

Life Letter *mature*

Healthy eating for older adults

Canadians are living longer than ever before. It is estimated that some 6.9 million Canadians will be over age of 65 by 2021. Proper nutrition becomes more important for older adults because it promotes good health and an active, independent lifestyle.

Older adults have different nutritional needs than younger adults. Calorie needs go down but they still need the same number of nutrients, so older adults need to:

Pay attention to portion size - A normal part of the aging process is the loss of muscle mass. Muscle burns a significant number of calories, so calorie needs may decrease by 15 to 20 per cent between the ages of 40 and 70. Older adults should eat smaller amounts than they did in their younger years or they risk gaining too much weight.

Attention to portion size is the key to trimming calories without sacrificing good nutrition. Larger portions often mean more calories. Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide provides straightforward information on healthy portion sizes and is a useful tool you can use to control the amount you eat.

Be choosy - Although calorie needs are probably decreasing with age, the need for most nutrients stays the same, some even increase. Older adults should focus on quality rather than quantity when choosing what to eat. Look for foods that are low in calories but rich in nutrients.

Also, limit the consumption of:

- desserts and other sweets
- alcohol
- high-fat snack foods

- added sugar in coffee or tea
- added fats like butter, margarine, salad dressings, etc.

Quench thirst wisely - Water and other fluids are important for general health and help to prevent constipation. Health Canada recommends that men over the age of 50 drink 3.7 litres of water and other fluids each day (2.7 litres for older women).

Drinking water is the best way to meet your hydration needs. Other fluids, in moderation, that are sources of water include herbal teas or decaffeinated coffee, and vegetable or fruit juices.

Daily vitamin D supplement - Along with calcium, vitamin D is important for bone health. It reduces the risk of osteoporosis and fractures in older adults. The sun is too low in the sky for much of the year in Canada to allow our bodies to make adequate amounts of vitamin D in our skin. Because many people use sunscreens, vitamin D production can be blocked. Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide recommends all adults over age 50 take a 400 IU vitamin D supplement.

Want help with your retirement planning? Call today!

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