



Senior Series

A partnership between Ohio State University Extension
and Ohio Aging Network professionals



For more information, visit the Ohio Department of Aging web site at: <http://www.goldenbuckeye.com>
and Ohio State University Extension's "Aging in Ohio" web site at: <http://www.hec.ohio-state.edu/famlife/aging>

Maintaining Nutrition as We Age

The aging process causes your body to change in many different ways. You may feel differently than you did a few years ago. While you cannot stop the aging process, you can provide your body with the right nutrients so that you can stay healthy. The aging changes that you encounter are part of life.

Monitor your weight and do your best to maintain a healthy weight as you age. A good diet, physical activity, and stimulating your mind will help you to face the obstacles that these changes can present. The answers to the questions discussed here can help you to prepare for your daily challenges.

Why do I have less of an appetite?

It is very common to feel less hungry when you get older, and sometimes medications can affect appetite so you don't feel as hungry. Try eating small,

frequent meals throughout the day to make sure that you are getting enough food. If you cannot eat an entire meal in one sitting, eat what you can and put the rest of the meal in the refrigerator. You can eat the rest of the meal later in the day. Consider meal replacement formulas if you can't maintain weight.

Why doesn't my food taste as good?

You may have noticed that food does not taste as good to you as it once did. You are not alone. Our sense of taste and smell declines as we age. Trying new seasonings, such as fresh herbs and spices, new foods, and different recipes, may help you enjoy your food more.

What can I do to be more "regular?"
Why has my bowel function changed?

Eating plenty of fiber can help with bowel regularity. Fiber is found in fruits, vegetables, breads, beans, cereals, and

other grains such as rice. There are two different kinds of fiber — insoluble and soluble fiber.

Insoluble and soluble fiber will help to bulk up the stool and make it easier to pass. Soluble fiber has an added benefit in that it can help to lower your “bad” cholesterol. Oatmeal and most fruits are great sources of soluble fiber.

How do I keep my bones strong?

Keeping your bones healthy and strong is very important as you grow older. You need to give your body the right nutrients so that your bones will stay strong.

The two most important nutrients for bones are calcium and vitamin D. We get calcium from dairy products such as milk and cheese. Some vegetables also contain calcium, but dairy products are by far the best source. You may need a calcium supplement if you do not eat two to three servings of dairy products each day.

Vitamin D helps your body to absorb and use calcium from foods that you eat. You can get vitamin D from fortified foods such as milk. Your body can also make vitamin D during exposure to sunlight. Five to 10 minutes of sun on your face and hands each day is enough for your body to make a day’s supply of vitamin D if your skin is light in color. Persons with dark skin need additional exposure — three to five times the amount recommended for persons with light-colored skin.

What can I do to protect my eyesight?

Poor vision often accompanies aging. Vitamins A and C are essential to keep your eyes healthy. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables because they are the best sources of vitamins A and C.

How do I lower my sodium intake?

A reduced sodium diet is recommended for people with high blood pressure. If you are watching your sodium, try using seasonings other than salt to make your food taste better.

Try consuming moderate amounts of highly processed foods (chips, TV dinners, canned soups, lunch meats, etc.) because these foods often contain a lot of sodium.

If you use canned vegetables, rinse them off in water to wash off some of the sodium before preparing them.

How do I control my cholesterol?

Cholesterol is found in meat, dairy products, and eggs. Vegetable products such as corn oil do not contain any cholesterol. Limiting your intake of cholesterol-rich foods such as meat and eggs can help to lower your cholesterol.

Saturated fats are fats found in foods like lard, palm oil, and butter that can raise your “bad” cholesterol. Trans fat is a kind of fat found in highly processed foods and margarine that can also raise

your “bad” cholesterol. A good way to control your cholesterol is to limit your intake of both saturated and trans fats. Vegetable oils such as olive oil and sunflower oil are great alternatives to use for cooking.

What about vitamin B12?

Aging can also affect your ability to absorb vitamin B12. Vitamin B12 is very important for nerve function and preventing some forms of anemia. After age 50, consume foods fortified with B12 or take a balanced multivitamin and mineral supplement containing B12.

