Healthy Eating for Seniors

Are you finding it difficult to get in all the nutrients that experts say you need because you just can’t eat that much? The fact is that as you age, you need fewer calories, but not fewer nutrients. In fact, you need more of certain nutrients to stay healthy. The key is to select foods that give you the most nutrients for the calories. Many people also tend to drink fewer fluids as they get older because they don’t feel as thirsty.

Researchers from Tufts University have incorporated the unique nutrition guidelines for older adults, age 70+, into a modified version of the U.S. Food Guide Pyramid. The general nutrition principles are the same as the U.S. Food Guide Pyramid: eat more whole grains, fruits, and vegetables and less meat, fat, and sweets. But, the modified pyramid emphasizes certain foods that provide more of the nutrients specifically needed for seniors.

At the base of the pyramid is eight glasses of fluid a day to encourage people to drink more fluids to help prevent constipation and dehydration. Fluids can include choices other than water like soup, fruit juice, and milk.

More nutrient-dense fruits and vegetables that contain specific nutrients are emphasized in the modified food pyramid. These fruits and vegetables provide the antioxidants needed as we age to fight damage from free radicals, and folic acid to help with mental alertness and reduce the risk of heart disease. The pyramid focuses on dark green leafy vegetables like spinach, deep yellow or orange vegetables like carrots and yams, and colorful fruit like oranges, strawberries and mangos that

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are high in Vitamin A, C, and folic acid. Fruits and vegetables that provide fewer nutrients per serving include iceberg lettuce, potatoes, apples, celery and cucumbers.

Older adults need plenty of Vitamin D and calcium to keep bones strong. The pyramid recommends low-fat milk and other dairy products, along with the dark green, leafy vegetables.

Foods high in fiber like whole grains and whole fruits and vegetables in place of juices are recommended and noted with a fiber symbol. Fiber helps prevent constipation, a problem more common as we get older. Fiber can help lower cholesterol and reduce the risk of heart disease and some types of cancer.

Sweets and foods high in fat should be used sparingly because they are low in nutrients and high in calories. Eating a lot of these foods will limit your intake of healthier foods.

A flag on the pyramid indicates that vitamin supplements may be helpful in some older individuals. Certain nutrients like Vitamin B12 may not be absorbed well. Extra calcium and Vitamin D may be needed to protect your bones if you cannot get a minimum of 3 servings of milk or dairy products each day. Food is always the best source of nutrients. Vitamin supplements should not be used in place of a healthy diet, but rather to supplement healthy foods.

The Tufts Modified Food Pyramid for Mature (70+) Adults can be viewed and copied from their web site at http://nutrition.tufts.edu/publications/pyramid.shtml.

**Guiltless Zucchini**

Nonstick cooking spray
4 medium zucchini, sliced
1/3 cup chopped onion
2 cloves garlic, minced
1/4 teaspoon dried oregano leaves
1/2 cup Roasted Red Pepper Salsa *
1/4 cup (1 ounce) shredded low-fat mozzarella cheese

Coat large nonstick skillet with cooking spray; heat over medium heat until hot. Add zucchini; cook and stir 5 minutes. Add onion, garlic and oregano; cook 5 minutes more or until zucchini and onion are lightly browned. Stir in salsa. Bring just to a boil. Reduce heat to low; simmer 5 minutes more or until zucchini is crisp-tender. Sprinkle cheese on top; cover and cook 1 to 2 minutes or until cheese melts. Serve hot. Makes 4 servings.

Exchanges: 2 Vegetable
Nutrition Information:

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<tr>
<td>Fiber:</td>
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* Other types of salsa can be substituted
Reference: www.diabeticcooking.com

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### Scam Targets Elderly African-Americans

"Apply for Newly Approved Slave Reparations!" "Claim $5,000 in Social Security Reimbursements!"

Flyers with these instructions, circulating in many Southern and Midwestern African-American communities, are trying to trick people into revealing personal identifying information that could cost them money or damage their credit ratings.

The flyers, distributed in churches and placed on the windshields of parked cars or bulletin boards in senior centers and nursing homes, claim that African-Americans born before 1928 may be eligible for slave reparations under a so-called "Slave Reparation Act" and that those born between 1917 and 1926 can apply for Social Security funds they are due because of a “fix” in the Social Security system.

According to law enforcement officials, the claims are false. They are being made by skilled identity thieves, who are asking people to
reveal their name, address, phone number, birth date, and SSN to access their credit cards or to open accounts under their names without their permission or knowledge.

You can minimize your risk of identity theft by following these suggestions:

1. Never reveal your personal identifying information unless you know exactly whom you’re dealing with and how the information will be used.
2. Verify the details with any government agency that is involved in an offer. You can find the phone number for every government agency in the blue pages of your telephone book.
3. Read all of your bills carefully. Call your creditors to dispute any charge you didn’t make or authorize.
4. Order a copy of your credit report every year from each of the three major credit reporting agencies to verify that your credit information is accurate. (You can reach Equifax at 1-800-685-1111, Experian at 1-888-397-3742, and Trans Union at 1-800-916-8800.)

If you receive a flyer promoting slave reparations or Social Security reimbursements, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) encourages you to report it to the Social Security Administration or the FTC at its toll-free Identity Theft Hotline, 1-877-438-4338 (1-877-IDTHEFT). In Georgia, you should also report it to the Governor’s Office of Consumer Affairs by calling 1-800-869-1123 (404-651-8600 in metropolitan Atlanta).

Reference: Federal Trade Commission

Your Relationships

Health, Long Life and Church

The United States is considered to be one of the more “religious” countries on earth. More than eight in ten Americans pray at least weekly, and nearly half of people here attend church weekly. New research has found some interesting benefits of church participation that go beyond one’s relationship with a higher power.

Health researchers in California followed the health status and behaviors of a group of 2,700 people for 30 years. This group is typical of people all across the country. When the researchers compared the health of these people with their involvement in church activities, they got a surprise. Many of the survey participants started out with many unhealthy behaviors such as smoking, drinking excessively, and not
exercising. The participants who attended church regularly were more likely to quit their unhealthy behaviors and begin healthier lifestyles. Weekly church attendance was also associated with less depression and with stronger marriages. Regular church attenders not only lived healthier lives, but they also lived longer lives.

These results don’t necessarily mean that church attendance causes better health and long life. Perhaps people with better health also just happen to attend church more. But the possible reasons for these findings are intriguing, particularly when the scientists looked at the number and quality of friendships that people had.

“Social support” is a measure of how involved people are with other people and groups. The researchers wondered whether regular church attenders differed from people who are less involved in church and social support. The results? Regular church attenders have more social relationships, more close friends, closer relationships with their relatives, and more group memberships. They are just more involved with other people! Many churches make a special effort to keep seniors involved by providing rides to activities or providing meals and visits to the homebound.

The researchers think that being involved with other people throughout life may help buffer the stress that everyone experiences. They cite an example of the old Amish tradition of, when your barn burns down, everyone in the community shows up to help you rebuild. Regardless of the loss and disappointments we all face, having a network of supportive friends seems to help people bounce back with better physical and emotional health.

The more we learn about the relationship between our physical health and our peace of mind, the stronger the association seems to be. Having friends and being involved with others goes right along with good health, and vice versa.

Dear Friend:

SENIOR SENSE is a quarterly publication provided by your local county Extension Service office. It is prepared by Extension Family & Consumer Sciences specialists at The University of Georgia specifically for the educational needs of older Georgians.

Please contact your local Extension Service office for more information on these and related topics.

Putting Knowledge to Work

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