

Nutrition Tips For Seniors

Nutrition is important at every stage of life. Regardless of age, we all require healthy foods to help our bodies thrive, but seniors and elderly people have specialized nutritional needs.

Healthy eating and nutrition for seniors can be affected by several factors. Simple body composition is one area that greatly affects the health needs of the elderly. For example, hormone activity decreases as a person ages, resulting in weight gain, and the loss of muscle and bone. The following points outline other health considerations for people in their senior years:

Water

The amount of water found in the human body naturally decreases with age. Personal habits can also affect the fluid levels. Sometimes, seniors don't drink enough water simply because they don't feel thirsty. Other times, it's inconvenient or even difficult for them to pour a glass of water. For these reasons, elderly people can become dehydrated very easily. It is recommended, however, that seniors take in at least one ounce of water for every 2.2 pounds of weight.

Protein

Protein is an essential nutrient at every stage of life. It supports a healthy immune system and prevents wasted muscle. Even though energy needs are decreased in the elderly, it's still important for seniors to eat high quality proteins such as eggs, lean meats, fish and poultry.

Carbs and fiber

Most people have heard that seniors require extra fiber, as a fiber rich diet combined with plenty of water can aid in preventing constipation. Carbohydrates from cereals, pasta, bread and other grain products are also required to provide the energy needed by active seniors.

Fat

The body's natural metabolism slows down as age increases, so nutrition for seniors means less fat in their diets. It's important to note that fat should be limited, but not eliminated altogether. You can trim the amount of daily fat intake by choosing fish, lean meats, low-fat dairy products, and fat-free or fat-reduced preparation methods.

Calcium

One vital element of nutrition for seniors is calcium, and many people just don't get enough of it. The calcium requirement for the elderly is about 1,500 mg per day. People often struggle with digestive problems from drinking milk, but there are many alternative calcium sources. Non-fat powdered milk can be used in many recipes. Other foods such as low-fat cheese, yogurt and even broccoli are delicious calcium-rich options.

Iron

Iron deficiency is a common problem for the elderly. Lean red meats and breakfast cereals are great sources of iron.

Zinc

Many seniors neglect zinc as an important contributor to good nutrition. The fact that zinc isn't readily absorbed into the body compounds the problem. Including healthy servings of poultry, meat and fish can help seniors to meet their daily zinc requirements.

Vitamin B12

A common problem with elderly men and women is B12 deficiency caused by a condition called atrophic gastritis. The vitamin B12 can only be absorbed when an intrinsic factor is present in the stomach. However, a person with atrophic gastritis will suffer from an inflammation of the stomach that causes bacterial overgrowth and impedes the intrinsic factor. Patients suffering vitamin B12 deficiency should talk to a doctor about supplemental options.

In order to grow and remain healthy, people of all ages require a balanced diet rich in vitamins, minerals and nutrients. Nutrition for seniors is especially important, as they face additional age-related health concerns. While aging does take a toll on the body, with good nutrition many seniors continue to lead vital, active lifestyles.