



HEALTHIER YOU
PTY LTD

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Top 5 tips for healthy eating as we age

NSW Seniors festival runs from 1st -10th April. On ABC radio, we discussed the 5 most important nutrition tips for people as we age. As people age beyond their 70's, some things can happen which may mean they need to make some changes to their diet. These include:

- Lack of energy and vitality
- Losing muscle mass and losing weight. This can increase the risk of falls
- Loss of bone calcium leading to the increased risk of osteopenia or osteoporosis
- Deterioration of brain function leading to increased risk of Alzheimer's, dementia and poor memory function



Although not everyone will experience these problems, most people notice a slowing down of things. The good news, an appropriate diet can help slow down or prevent these aspects. The Dietary Guidelines state we need to eat a wide variety of nutritious foods ⁽¹⁾. The top 5 things that we discussed with ABC are:

1. **Eat regularly.** Aim to have 3 main meals each day. Regular snacks in between your meals can ensure you can maintain your energy levels and that you can balance your blood sugar levels across the day. A good mix of protein (meats dairy etc), carbohydrates (fruit, vegetables, breads, cereals) and good fats (nuts, avocado, fish) as well as a lot of fibre (grains, cereals, fruit and vegetables).
2. **Protein foods build muscle strength.** Ensure there is an adequate mix of protein (eggs, meat, fish, chicken, nuts, dairy foods (yoghurt, milk, cheese), tofu, tempeh, lentils (kidney beans, baked beans, chick peas), pumpkin seeds etc) in your diet. Aim to have one of these in all main meals and some snacks. Protein foods can help muscle strength and good muscle strength can prevent falls.

3. **Calcium rich foods are important for bone strength.** As we age, we need to increase our calcium intake to 1200mg/day (approximately 3-4 serves of dairy each day). Calcium rich foods include milk, yoghurt, cheese, bony fish, nuts, some vegetables and seeds.
4. **Eat some foods that help brain function.** Foods like fish, nuts, soy products (all rich in omega-3) have been shown to help preserve brain function. Nuts (particularly walnuts) have been shown to help memory ⁽²⁾; pumpkin seeds are rich in zinc and help memory and thinking. Foods rich in B6, B12 and folic acid - are known to reduce levels of homocysteine in the blood. Elevated levels of homocysteine are associated with increased risk of stroke, cognitive impairment and Alzheimer's disease ⁽³⁾.
5. **Adequate fluid intake.** Water is our preferred drink. The Dietary Guidelines state we should aim to drink up to 8 glasses of water each day ⁽⁴⁾. A moderate amount of alcohol (1-2 standard drinks – 5 days/week) has also been shown to prolong longevity ⁽⁵⁾. Milk is also a great drink to help build bone strength and ensure adequate protein intake

If you feel you might be missing some of these things in your diet, chat to an Accredited Practising Dietitian who may be able to suggest ways to modify your diet. If we ensure we have an adequate intake of a range of these types of foods, our bodies will get the vitamins and minerals for a healthier you!!!

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