



The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service

Eating Well & Staying Well in Senior Years

Admit it. You want to live actively, independently, and well in your senior years. Yet, you know living well can be a challenge. You know the challenges - shrinking muscles, aches and pains, chronic diseases, eye problems, constipation, and weight changes. Take heart - you **can** do something about these challenges.

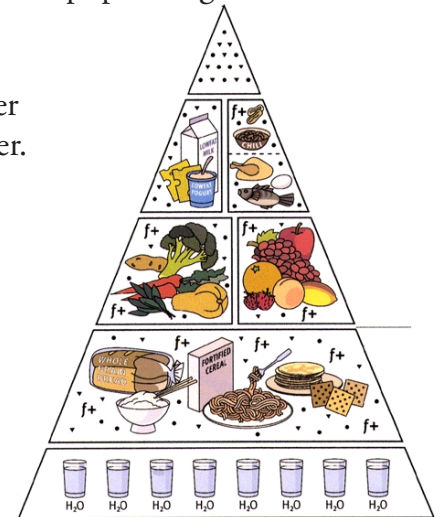
Drink Up Drink at least 2 quarts (8 cups) of water or other fluids each day to prevent dehydration. Dehydration can cause constipation, dry skin, skin tears, muscle cramps, dizziness, mental confusion and dry eyes. You may have these problems because you do not feel thirsty when you need fluids. Drink your fluids earlier in the day if you are worried about getting up at night to go to the bathroom.



- ❖ Drink water often and before you get thirsty - plan water breaks through the day
- ❖ Include other fluids - 100% fruit juice, milk, broth, or decaf tea
- ❖ Eat foods that contain water - fruit, vegetables, soup, pudding, yogurt, or gelatin

Feast on Fiber Fiber can help prevent constipation and may help lower blood cholesterol, control blood glucose levels and prevent colon cancer. Fiber only works well if you drink plenty of water. Fiber can cause impactions if not consumed with enough fluids. To increase fiber:

- ❖ Eat 6 or more servings of breads, cereals, tortillas, rice or pasta each day
- ❖ Make at least 3 servings whole grain, like whole wheat bread or crackers, whole grain or bran cereals, oatmeal, or brown rice
- ❖ Eat 5 or more servings of vegetables and fruits each day
- ❖ Have bean dishes at least twice a week and a small amount of nuts a few times a week



Modified Food Pyramid for 70+ Adults

Make Your Plate Colorful Choose at least 2 dark green, red, orange or yellow colored veggies and fruits every day. These give you more vitamin C, vitamin A (from carotenoids), antioxidants and phytochemicals per serving than other produce. They may help you fight heart disease, diabetes, cancer, cataracts and macular degeneration.

- ❖ Enjoy collard, kale, turnip, or mustard greens, and spinach, broccoli or cabbage
- ❖ Feast on sweet potatoes, carrots, winter squash, tomatoes, corn and red or yellow peppers
- ❖ Reach for berries, apricots, peaches, mangos, melon and citrus fruits and juices

Feed Your Bones You need plenty of calcium and vitamin D to slow bone loss and reduce risk of osteoporosis fractures. Consume at least 1200 mg calcium and 600 IU to 800 IU vitamin D daily. Feed your bones 3 or more servings of milk or milk foods daily. Include plenty of other sources of calcium and vitamin D so you get enough.

- ❖ Eat foods like turnip or mustard greens, broccoli, beans, and canned salmon with bones
- ❖ Try foods with added calcium, like orange juice, breakfast cereals, soy beverages, or tofu
- ❖ Spend 15 minutes in the sun daily, without sunscreen, for vitamin D

Pick Your Protein You need enough protein to help fight infections, recover from illnesses and slow muscle loss. Eat a protein food at each meal and plant and/or animal protein foods that are low in fat. Try beans, eggs, peanut butter, chopped fish or meats and dairy foods if you have chewing or swallowing problems.

- ❖ Eat 2 to 3 servings (5 to 6 ounces total daily) of fish, skinless poultry, lean beef or pork each day
- ❖ Try eggs, tofu or other soy foods, nuts, peanut butter or beans
- ❖ Count milk, buttermilk, yogurt, cottage cheese, and cheese as protein foods

Consider a Vitamin-Mineral Supplement You will need a supplement if you cannot get enough calcium and vitamin D from milk and other foods. You may not absorb vitamin B12 from food well which can cause confusion, difficulty walking, and nerve problems. A vitamin B12 supplement may be needed. Check with your doctor.

- ❖ Take a vitamin B12-containing multivitamin and/or eat a B12- fortified breakfast cereal every day
- ❖ Take a calcium/vitamin D supplement each day - no more than 500 mg calcium at one dose; no more than 2000 mg calcium and 4000 IU vitamin D each day, if you do not consume enough milk.

Get Moving It is true - you will lose it if you do not use it. Exercise helps keep your heart healthy and your bones and muscles strong. Exercise can help you have less joint pain. It is never too late to start being active. Be sure to get your doctor's okay if you have not been active for a while. Look for community classes to try new activities. Try:

- ❖ 30 minutes of walking, gardening, dancing, golf or tennis, 4 or more days of the week
- ❖ Strengthening exercises, like lifting weights, weight machines or resistance bands, 2 days a week
- ❖ Swimming or water exercises for aching joints and muscles when you can
- ❖ Exercises that improve flexibility, like stretching, every day

Complete the Picture There is a little more to successful aging. Ask your family and friends to be active with you. Get enough sleep so you can enjoy the ride and work on a positive attitude. Sometimes it is hard to stay positive as we age. Eating well, sleeping well, exercising and having friends can help you stay positive and take you further along the road to successful aging.