



A Nutrition Resource

Older Adults: A Necessity for Nutrition

Good nutrition is important to maintain or promote adequate health, manage or prevent disease, and improve quality of life. Throughout the lifespan, eating habits change. Choosing certain foods and drinks each day can help you meet nutrient needs, maintain a healthy body weight, and reduce the risk of chronic disease.

Nutrient Needs:

- **Protein:** Important for maintaining muscle mass at all ages.
- **Vitamin B12:** Absorption can decrease with age; certain medicines can also lower absorption. Ensure adequate intake from food.
- **Calcium and Vitamin D:** Essential for bone health, muscle and nerve function, blood clotting, hormone secretion, blood pressure management, immune system, and nervous system.
- **Dietary Fiber:** Crucial for digestive health and regularity; may reduce cardiovascular disease risk.
- **Potassium:** Vital for muscle, heart, and nervous system function.
- **Sodium:** Used in curing meat, baking, flavor enhancement, preservation, and moisture retention. Limit intake to 2,300 mg per day.
- **Hydration:** Maintain fluid intake even if thirst decreases with age.

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Tips to Meet Nutrient Needs:

Nutrient Recommendations:

- **Protein and Vitamin B12:** Eat seafood, lean meats, dairy or fortified plant-based alternatives, beans, peas, and lentils. Canned seafood like salmon, tuna, or crab are convenient options.
- **Calcium and Vitamin D:** Include low-fat or fat-free dairy products or fortified alternatives daily.
- **Fruits and Vegetables:** Include with meals and snacks. Frozen and low-sodium canned options are easy and nutritious.
- **Fluid Intake:** Drink water frequently. Other good options include low-fat or fat-free milk, milk alternatives, 100% juice, and beverages with limited or no added sugars or salt. Aim for at least 64 oz of fluids daily.

Meal Planning:

- **MyPlate Guide:** Follow the MyPlate diagram to include all five food groups and meet nutrient needs.
- **Food Safety:** Prevent foodborne illness by keeping surfaces and hands clean, separating raw and cooked foods, cooking to proper temperatures, and chilling cold foods.
- **Dietary Supplements:** Consult with a healthcare provider before taking supplements to ensure they meet your needs.



Sodium, Sugars, and Saturated Fats:

- **Sodium Reduction:** Cook at home more often; use Nutrition Facts labels to choose lower sodium options; flavor foods with herbs and spices instead of salt.
- **Added Sugars:** Major sources are sugary drinks, desserts, sweet snacks, sweetened coffee/tea, and candy. Limit intake as these provide little nutritional value.
- **Saturated Fats:** Opt for low-fat dairy, lean meats, and healthy oils like olive oil. Unsaturated fats are healthier options found in olive oil, salmon, tuna, flaxseed, walnuts, chia seeds, olives, and avocado.

