

Healthy Eating Habits after Age 65

Choose nutrient dense foods.

As you age, you need fewer calories due to loss of lean body mass. To get the nutrients your body needs, choose foods that are high in vitamin and minerals, but low in calories and fat. This can help prevent unwanted weight gain.

Nutrient dense foods include:

- Dried, canned, fresh, or frozen colorful fruits and vegetables
- Whole, enriched, and fortified cereals and grains like 100% whole wheat bread, pasta, or brown rice
- Low or non-fat dairy products like milk, cheese, yogurt, and kefir
- Liquid oils low in saturated and trans fats like olive oil, canola oil, and buttery spreads with no trans fats
- Lean meat, nuts, dried beans, and eggs

Eat a good source of protein at meals and snacks.

Losing muscle mass, called sarcopenia, is a natural part of aging. Eating the right amount of protein can lessen the loss of muscle mass. This can also help you maintain strength and independence as you age.

High protein foods include:

Lean Meat	Beans	Milk/Soy Milk
Poultry	Lentils	Cottage cheese
Fish	Soy products	Greek Yogurt
Nuts	Tofu	Quinoa
Nut butters	Hummus	Buckwheat

Eat less sodium.

Eating a lot of sodium over time may lead to high blood pressure. This can cause heart disease, stroke, and kidney disease. Limit sodium to 1500 milligrams (mg) per day. This is equal to 2/3 teaspoon. Most salt in your diet comes from salt added to foods rather than from your saltshaker. If you have been eating a diet high in sodium, it may take 6-8 weeks to get used to a low sodium diet.

Tips for reducing sodium:

- Read food labels. Choose foods with 300 mg of sodium per serving or less. Boxed, canned, or processed food items are often high in sodium.
- Choose food products marked “low sodium,” “unsalted,” “no salt added,” “sodium free,” or “salt free.”
- Buy fresh, frozen, or unprepared meats, fruits, and vegetables. Pre-mixed or prepared items may have sauces or seasonings high in sodium.
- Research menu items before eating out. Most restaurants have a website that lists the amount of sodium in the foods they serve.

Add these herbs and spices to your foods instead of salt:

Fresh garlic, Fresh onion, Garlic powder, Onion powder, Black pepper, Cinnamon, Cayenne, Nutmeg, Lemon juice, Low-sodium/salt-free seasoning blends, Vinegar

Drink enough fluids.

As you age you may not be able to notice thirst. If you do not feel thirsty, you may not drink enough fluids. This can cause dehydration. Dehydration can increase risk of falls, urinary tract infections, dental issues, kidney stones, and constipation.

Tips for staying hydrated:

- Do not rely on your thirst. Keep a drink nearby. Make a habit of sipping on fluids throughout the day.
- Include a drink at every meal and snack.
- It may be easier to drink room temperature fluids.
- Choose foods with higher amounts of water like fruits and vegetables.
- Sip on drinks you enjoy. Limit high calorie drinks to prevent unwanted weight gain.

Eat more high fiber foods.

Fiber can promote colon health and help prevent issues like constipation. Fiber can help control blood sugar and reduce cholesterol. Read food labels. Choose foods that have 3 or more grams of fiber per serving.

High fiber foods include:

Beans	Whole grains	Fruits
Legumes	Oats	Vegetables
Nuts	Flaxseed	

Switch to softer foods.

As you age, you might have trouble chewing and swallowing. This can affect your ability to get the nutrition that you need. Choose nutrient dense soft foods.

Soft foods include:

Smooth yogurt	Applesauce, canned fruits
Boiled or cooked eggs	Soft fruits without skins
Soft cheeses	Melons, peaches, bananas
Cottage cheese	Hot cooked cereals
Ground cooked meat or poultry	Soft bread, rolls, muffins
Baked, broiled, or poached fish	Pancakes, French toast
Soft cooked or canned vegetables	Desserts without nuts
Legumes, potatoes, squash	

Include foods with vitamin B12, calcium and vitamin D.

As you age, you need more vitamin B12, calcium, and vitamin D. Medicines as well as aging can reduce your ability to make or use these vitamins. Eat more foods high in these vitamins and minerals (listed below). If you are unable to eat more of these foods, contact your doctor to see if you need a vitamin or mineral supplement.

Vitamin B12 foods:

- milk, fortified breakfast cereals and grains.

Calcium and Vitamin D foods:

- milk, cheese, yogurt, soy beans, kale, spinach, sardines, salmon, perch, beef liver, egg yolks, fortified orange juice, and fortified cereals.

Save money while eating well.

Here are a few tips to help save money while on a budget:

- Make a shopping list before you go to the grocery store and only buy items on the list.
- Plan meals and snacks in advance. This will help to organize your grocery list and pick foods that are on sale.
- Review store flyer for coupons and specials.
- Choose store brands instead of brand names.
- Eat at restaurants that offer senior discounts.

Increase physical activity.

Regular exercise and physical activity can lessen the risk of some diseases and disabilities. It can also improve appetite and support healthy digestion.

Look for nutrition resources near you.

Here are some federal food programs for older adults with limited budgets:

- **The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program** gives coupons to older adults with low incomes that can be used to at Farmers' Markets. You can use these to purchase fresh, nutritious, locally grown fruits, vegetables, and herbs from certified farmers. For more information, go to <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/wic/fmnp/senior.htm>.
- **The SNAP program, or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program** (known as FoodShare in Wisconsin) helps people with a low income buy food. Find out more at www.fns.usda.gov/snap
- **The Commodity Supplemental Food Program** provides a monthly food package of vegetables, fruits, grain products, dry beans and canned meats to eligible older people to supplement their own food. Find out more at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/nutrition/csf.htm>.
- **The Emergency Food Assistance Program** provides food from pantries or prepared at meal sites to low-income older adults who might not have enough to eat. Find out more at www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/tefap/
- **The Child and Adult Care Food Program** provides meals and snacks to eligible older adults taking part in adult day care programs. Find out more at https://fns.dpi.wi.gov/fns_cacfp1
- **The Meals on Wheels Association** provides home-delivered meal services to people in need. Find out more at <http://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org>

Teach Back:

What is the most important thing you learned from this handout?

What changes will you make in your diet/lifestyle, based on what you learned today?

If you have more questions please contact UW Health at one of the phone number listed below. You can also visit our website at www.uwhealth.org/nutrition

Nutrition clinics for UW Hospital and Clinics (UWHC) and American Family Children's Hospital (AFCH) can be reached at: **(608) 890-5500**.

Nutrition clinics for UW Medical Foundation (UWMF) can be reached at: **(608) 287-2770**.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 6/2015 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Clinical Nutrition Services Department and the Department of Nursing. HF#588