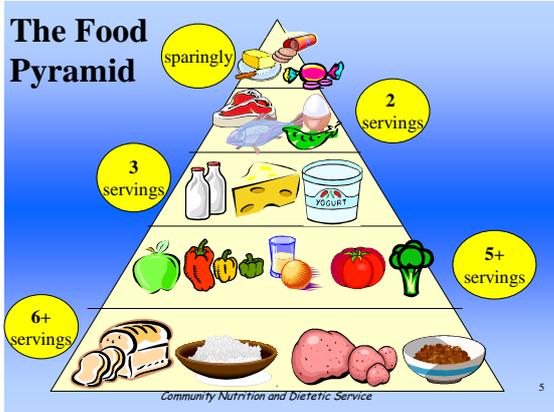




Nutrition and the over 65s: Eat well, live well age well

A healthy diet and regular exercise can help an older person live a full and active life and preserve their independence right through to old age.



A healthy diet means choosing a wide variety of foods following the portions recommended by the food pyramid. Many people become less active as they get older and as a result need less food to maintain a healthy weight. However their requirement for vitamins and minerals remains the same. Therefore an extra effort must be made to include foods high in these nutrients daily.

Cereal, Bread and Potato shelf

The food pyramid recommends 6+ portions a day.

However unless the older person is very active 6 portions is normally sufficient.

Choosing high fibre varieties such as wholegrain/ wholemeal cereals and bread, and eating the skins of potatoes is important in helping to prevent constipation.

For a healthy heart and a healthy weight it is important to keep chips to once a week and avoid adding butter or spread to potatoes and vegetables.

Fruit and Vegetable group

Five or more portions are recommended daily. Include a large variety of different types and colours. Fruit and vegetables are good sources of Vitamin A and C and folic acid, and important in preventing constipation.

Include fruit in your daily routine

- Have a piece of fresh or dried fruit as a snack
- Add a piece of fruit e.g. banana or kiwi to your breakfast
- Enjoy fresh fruit salads, stewed fruit, tinned fruit in its own juice, fruit in jelly
- Try blending your favourite fruit with juice, milk or yoghurt.

Ensure an adequate intake of vegetables

- Fill half your dinner plate with vegetables
- Base stews soups and casseroles on vegetables.
- Include salad vegetables such as lettuce, tomatoes and peppers in sandwiches.
- Peas, beans and lentils are also high in fibre. Baked beans on toast is a nutritious light meal or snack

Frozen, tinned and dried fruit and vegetables are a good substitute for fresh fruit and vegetables. To avoid vitamin losses in cooking try steaming or micro- waving vegetables, or cooking in a small amount of boiling water.



Milk and Dairy Group.

3 portions are recommended daily

The main nutrients supplied by this group are calcium, Vitamin B12, protein, energy and Vitamin A. Calcium is important in maintaining healthy bones and preventing osteoporosis.

Choose low fat products for a healthy heart and weight. Low fat products are just as good a source of calcium as the high fat products.

Older people, especially those confined to the house, are advised to use fortified milks, which contain added vitamin D and calcium.

Meat and alternative group.

Choose 2 portions daily

This group includes meat, chicken, fish, eggs, as well as peas, beans, lentils, nuts, and seeds. They are protein and iron rich foods. Protein is the nutrient important for the growth and repair of body tissues. Iron is important for healthy blood. Red meat is an important source of iron.

Oily fish such as salmon, mackerel herring and trout should be included in the diet at least once a week. They provide omega 3 fatty acids, which are important for heart health. They also include vitamin D, which is important for healthy bones.

Choose lean meat, cutting off the fat before cooking. Keep high fat processed meats such as sausages, pudding, meat pies and burgers to once or twice a week. Grill instead of fry.

Once trimmed, cheaper cuts of meat are as nutritious as expensive ones. If the meat is tough, cook it longer in stews and casseroles.

Fats and oil group

This group also contains sugar, sweets, confectionary, crisps, and biscuits. These foods provide none of the important nutrients needed for good health so you should concentrate on achieving the recommended servings from the other shelves first. It is best to try and limit these treat foods to once or twice a week.

In order to keep your teeth and mouth healthy it is important to avoid sugary drinks and minerals choose low sugar or diet options instead.

Instead of butter and lard choose fats based on vegetable oils such as flora light, low low, Avon more extra light, or dairy gold light. Avoid adding it to other foods other than your bread

Important Topics for the over 60's

Healthy Bowels

Constipation is said to affect the quality of life of 20 % of older people. It can also damage the bowel thereby increasing the risk of diverticular disease and bowel cancer. To maintain healthy bowels it is important to remember the following points

- Eat a high fiber diet. Include wholegrain breads and cereals and 4 portions or more of fruit and vegetables a day. Include peas, beans and lentils
- Remain as active as possible. Exercise helps prevent constipation
- Aim for 8 glasses of fluid a day. Water, milk and juice are best. The sense of thirst decreases as you age so it is important for an older person to make a conscious effort to drink even when they do not feel thirsty.

All fruit can help if you are constipated especially prunes, kiwis, strawberries, rhubarb, and figs. Taking prune juice as a drink is a natural alternative to laxatives.



Adding 2 dessertspoons of linseed gold to cereal or porridge can also help constipation, however this is only suitable for an older person who can drink at least 8 cups of fluid a day.

Adding unprocessed bran is no longer recommended as it can inhibit the absorption of many vitamins and minerals.

If constipation is a problem you can get more information from your dietitian.

Healthy bones

One in four women and one in twenty men by the age of 60 suffer a fracture due to osteoporosis, increasing to one in two women and one in twelve men by the age of 70.

The important points in maintaining bone health are

- Eat 3 portions of calcium rich dairy foods such as milk, cheese and yogurt a day. Other sources of calcium include eggs, bones of tinned fish e.g., sardines, dark green leafy vegetables and oranges.
- Ensure an adequate intake of vitamin D. Foods which are rich in Vitamin D include oily fish, liver, eggs, fortified spreads, milks and breakfast cereals. However the best source of vitamin D is sunlight. A Vitamin D supplement may be needed for housebound older person but check with your dietitian first
- Avoid restrictive dieting and weight loss
- Maintain a healthy body weight. Being either underweight or overweight increases your risk of falls.
- Take weight-bearing exercise daily. Walking, dancing, and climbing stairs are all good examples of weight bearing exercise
- Avoid excessive amounts of coffee or alcohol.
- Avoid smoking

Iron deficiency anaemia

Iron is essential for red blood cells and carrying oxygen around our bodies to give us energy. A lack of iron in the diet is one of the causes of iron deficiency anemia. Meat, poultry, fish and offal foods, (liver, heart and kidneys) are all good sources of iron. Other sources include green leafy vegetables, peas and beans and fortified breakfast cereals. Foods rich in vitamin C, for example, orange juice, taken with any of these foods will help the body absorb more iron.

Cooking for one

In the 2002 census 27% of over 65's were living alone. It is easy for someone living on their own to fall into the habit of getting by on bread and butter as there is "no one to cook for". It is important to make food a priority and continue to eat well when cooking for one. The following tips may help

- Keep a well stocked food cupboard
- Make a large amount of a meal then freeze individual portions for use at a later date
- Rather than preparing meat, potatoes and vegetables separately, try combination casserole dishes to reduce clean up time.
- Invite friends over for meals

For more information on healthy eating and other topics log on to www.indi.ie
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