

Our nutrition requirements change as we move through the lifespan. At any age, we continue to require a broad range of nutrients from the 5 food groups. The challenge of meeting these nutritional requirements can be increased due to specific physical and eating environment changes as we age. In our senior years we continue to need a balanced diet to maintain and promote good health and there are nutrients requiring special attention.



New challenges that impact nutritional intake and requirements can include:

Social challenges

- eating alone, skipping meals or changed eating environments
- lack of motivation to prepare foods
- reduced independence in shopping and meal preparation
- dislike of newer healthier foods

Tips and tricks to make it easier ...

- eating at a similar time each day to build a routine
- enjoy small, regular meals
- choose healthy snacks as an opportunity to meet your requirements such as nuts, yoghurt with fruit on top, wholegrain toast with peanut butter or avocado
- make the most of pre-made foods such as frozen veg, canned fruit, ready-made meals, tinned tuna or salmon
- cook larger meals and freeze into individual portions
- use flavourings such as herbs and spices
- take opportunities for social eating: with friends, family, neighbours
- continue to enjoy your favourite meals



General ageing challenges

- loss of appetite
- taste changes
- difficulty chewing
- dry mouth
- muscle mass decrease
- reduced ability to absorb nutrients from food
- constipation
- bone loss
- reduced thirst



Tips and tricks to make it easier ...

- keep it interesting and enjoyable with variety
- choose foods that are high in nutrients
- follow the Australian Dietary Guidelines to ensure all nutrient requirements are met.
- regularly discuss your medications with your health professional
- make water your drink of choice and keep water on hand at all times.



It is important that older Australians include specific nutrients that help the body to remain healthy as we age:

Calcium

- reduced calcium absorption from food means that calcium intake needs to be increased
- milk and milk products are the best source of calcium
- aim for 4 reduced fat milk and milk products serves each day



Fibre

- can help to encourage bowel regularity
- is useful in lowering blood cholesterol
- can help manage blood sugar level and promote healthy gut bacteria
- include foods high in fibre throughout the day
- great sources of fibre include wholegrains, wholegrain cereals, vegetables and fruits



Protein

- extra protein is needed to compensate for muscle loss, wound healing and during times of illness
- find protein in meat and meat alternatives, nuts, legumes, milk and milk alternatives
- try for 2-3 serves of meat and meat alternatives each day



Antioxidants

- some vitamins such as Vitamin D and C contribute antioxidants to the body
- antioxidants can help to prevent damage to our cells as we age
- antioxidants help boost immunity to prevent and overcome illness
- fruit and vegetables are the best sources of antioxidants

A special mention on **Fluids.** Reduced thirst and reduced bowel regularity means that fluid needs to be monitored in older adults. The simple trick to check if enough fluid is consumed is to check the colour of urine produced. Ideal hydration status is indicated by clear or very pale yellow urine.

We are here to help. Go to our website www.actnss.org/nutritioninfohubseniors for ideas and inspiration to help older Australians to eat well and maintain their health. Looking for easy recipes to meet the nutrition needs of seniors? Go to our website www.actnss.org/recipes for ideas.

Do you have a specific question around healthy eating for seniors? Contact us for more information on T: 02 6162 2583.