

Eating Healthy as you Age

As a person gets older, they need to make sure that their diet is appropriate for their age. It is important for a person to make sure that they are getting the right foods so that they are getting calories, vitamins, minerals and proteins. As a person's body changes over time, their food intake needs change. Here are some tips for older adults:

- Drink water throughout the day. As a person gets older, their sense of thirst diminishes and they don't always feel thirsty even though they need to stay hydrated. Water should be the beverage choice and a person needs to limit beverages with added sugar.
- Meals are more enjoyable when socializing and sharing them with others. If a person lives alone, they should make an effort to join other friends or family for meals often.
- Pay attention to portion size of foods. Some restaurants have large portions and often enough food for two or more people. Ask for excess portions to be bagged and eaten later that day or the next day. Or share a meal with someone else.
- Eat main meals in the middle of the day. This makes it easier to digest and can lessen digestive problems. Keep the dinner meal a light meal such as salad, soup, sandwich or small meal as these are light options for those who have digestive issues.
- Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables. Include dark green vegetables daily along with other colors such as yellow, orange, red and purple. Enjoy fruits and vegetables as a part of the meal or a snack. New research shows the importance of daily fruit and vegetables for a person's needed vitamins and minerals. Make sure half of your plate include fruit and vegetables most meals.
- Pay attention to teeth and gums. Dental problems can make it harder to chew food. Adjusting eating patterns and diet according to what a person can chew, and eating softer versions of foods can help as well.
- Use herbs and spices to flavor food instead of salt by itself or other herb mixtures that contain salt. Food may taste bad or bland due to medications a person is taking or as part of the aging process. Make sure food is tasty by adding spices and herbs that add flavor to food, but not salt, sugar or saturated fat.
- Keep food safety in mind and throw out expired food. As a person ages, their immune system weakens and that makes them more vulnerable to food borne illnesses. Check date labels on food products such as dairy and use up before expiration dates. Make sure all dairy consumed is pasteurized for safety of the young and old.
- Make sure to eat a balanced diet as often as possible. Visit the USDA website, ChooseMyPlate.gov to make sure. They have good information on nutrients and calories from all the food groups.
- Keep sweets and high fat foods to a minimum and avoid fried foods and sugar-sweetened beverages.

Eating healthy each day will help a person feel energetic and keep their immune system and weight at a healthy level. Along with eating right is the need to exercise. Make it a point to exercise at least 30 minutes most days of the week.

Taking these ideas will provide a person with an excellent wellness profile. Every healthy tip can make a difference.