



Eat Right

Food, Nutrition and Health Tips from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Eating Right for Older Adults

Eating right doesn't have to be complicated. Before a meal, think about what foods you are going to eat. Choose foods that provide the nutrients you need without too many calories. Build a healthy plate with foods such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low-fat dairy and lean protein foods.

Consider the following tips to help you get started on your way to eating right.



Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.

Eat a variety of vegetables, especially dark-green, red and orange vegetables plus beans and peas. Fresh, frozen and canned vegetables all count. Choose "reduced sodium" or "no-salt-added" canned vegetables.

Add fruit to meals and snacks. Choose fruits that are dried, frozen or canned in water or 100% juice, as well as fresh fruits.

Make at least half your grains whole.

Choose 100% whole-grain breads, cereals, crackers, pasta and brown rice. Also, look for fiber-rich cereals to help stay regular.

Switch to fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt and cheese.

Older adults need more calcium and vitamin D to help keep bones healthy. Include three servings of fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt or cheese each day. If you are lactose intolerant, try lactose-free milk or a calcium-fortified soy beverage.

Vary your protein choices.

Eat a variety of foods from the protein food group each week, such as seafood, nuts, beans and peas, as well as lean meat, poultry and eggs.

Limit sodium, solid fats and added sugars.

Look out for salt, or sodium, in foods you eat. Compare sodium in the foods you buy and choose those with lower numbers. Add spices or herbs to season food without adding salt.

Limit major sources of saturated fats, such as pizza, baked goods, full-fat cheese, sausage and hot dogs.

Switch from solid fats to oils when preparing foods.

Drink water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages. Select fruit for dessert more often in place of desserts with added sugars.

Enjoy your food but be mindful of portion sizes.

Most older adults need fewer calories than in younger years. Avoid oversized portions. Try using smaller plates, bowls and glasses.

Write down what you eat to keep track of how much you eat.

Cook more often at home, where you are in control of what's in your food.

When eating out, choose lower calorie menu options. Choose dishes that include vegetables, fruits and whole grains. When portions are large, share a meal or take half home for later.

Be physically active your way.

Pick activities that you like and start by doing what you can. Every bit adds up and health benefits increase as you spend more time being active.

If you are currently inactive, check with your doctor concerning increased physical activity.

Consult a registered dietitian

nutritionist if you have special dietary needs. A registered dietitian nutritionist can create a customized eating plan for you.

For a referral to a registered dietitian nutritionist and for additional food and nutrition information visit www.eatright.org.



The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics is the largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. The Academy is committed to improving the public's health and advancing the profession of dietetics through research, education and advocacy.

This tip sheet is provided by:

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