

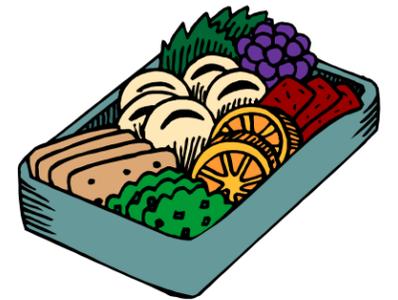
FOOD AS PREVENTIVE MEDICINE

The food we eat today can affect how we feel tomorrow.

Well-nourished older adults not only feel better, they also recover faster from illnesses, spend less time in the hospital, and can possibly live longer than their peers. Aging bodies require less calories but have increased need for some vitamins and minerals. New research shows that your food choices can impact your risk for getting major long-term diseases and the severity of the complications of those illnesses.

Food choices directly relate to the leading causes of illness and death:

◆ **Heart Disease** - Risks for heart disease can be reduced with a diet that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol, moderate in total fat, and rich in whole grains, fruits and vegetables, lean meats, poultry, fish, and nonfat dairy products.



◆ **Cancer**

- The National Cancer Institute estimates that 35% of cancer deaths may be related to dietary factors.
- A diet that is high in fiber, grain products, fruits, and vegetables, but low in fat can reduce the risk of getting many kinds of cancer.

◆ **Stroke** - Foods low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol reduce the risk of stroke.



Food Related Risk Factors

Overweight/Obesity

If you are overweight, you have an increased chance of developing high blood pressure, atherosclerosis, heart disease, stroke, cancer, asthma, diabetes, and osteoarthritis. Controlling or losing weight can reduce stress on the joints and can help avoid further damage from painful arthritis.



High Blood Pressure

Treating high blood pressure reduces risks for stroke, heart disease, and kidney disease. Even moderate weight loss and sodium restriction can reduce blood pressure significantly in older adults, as can exercise and eliminating smoking.

High Blood Cholesterol

High blood cholesterol levels can contribute to heart disease and stroke. Eating a diet low in total fat, saturated fat and cholesterol, and eating soluble fiber, can help to lower blood cholesterol.

Developed by: Claudia C. Collins, Ph.D.
Nita M. Schmidt



Senior Wellness Series

Food as Preventive Medicine

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
Bringing the University to You



References:

Administration on Aging. (2001). ElderAction: Action Ideas for Older Persons and Their Families (Online). <http://www.aoa.dhhs.gov/aoa/eldractn/foodfact.html> (Access date: 7/30/01.)

The American Dietetic Association. (1997). Staying Healthy-A Guide for Elder Americans (Rev.ed.) (Brochure). Chicago, IL.

National Academy Press. (1997). Dietary Reference Intakes for Calcium, Magnesium, Vitamin D, and Fluoride. Food as Medicine. (1998, April). Harvard Women's Health Watch, 5, 4-5.

National Cancer Institute. (1996). Cancer Rates and Risks (4th ed., NIH Publication No. 96-691). Bethesda, MD: National Institutes of Health

National Center for Nutrition and Dietetics, The American Dietetic Association. (1995). Nutrition Fact Sheet: Fitness and Bone Health (Brochure). Chicago, IL.

Recommendations Updated for Hypertension. (1998, January). Harvard Health Letter, 23, 6-7.

Russell, R.M., Rasmussen, H., & Lichtenstein, A.H. (1999). Modified Food Guide Pyramid for People over Seventy Years of Age. Journal of Nutrition, 129, 751-753.

Osteoporosis

Increased calcium intake can reduce the risk of osteoporosis by as much as half. Osteoporosis is a slow, progressive bone-weakening disease that can affect both men and women as they age. Almost half of women over age 50 suffer from bone fractures due to osteoporosis. Osteoporosis affects the majority of people over age 70. Bones become so fragile that they fracture with normal use and falls have a much greater likelihood of causing serious injury.



Healthy Food choices

Foods to eat more often:

- ◆ Fruits and Vegetables
- ◆ Foods Containing Fiber
- ◆ Foods Containing Whole Grains
- ◆ Foods Rich in Calcium and Vitamin D

Fruits and Vegetables - 5 Servings a Day



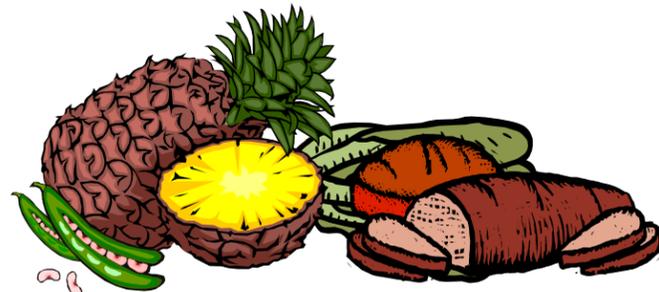
- ◆ Fruits and vegetables are known to reduce risks of cancer and may reduce risks of heart disease.
- ◆ Fruits and vegetables are complex foods containing more than 100 substances—including vitamins, minerals, and fiber, which may offer protection from cancer.

- ◆ Choosing a variety of deeply colored fruits and vegetables is important to obtain necessary nutrients.

Foods Rich in Fiber

High Fiber Foods Include:

- ❖ Fruits
- ❖ Vegetables
- ❖ Beans
- ❖ Whole grains, breads, cereals



High fiber foods—particularly when combined with a low-fat diet—might help protect against colon and rectal cancer. A high-fiber diet is usually low in fat as well. Some types of fiber help to protect against high blood cholesterol levels, and fiber can be effective in fighting constipation by reducing food transit time. To increase the health benefits of your food, get **20 to 35 grams** of fiber daily (on average, most people get only 11 grams of fiber daily). Add fiber to your diet gradually to prevent problems like diarrhea, constipation or diverticular disease.

Calcium and Vitamin D

It is never too late to improve your bone health by eating calcium-rich foods. The National Institute on Aging recommends that men and women aged 50 and older take 1,200 mg. of calcium every day; and that women past menopause should have 1,200 to 1,500 mg. of calcium daily. Some studies suggest that calcium may play a protective role against colon cancer and lower the incidence of kidney stones.

Sources of Calcium

- ◆ Many dairy foods (milk, yogurt, cheese) are good sources of calcium. Low fat and nonfat dairy foods generally have calcium content comparable to whole dairy products. One 8-oz glass of milk (whole, low-fat, or skim) has 300 mg. of calcium.
- ◆ Other good sources of calcium include broccoli, kale, okra, collard greens, sardines or salmon, and calcium-fortified products like orange juice.
- ◆ Most older adults do not get enough calcium from their food, and might consider taking a calcium supplement. Check with your doctor before taking this or any kind of dietary supplement.



Vitamin D

- ◆ Your body needs adequate vitamin D to use the calcium you ingest. Milk fortified with vitamin D is a good source of vitamin D. Your body can make its own vitamin D if you get a few minutes of sunshine a few times a week.
- ◆ For those who cannot or choose not to drink milk, supplemental vitamin D may be necessary.

Eat Less of These Foods:

- ◆ Foods High in Sodium
- ◆ Alcoholic Beverages
- ◆ Caffeine
- ◆ Sugar
- ◆ Fat, Saturated Fat, Trans-fat, and Cholesterol

