



EXTENSION

Nutrition for Older Adults: Nutrition Needs with Aging

April 2021

Janice Hermann,
Extension Nutrition Specialist

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Fact Sheets
are also available on our website at:
facts.okstate.edu

Nutrition Needs with Aging

The USDA MyPlate Plan is the best way to plan a healthful diet. Older adults' nutritional needs are about the same as younger adults. However some changes do occur.

Calories

Calorie needs decrease with age due declines in:

- Muscle mass which lowers the body's metabolism.
- Physical activity.

Careful meal planning can help meet nutritional needs in fewer calories.

Carbohydrate

Carbohydrate is the main source of energy. Most carbohydrate should come from the grains, fruit and vegetable groups. Sugar rich foods should be kept low.

Protein

Protein needs do not decrease with age. Protein helps:

- Maintain and repair the body.
- Prevent muscle loss.
- Sustain the immune system.

Protein comes from the protein foods group and dairy group. Smaller amounts of protein come from the grain group.

Fat

High fat diets are a risk for:

- Heart disease.
- Cancer.
- Overweight.

Being overweight is a risk for:

- High blood pressure.
- Diabetes.

Fats come from oils and solid fats and higher fat choices in the protein foods, dairy and grains groups.

Fiber

Fiber is helpful for many conditions including:

- Constipation.
- Diverticulitis.
- Colon cancer.
- Heart disease.
- Diabetes.

Fiber comes from whole grains in the grain group and fruit and vegetable groups.

Vitamins and Minerals

Vitamin and mineral needs for older adults are about the same as for younger adults. However, some changes do occur with age.

- Need for vitamin A and iron, for women, decreases with age.
- Need for vitamin D and calcium increases with age.
- Many older adults cannot absorb vitamin B12 from food. Vitamin B12 may be better absorbed from supplements than food.

Eating a variety of foods based on the USDA MyPlate Plan can provide the vitamins and minerals needed.

Water

Recommended fluid intake is 13 cups of fluid a day for males and 9 cups a day for females. Although water can come in many forms, older adults are at higher risk of dehydration.

Sources

Whitney, E.N. & Rolfes, S.R. (2015). *Understanding Nutrition*, 14th ed., Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, Belmont, CA.

Bernstein, M., & Munoz, N. (2016). *Nutrition for the Older Adult*, 2nd ed., Jones and Bartlett Publishers, Sudbury, MA.

Brown, J.E. (2014) *Nutrition through the Life Cycle*, 5th ed., Cengage Learning, Stamford, CT.

United States Department of Agriculture. ChooseMyPlate.gov. Accessed at www.choosemyplate.gov

Oklahoma State University, as an equal opportunity employer, complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding non-discrimination and affirmative action. Oklahoma State University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all individuals and does not discriminate based on race, religion, age, sex, color, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity/ expression, disability, or veteran status with regard to employment, educational programs and activities, and/or admissions. For more information, visit <https://eeo.okstate.edu>.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. This publication is printed and issued by Oklahoma State University as authorized by the Vice President for Agricultural Programs and has been prepared and distributed at a cost of 20 cents per copy. Revised 04/2021 GH.