



Planning Meals using Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating

Good nutrition is important at any age. Eating well will help you feel your best every day and may even prevent heart disease, osteoporosis, diabetes and some cancers.

Aging itself affects nutrition. As you get older, you need fewer calories and the same amount, or even more, of certain vitamins and minerals. Planning meals to provide all the required nutrients in fewer calories can be a challenge.

The key to healthy eating is planning your food choices and meals using Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating. That way you will be eating a variety of foods and making choices that are higher in fibre and lower in fat more often. Most special diets for diseases or conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis and high blood pressure start with healthy eating as recommended in Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating.

Planning Meals

- ⊗ Start by planning for three meals each day; if you like, include one to three snacks. Skipping any meal, but especially skipping breakfast, will make it difficult to get all the nutrients you need each day.
- ⊗ Choose foods from at least three of the four food groups at each meal.
- ⊗ Make sure that you eat at least the minimum amount of servings from each food group every day. You can eat more depending on your appetite, age, size, activity level and gender. A registered dietitian can help you plan a diet that will meet your individual needs.
- ⊗ Plan your meals around grain products and vegetables and fruits. These two food groups should cover about 2/3 of your plate.
- ⊗ Eat a variety of foods every day to ensure that you are getting all the nutrients you need.
- ⊗ Choose lower fat and higher fibre foods from each food group more often.
- ⊗ Keep a written list of menu items to refer to when you are out of ideas. Swap menu ideas with friends to add even more variety.

Grain Products

5 to 12 servings per day
Grains provide you with energy as well as fibre and some important vitamins.

Examples of one serving

- ✿ 1 slice bread or ½ bun.
- ✿ 30 grams cold cereal (about 1 cup depending on type of cereal - see label).
- ✿ ¾ cup hot cereal.
- ✿ ½ cup pasta or rice.



Vegetables and Fruit

5 to 10 servings per day

Choose dark green, bright yellow and orange

vegetables and fruit more often as they contain the most nutrients. Try spinach, broccoli, carrots, squash, oranges, cantaloupe and peaches.

Examples of one serving

- ✿ 1 medium sized piece of fruit or vegetable (e.g. apple, banana, carrot).
- ✿ ½ cup fresh, frozen or canned fruit or vegetables.
- ✿ 1 cup leafy vegetables.
- ✿ ½ cup fruit or vegetable juice.

Milk Products

2 to 4 servings per day
Milk products contain calcium and vitamin D, important for keeping your bones healthy. Choose lower fat milk products more often.

Examples of one serving

- ✿ 1 cup skim, 1%, 2% or whole milk.
- ✿ 2 slices cheese.
- ✿ ¾ cup yogurt.

Meat and Alternatives

2 to 3 servings per day
Meat and alternatives are important sources of protein, iron and B vitamins and are key for good muscle tone and immunity. Choose lean meats, fish and poultry, and alternatives such as beans, lentils and peas more often.

Examples of one serving

- ✿ 2 to 3 ounces meat, fish or poultry (about the size of a deck of cards).
- ✿ 1/3 to 2/3 can of salmon or tuna.
- ✿ ½ to 1 cup cooked beans such as pork and beans, kidney beans, lentils.
- ✿ 1 egg.
- ✿ 2 tablespoons peanut butter.

Other foods

Some foods don't fit into the four food groups. These include cream, butter, margarine, salad dressings, jam, sugar, honey, candies, herbs, seasonings and condiments as well as high fat and/or salty snack foods such as potato chips. Also in this group are beverages, including water, coffee, tea, soft drinks and alcohol. These foods can add variety and interest to your meals and snacks, but most should be used in moderation.



Fluids are essential to life, yet many seniors do not drink enough. As we age, our sense of thirst declines so we need to drink regularly whether we feel thirsty or not. Aim for six to eight glasses of fluids each day including water, juice, milk, soup, herbal tea and decaffeinated coffee and/or tea.

