Nutrition Needs with Aging

The USDA MyPlate Daily Checklist 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 diary 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 Daily Checklist can provide the vitamins and minerals needed.

Water

Older adults need six to eight cups of water each day. Although water can come in many forms, older adults are at higher risk of dehydration.

Sources