Foods such as meat, eggs, and dairy products are good sources of vitamin B12. Doctors may recommend a vitamin B12 shot for older adults who cannot absorb enough vitamin B12 from their food.

How do I control my blood sugar?

Diabetes is a medical condition that affects the way the body uses glucose. Glucose is commonly known as blood sugar. Carbohydrates break down to glucose when they are digested. Eating

small, balanced meals throughout the day that contain fiber-rich carbohydrate, fat, and protein can help to control your blood sugar. Consult your doctor or dietitian for specific diet plans.

The Bottom Line

Dealing with the challenges of aging can be difficult. To help face these challenges, you will need the best nutrition possible. You can stay healthy by following a few simple suggestions.

- Eat small, frequent meals throughout the day.
- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables each day. (Consult **MyPyramid.gov**).
- Drink eight to 10 glasses of water per day.
- Eat a balanced diet by following *MyPyramid* guidelines.
- Stay active. Ask your doctor for activity suggestions.
- Eat with friends and family to make your meals more enjoyable.
- Stay curious. An active mind is a healthy mind.

Daily Amount of Food From Each Group

Calorie Level¹	1,000	1,200	1,400	1,600	1,800	2,000
Fruits ²	1 cup	1 cup	1.5 cups	1.5 cups	1.5 cups	2 cups
Vegetables ³	1 cup	1.5 cups	1.5 cups	2 cups	2.5 cups	2.5 cups
Grains ⁴	3 oz-eq	4 oz-eq	5 oz-eq	5 oz-eq	6 oz-eq	6 oz-eq
Meat and Beans ⁵	2 oz-eq	3 oz-eq	4 oz-eq	5 oz-eq	5 oz-eq	5.5 oz-eq
Milk ⁶	2 cups	2 cups	2 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups
Oils ⁷	3 tsp	4 tsp	4 tsp	5 tsp	5 tsp	6 tsp

¹ Calorie levels are set across a wide range to accommodate the needs of different individuals.

² Includes all fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruits and fruit juices. In general, 1 cup of fruit or 100% juice, or 1/2 cup of dried fruit, can be considered as 1 cup from the fruit group.

³ Includes all fresh, frozen, canned, and dried vegetables and vegetable juices. In general, 1 cup of raw or cooked vegetables or vegetable juice, or 2 cups of raw leafy greens can be considered as 1 cup from the vegetable group.

⁴ Includes all foods made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley, such as bread, pasta, oatmeal, breakfast cereals, tortillas, and grits. In general, 1 slice of bread, 1 cup of ready-to-eat cereal, or 1/2 cup of cooked rice, pasta, or cooked cereal can be considered as 1 ounce equivalent from the grains group.

⁵ In general, 1 ounce of lean meat, poultry, or fish, 1 egg, 1 Tbsp peanut butter, 1/4 cup cooked dry beans, or 1/2 ounce of nuts or seeds can be considered as 1 ounce equivalent from the meat and beans group.

⁶ Includes all fluid milk products and food made from milk that retain their calcium content, such as yogurt and cheese. Foods made from milk that have little to no calcium, such as cream cheese, cream, and butter, are not part of the group. In general, 1 cup of milk or yogurt, 1-1/2 ounces of natural cheese, or 2 ounces of processed cheese can be considered as 1 cup from the milk group.

⁷ Includes fats from many different plants and from fish that are liquid at room temperature, such as canola, corn, olive, soybean, and sunflower oil. Foods that are mainly oil include mayonnaise, certain salad dressings, and soft margarine.

Courtesy of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



Updated by Christine Wisler, Dietetic Intern, The Ohio State University, Department of Human Nutrition, September 2005. Updated by Abbey Mens, Dietetic Intern, The Ohio State University, Department of Human Nutrition, May 2005.

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Keith L. Smith, Associate Vice President for Agricultural Administration and Director, OSU Extension

TDD No. 800-589-8292 (Ohio only) or 614-292-1868