

InFlight

Wellness Weekly



HEALTHY AGING

Changing Nutrient Needs as We Get Older

Eating right and staying fit are important no matter your age. As we get older, our bodies have different needs so certain nutrients become especially important for good health.

Calorie needs change due to more body fat and less lean muscle. Less activity can further decrease calorie needs. The challenge for older adults is to meet the same nutrient needs as when they were younger, yet consume fewer calories. Choosing nutrient-dense foods - foods high in nutrients in relation to their calories - will help reduce calories.

Protein needs usually do not change for the elderly, but requirements can vary because of chronic disease. Balancing needs and restrictions is a challenge, particularly in healthcare facilities. Excess protein could unnecessarily stress kidneys.

Reducing the overall fat content in the diet is reasonable and may be the easiest way to cut calories and added sugar and reduce weight. Lower fat intake is often also necessary because of chronic disease. However, if an older adult gains weight, healthy sources of fats include salmon, avocado, nuts and nut butters, and olives and olive oil.

About 45-60 percent of calories should come from carbohydrates, with emphasis on complex carbohydrates. Complex carbohydrates include 100% whole wheat bread and tortillas, beans, whole grain pasta, potato with the skin, brown rice or quinoa, and oatmeal. Glucose tolerance may decrease with advancing years, and complex carbohydrates put less stress on the circulating blood glucose than do refined carbohydrates.

Complex carbohydrates also enhance dietary fiber intake. Adequate fiber, together with adequate fluid, helps maintain normal bowel function. Fiber is also thought to decrease risk of intestinal inflammation.

Of all the nutrients, water is the most important, serving many essential functions. Adequate water intake reduces stress on kidney function, which tends to decline with age. Adequate fluid intake also eases constipation. With the aging process, the ability to detect thirst declines, so it is not advised to wait to drink water until one is thirsty. Individuals should be sure to drink plenty of water, 100% fruit or vegetable juice, milk, or coffee or tea to stay properly hydrated. The equivalent to nine (for women) or 13 (for men) glasses of fluid should be consumed every day.

Nutrition and Aging. Retrieved from <https://extension.colostate.edu/docs/pubs/foodnut/09322.pdf>



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Heal Wounds Faster with A Proper Diet

We all know a healthy diet is important for overall health, but what you eat can also make a difference in how quickly a wound heals.

- Plan healthy, balanced meals and snacks that include the right amount of foods from all the MyPlate food groups — protein, fruits, vegetables, dairy and grains.
- Choose vegetables and fruits rich in vitamin C, such as strawberries or spinach. For adequate zinc, choose whole grains and consume protein, such as eggs, meat, dairy or seafood. Some wounds may require a higher intake of certain vitamins and minerals to support healing. Speak with your healthcare provider before starting any new supplements.
- Include adequate protein throughout the day. Include a source of protein at each meal or snack. A sample menu may include eggs for breakfast, black bean tacos for lunch, yogurt for a snack and chicken at dinner.
- Stay well-hydrated with water or other unsweetened beverages.
- For people with diabetes, control blood sugar levels to help prevent wounds from developing and to support healing and recovery.

A registered dietitian nutritionist can develop an individualized eating plan with optimum amounts of calories, protein, fluids, vitamins and minerals for your specific needs.

Five Nutrition Tips to Promote Wound Healing. Retrieved from <https://www.eatright.org/health/wellness/preventing-illness/nutrition-tips-to-promote-wound-healing>

A Personal Message From Your Health Promotion Health Myth Busting Team



Dear Health Myth Busters,

My parents are in their late 60's. Alzheimer's runs in our family, and I heard that Vitamin B12 can help older adults avoid memory loss. Is this true? If so, what should I tell my parents to eat more of to get more Vitamin B12?

Sincerely,
Eating to Prevent Alzheimer's

Dear Eating to Prevent Alzheimer's,

It's important to recognize that no single nutrient or food is going to independently cure or avoid a disease. Regarding vitamin B12 and memory loss, there may be an association between low vitamin B12 levels and increased homocysteine levels; increased homocysteine levels have been associated with the onset of Alzheimer's and dementia. However, these studies were observational, and a cause-and-effect relationship cannot be determined.

In literature reviews, there has been no evidence that vitamin B12 has an independent effect on cognition. This means eating more foods high in B12, absent of a B12 deficiency, will not avoid the onset of Alzheimer's. However, older adults are at increased risk for vitamin B12 deficiency.

As we age, stomach acid levels may decrease, which causes a decrease in vitamin B12 absorption. This is because B12 requires stomach acid to unbind it from protein in food, so it can be absorbed in the intestines. Vitamin B12 is found in animal foods, such as fish, meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products. Many plant foods, including bread, cereal, and plant-based milk may also be fortified with vitamin B12.

Vitamin B12 deficiency presents as a variety of non-specific symptoms including numbness or tingling in extremities; balance problems when walking; anemia; swollen or inflamed tongue; weakness; fatigue; and difficulty thinking or reasoning. If your parents experience any of these symptoms, they may want to discuss having their vitamin B12 levels checked with their primary care provider.

Adults over the age of 50 are encouraged to take a daily multivitamin that provides 100% of their vitamin B12 needs (no need to take doses of >100% unless you have been directed to do so), as this synthetic form of B12 is unbound, and easier to absorb.

Sincerely,
Health Myth Busters

Vitamin B12. Retrieved from <https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/VitaminB12-HealthProfessional/>
Vitamin B12 deficiency can be sneaky, harmful. Retrieved from <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/vitamin-b12-deficiency-can-be-sneaky-harmful-201301105780>

Got questions on other health issues related to sleep health, physical activity, tobacco, or nutrition? Share them with us and we will help you "Bust The Myths!" Send your questions to usaf.jbsa.afmsa.mbx.hpo@mail.mil. Make sure to include in the subject line "Health Myth Buster." For more online health tips visit the Air Force Health Promotion webpage <https://www.airforcemedicine.af.mil/Resources/Health-Promotion/> or <https://www.facebook.com/Joint-Base-Andrews-Health-Promotion-120094328077726>



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Your Local Health
Promotion Office



Contact: Sylvia Goff, Health Promotion Coordinator, JBA

Phone: 240-612-1745

Email: sylvia.a.goff.civ@mail.mil

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	Classes are held at Malcolm Grow Medical Clinic, 1060 West Perimeter RD., Joint Base Andrews MD			
Taking Action - Healthy Weight Management Mondays at 1500 Register at: 240-612-2703/857-7186	Tobacco Cessation Program Tuesdays at 1500 Register at: 240-857-7186	Group Lifestyle Balance - Pre-Diabetes Wednesdays at 1200 Register at: 240-612-2678	Freedom from Sleep Troubles - Sleep Optimization Thursdays at 1400 Register at: 240-612-1130/857-7186	Health Habit Workshop - Making Changes Stick Fridays at 1300 Register at: 240-857-7186
Comprehensive Fitness Incentive Program (C-FIP) 12 wk program - Mon/Wed/Fri 0700-0800, Tactical Fitness Center, Register at: https://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050f4ea4a62ca7f85-cfip				