As You Age ... Eat the "Food Guide Pyramid" Way

As you age, eating a variety of nutritious foods becomes very important. Your lifestyle may be less active; you may sit more and perform fewer exercises or physical labor. Also, your body’s metabolism may be less efficient or slower.

The Food Guide Pyramid is a general guideline to help you eat a well-balanced diet. A new Modified Food Guide Pyramid for Persons 70+ has been developed to more accurately represent the calorie and special nutrient needs for persons over the age of 70.

Eat a Variety of Nutrient-Dense Foods. Eat at least the minimum number of servings for each food group. Choose foods that are nutrient-dense or fortified with vitamins and minerals. Choose less sugary and high fat foods (lower in nutrients), unless you need extra calories. Eating less foods or calories may be due to poor appetite, less activity, or medical conditions and may result in weight loss.

Eat Calcium-Rich Foods. Eat at least three servings of calcium-rich foods. Calcium and Vitamin D are important to maintain bone health.

Drink Enough Fluids. Drink eight (8-ounce) glasses of water as the base of the 70+ Pyramid. Water or other liquids (100% juices, milk, beverages, or soup) are needed to prevent dehydration and constipation and because of higher intake of medications in older adults.

Eat a Fiber-Rich Diet. Select a variety of fiber-rich foods from grain, fruit, and vegetable groups to maintain your digestive system. A plant-based diet has vitamins (A, C, and E) and other natural ingredients (phytochemicals and antioxidants) to protect us from normal cell damage. They also may reduce the risk of cancer and heart disease and may slow down the aging process.

Eat a Protein-Rich Diet. Animal foods are good sources of protein and Vitamin B-12. Protein is needed during periods of physical and emotional stresses, such as sickness. Vitamin B-12 is needed to make red blood cells and maintain the central nervous system. As you age, blood levels of Vitamin B-12 usually decrease.

Ask For Advice. If you are not eating well or don’t feel well, talk to your doctor, dietitian, or nutritionist. You may need a dietary supplement with Vitamin B-12, calcium, and Vitamin D.


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As You Age ... Health Care Professionals

Take a list of questions with you to the doctor's office. Ask the right questions, such as,
- What are side effects of medications?
- Do I need special equipment or instructions?
- What foods might interfere with treatment?
- Who pays for the costs of treating me?

Color Your Plate

As you age, it is important to choose nutrient dense foods that are lower in fat and sugar. Nutrient dense foods will provide you with needed vitamins and minerals and also help you maintain your desired weight. Circle the foods in the sample meal that are nutrient dense choices.

**Bread Plate:**
- Whole wheat bread
- Biscuit made from white flour

**Vegetable on Meal Plate:**
- Coleslaw made with mayonnaise
- Steamed broccoli

**Drinks:**
- Cola
- Skim milk

**Grains on Meal Plate:**
- White rice
- Brown rice

**Protein on Meal Plate:**
- Broiled fish
- Fried fish

**Dessert:**
- Sherbet
- Banana
Recipe for Healthy Aging

Preparation
1. Select a new topic or area of interest to learn about your own aging. Pursue a creative outlet for your interests.
2. Find resources on aging and become your own expert on a particular aging issue.
3. Learn about health-related changes as you age. Practice healthy physical and mental habits.
4. Ask your friends to participate in activities that you enjoy.
5. Set specific age-related goals and work to achieve them.
6. Encourage other older persons to take up active aging.
7. Communicate with one person each day.

Ingredients
1. Eat a variety of nutrient-dense foods from the Food Guide Pyramid.

2. Eat a fiber-rich diet.
   - Choose a variety of whole wheat foods, such as barley, whole wheat bread, cereals, oatmeal, brown rice, or whole wheat pasta to your diet.
   - Choose a variety of colorful fruits as snacks, part of a meal, or as dessert-apples, bananas, pears, peaches, strawberries, & melons (fruits contain vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants).
   - Choose a variety of colorful vegetables, such as broccoli, bell peppers, carrots, collard greens, kale, & spinach (vegetables contain vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals).

3. Eat at least 3 serving of calcium-rich foods.
   - Choose a variety of calcium-rich foods, such as milk products, yogurt, cheese, greens, broccoli, sardines with bones, or tofu.
   - Choose vitamin D fortified foods, such as fluid milk, dried milk products, and cereals.

4. Eat a protein-rich diet.
   - Choose a variety of fish, lean meats, dairy foods, and dried beans and peas for needed protein. Vitamin B-12 is found in animal proteins.

5. Drink enough fluids.
   - Drink 8 glasses of water or other fluids (100% fruit juices, beverages, or soup).
   - Drink tea, coffee, and caffeinated sodas in moderation.

Directions
1. Mix the above ingredients together to create colorful meals and snacks. Try to eat smaller, more frequent meals.
2. Share healthy foods with family and friends.
3. Discover new ways to prepare foods to meet age-related changes.
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