

Nutrition News

Department of Human Nutrition



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The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans Ages 65 years and Older

2010 is the first time that the Dietary Guidelines for Americans have been intended for Americans who are healthy AND for those who are at increased risk of chronic disease. Here are some of the Dietary Guidelines for older adults, and action steps that you can take each day for better health.

1. Achieve and maintain a healthy body weight. Why? Overweight or obese older adults benefit from losing weight and keeping it off by having improved quality of life and decreased risk of disabilities and chronic diseases.

- Those who are overweight are encouraged to not gain additional weight.
- Those who are currently obese should prevent additional weight gain. If you also have risk factors for heart disease, the guidelines recommend that you intentionally lose weight.
- How to lose weight? For most, this means eating fewer high-calorie foods and increasing physical activity.

2. Reduce time spent being

sedentary. Instead, be more physically active.

- Increase your minutes of aerobic physical activity gradually to 150 minutes of moderately intense aerobic activity each week. If you can't meet these guidelines, be as physically active as your abilities and conditions allow.
- In addition, do exercises that maintain or improve balance if you are at risk of falling.
- Do physical activities that are appropriate for your level of fitness. If you have a chronic health condition, talk with your doctor about whether and how your condition affects your ability to safely do certain activities.

3. Change behaviors that typically lead to weight gain. How? Eat out less often (especially at fast food restaurants), eat smaller portions of high-fat and high-sugar foods and drinks, don't skip breakfast, and watch less television. Prepare and eat more healthful meals and snacks at home. Be mindful or conscious of eating. Monitor what, when and how much you eat.

4. Eat foods that provide more potassium, dietary fiber, calcium and vitamin D. These foods include vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and milk and milk products.

5. Choose nutrient-rich foods and beverages. Here's how:

- Eat more vegetables, especially dark-green, red and orange ones, and cooked dry beans and peas. Eat them as snacks, side dishes and salads, and in main dishes and soups.
- Fill half of each plate with fruits and vegetables.
- Eat more whole-grain foods, by substituting them for refined-grain food choices in breads, pasta, rice and breakfast cereals.
- Eat fewer salted foods. Adults ages 51 years and older are advised to reduce their sodium intake to 1,500 mg per day. Eating foods high in potassium (such as cooked greens, tomato juice/sauce/paste, potatoes, prune juice and yogurt) helps offset the negative effects of eating foods high in sodium. Read the Nutrition Facts label and choose products lower in sodium.

- Eat less of foods and beverages high in solid fats (including saturated and trans fats) or added sugars. These foods are called “SoFAS” in the new guidelines. Most Americans – even older men and women – eat too many SoFAS, about one-third of our calories. Older adults in particular eat too many dairy desserts. Read the Nutrition Facts label and ingredients in packaged foods (especially cakes, cookies, dairy desserts, pizza and cheese), and choose products lower in saturated fats, trans fats and added sugars.
 - Switch to fat-free or 1% milk.
 - Eat seafood in place of meat or poultry twice a week (strive to eat 8 or more ounces of a variety of seafood per week, to help prevent heart disease).
 - Eat moderate amounts of cooked lean beef, pork and lamb (up to 13 ounces per week), lean chicken and turkey without skin (up to 12 ounces per week), eggs (up to 7 yolks per week), and unsalted nuts and seeds (up to 7 ounces per week). Replace high-fat meats and poultry with choices that are low in saturated fats.
 - Eat grilled, baked, steamed, broiled, poached or roasted foods without extra fat most often, rather than breaded or fried ones.
 - Use spreads made from liquid vegetable oils, and use oils instead of solid fats when cooking.
 - Drink water or unsweetened beverages instead of sugary drinks.
6. Eat foods fortified with vitamin B₁₂, such as fortified cereals, or take a dietary supplement containing vitamin B₁₂.
7. Drinking alcohol in moderation can have either beneficial or harmful effects. Do not begin to drink it, or drink more frequently, on the basis of its potential health benefits.
- Moderate alcohol intake is associated with a lower risk of heart disease and death from all causes among older adults, and it may help to keep your mind functioning well as you age.
 - Moderate alcohol intake is also associated with increased risk of breast cancer, violence, drowning, and injuries from falls and motor vehicle crashes.
 - People who should not drink alcohol at all include those who take medications that can interact with alcohol; have certain medical conditions (such as liver disease, high triglycerides and pancreatitis); or plan to drive or do other activities where impaired coordination or judgment could cause injury or death.
8. Handle foods safely. Don’t eat foods that increase your risk of foodborne illness, because for older adults especially, the outcome can be severe or even fatal.
- Make it a habit to practice four food safety principles: Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill.
 - Do not eat undercooked foods containing seafood, meat, poultry or eggs. Use a meat thermometer to be sure they have been cooked to recommended safe internal temperatures.
 - Do not drink unpasteurized (raw) juice or milk, or eat foods made from unpasteurized milk, such as some soft cheeses (examples include feta, queso blanco, queso fresco, Brie, Camembert cheeses, blue-veined cheeses and Panela).
 - Heat deli and luncheon meats, and hot dogs, until they are steaming hot. This will kill the bacteria that cause the illness listeriosis.
 - Do not eat raw sprouts.
- How do your current food and activity choices align with these Dietary Guidelines? Getting into the habit of following them will help you live longer and healthier!

Source: Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010; www.cnpp.usda.gov/DGAs2010-PolicyDocument.htm

For more information about healthy eating, contact your local extension office.
The Food Assistance Program can help people of all ages with low income buy nutritious foods for a better diet.
To find out more, call toll-free 1-888-369-4777.

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