods and drinks with “empty calories.”** They provide calories from solid fats, added sugars, and/or alcohol, but few or no nutrients. Examples are candy, cake, regular soda, beer, wine, liquor, and fatty meats, whole or 2-percent dairy foods, snacks and desserts.

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- Drink about 10 8-ounce glasses of fluids without added sugar every day.** Examples are water, nonfat or 1-percent milk, soup, and juice. Make water more appealing by adding ice, lemon slices, or a little 100 percent fruit juice. Try plain or flavored seltzers. Avoid drinks with added sugar. Juice is high in calories from natural sugar. Limit it to ½ cup per day.
- Limit salt and sodium.** Eat mostly fresh foods. Limit fast foods and processed foods. Check food labels for sodium. Choose foods with fewer than 400 mg of sodium per serving. Add little or no salt to food at the table and in cooking. Season foods with herbs and spices instead of salt or salty seasonings.
- Get enough calcium and vitamin D.** Both are key to bone health at any age. The best sources are nonfat or 1-percent milk, yogurt, and low-fat cheese. Some seniors have gas, diarrhea, or stomach pain after drinking milk. Yogurt, hard cheese, or lactose-free milk may be easier to digest. Limiting milk to small amounts may also help.
- Plan when to eat and drink fluids.** Schedule three meals and one or more snacks at regular times. Plan to drink fluids with each meal and between meals. Are three large meals too much? Plan five or six mini-meals each day.
- Use reminders.** Use notes, phone calls from family or neighbors, or an alarm to remember when to eat and drink.
- Make food appealing.** Season foods with herbs and spices. Use low-sodium dressings, marinades, and sauces. Eat different foods from day to day. Vary the color and texture of foods.
- Save money on healthy foods.** Read unit cost stickers to compare prices. Buy generic or store brands. Buy produce in season. Frozen and canned fruits and vegetables often cost less and are just as healthy as fresh ones. Make sure they do not contain added sugar or syrup, fatty sauces, or salt. Use coupons and buy items on sale, but buy only the foods and amounts you will use. Plan several meals each week with cooked dried beans, split peas, or lentils instead of meat.
- Reach out for help when needed.** You may be able to hire someone or ask a neighbor to take you or your loved one food shopping. You may be able to order foods by phone or online for home delivery. Look into home-delivered meals, group meals at senior centers, door-to-door transportation, and financial help. For more information, visit the U.S. Administration on Aging website at www.AOA.gov.

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- Make eating times relaxed.** Allow time to chew food well and enjoy meals. Eating with family, friends, or neighbors may also boost your appetite. Accept offers to join others for meals. Try having meals at a senior center.
- Take care of any dental problems.** Make sure dentures fit as they should. Take care of cavities and jaw pain. Chop, mash, grind, or puree some foods, if necessary.
- Talk with a doctor about exercise.** Staying active is key to health at all ages. Talk with a doctor about the types of exercise that are safe for you or an elderly loved one.
- Get a doctor's advice about supplements.** Some supplements may be helpful. Some can be harmful if taken with certain medicines.
- Choose a weight loss program with care.** Some forms of weight loss may harm a senior's bone health, muscle mass, and overall health. Check with a doctor about what's best for you or your loved one.

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Take Action

		Check when completed
My SMART* goal for this week Do your best to reach the SMART* goal you set with your health coach. Write it below. Check the box when you have completed it. _____ _____		<input type="checkbox"/>
Staying on the path to wellness When you are ready, choose one or two ideas from this tip sheet that you would like to put into action. Set a weekly SMART goal for each one. Write your goals below. Check the boxes when you have completed them. SMART goal 1: _____ _____ SMART goal 2: _____ _____		<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

*SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Appropriate, Realistic, and Timely. For example, "I will have 10 8-ounce glasses of water each day this week. I'll put a note on the refrigerator so I see it each time I walk into the kitchen."

SMART goals help you succeed! If you have any trouble setting your weekly SMART goals, ask your health coach for help.

The information in this tip sheet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Before making changes, always talk to your doctor about what is right for you.

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Sources:

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- National Institute on Aging. Available at www.nia.nih.gov/health/healthy-eating. Accessed February 2, 2018.
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