Office on Aging

How to Plan Meals that Are Balanced and Varied

Nutritional needs change as a person ages: fewer calories are needed each day, older adults are often active, and vitamins and nutrients are absorbed differently by the body. Change in taste preferences and loss of appetite also affect how well a person eats. It is important to "power-pack" your meals to make sure you get the vitamins your body needs.

- 1. Enjoy a variety of nutritious foods: Try a new fruit, vegetable, or grain each month.
- 2. Eat more whole grains and fiber:
 - Eat a high fiber cereal for breakfast or as a snack
 - Use brown rice in stir-fries or casseroles
 - Switch to whole-wheat bread, muffins, pasta, or muffins
 - Experiment with other grains such as bulgar, quinoa, or couscous
- 3. Eat more colorful vegetables and fruits:
 - Drink 100% fruit juice
 - Sprinkle berries onto cereal, yogurt, or oatmeal
 - Include a salad, raw vegetables, or vegetable soup with lunch or dinner
 - Toss extra vegetables into your pasta, casserole, or stew
 - Eat fresh fruit, a baked apple, or fruit cobbler for dessert
 - Buy fruit or vegetables when they are in season
- 4. Add more dairy/calcium to your meals:
 - Use milk instead of water in canned soup or oatmeal
 - Have pudding or frozen yogurt as dessert
 - Drink a glass of non-fat or low-fat milk as a snack
 - Eat canned salmon
 - Sprinkle almonds onto salads, green beans, casseroles, or fish
 - Choose dark green leafy greens over iceberg lettuce
- 5. Choose leaner meats or eat non-meat protein sources.
 - Use chicken, pork, or fish in meals. Leaner cuts of beef are round, flank, and loin.
 - Trim fat and remove skin from meat
 - Substitute meat in a dish by using egg, tofu, or beans instead
- 6. Limit salt and sugar intake. Avoid trans fats.
 - Try pepper or fresh herbs rather than salt to season
 - Choose lower sodium products such as canned soups, sauces, or crackers
 - Eat fewer processed foods; they often have added sugar, salt, and trans-fats
- 7. Drink at least 8 glasses of water a day
 - Fruit, milk, juice, and soups are included
 - You may not be thirsty, but your body needs to stay hydrated



Information & Assistance for Older Adults 1-800-510-2020

