Eating healthily, combined with regular physical activity, can help a person live a full, active life, preserving independence into older age.

10 Simple Dietary Guidelines To Help You Stay Well Into Older Age:

1. Balance your food intake with physical activity – the more active you are, the more food you need. Keep an eye on your meal portion size, if you are less active choose smaller serving sizes and add plenty of vegetables, salad and fruit.

2. Include a carbohydrate food (bread, rice, pasta, potato, or cereal) at each meal. Choose high fibre options whenever you can (see following section for suggestions).

3. Aim for five servings of fruits & vegetables each day. These are packed with important nutrients to help you stay healthy. Remember these can be fresh, frozen, tinned, or dried. Colour is important – have a mixture of different coloured fruits and vegetables each day such as apples, oranges, bananas, spinach, cabbage, carrots, sweet potato, broccoli, cauliflower, peppers, sweet corn.

4. Protein foods help to make new cells and keep your muscles healthy. Stay fit and strong by eating a variety of protein-rich foods each day. Great sources include lean meat, poultry and fish. Salmon, sardines, trout, fresh tuna and kippers are packed with heart-healthy omega 3 fats. Eating beans, eggs and nuts is a simple way of boosting the protein in your diet.

5. Keep your bones healthy by having three servings of low-fat dairy foods (milk, yoghurt, or cheese) each day. Dairy foods with added calcium and vitamin D are even better. Look out for these in the supermarket as fortified foods.

6. Choose heart-healthy fats. We all need some fat in the diet but it is a case of choosing the right type:

   - Saturated fat or animal fat can raise your cholesterol level, which can in turn increase the risk of heart disease. Saturated fat is found in butter, hard margarine, lard, cream, cream based sauces, fat on meat, skin on chicken, and processed meats like sausages, burgers, black and white pudding, meat pies and pate. It is also found in biscuits, cakes, chocolate, toffees, takeaway foods, foods covered in batter and breadcrumbs as well as milk, cheese and yoghurt.

   - Trans fat or hydrogenated vegetable fat also raises cholesterol levels. Trans fat is found in hard margarine, cakes, biscuits and confectionery. It may be listed as hydrogenated fat on food labels and should be avoided.

   - Monounsaturated fat – aim to replace saturated fat with monounsaturated fat to help protect your heart as it helps lower cholesterol level. Monounsaturated fat is found in olive oil, peanut oil and rapeseed oil, unsalted peanuts, cashew nuts and almonds.
Polyunsaturated fat can also help to reduce cholesterol levels. Polyunsaturated fat is found in oily fish (omega-3 fat), sunflower oil (omega-6 fat), sesame oil, flaxseed oil, walnuts and hazelnuts.

Remember all types of fats and oils contain the same amount of fat and calories. They can lead to weight gain if used to excess!

7. Use less salt. Too much salt in the diet can contribute to high blood pressure, which in turn can lead to stroke or heart disease. You can reduce the amount of salt in your diet by:
   - Avoid adding salt to your food at the table and in cooking. Use pepper, lemon juice, herbs and spices to flavour food instead of salt.
   - Choosing fresh foods as often as possible e.g. fresh meat, chicken, fish, vegetables, home-made soups and sauces without salt.
   - Limit intake of processed or canned food.
   - Avoid foods high in salt such as packet and tinned soups and sauces, instant noodles, Bovril, Oxo, Marmite, stock cubes, soy sauce, garlic salt and sea salt.
   - Avoid processed meats such as ham, bacon, corned beef, sausages, burgers, black and white pudding, meat pies, pate as well as smoked fish.
   - Keep away from snacks such as salted biscuits and salted crisps and nuts.
   - Check food labels to help you choose foods with a low amount of salt. Too much salt is more than 1.5g (0.6g sodium) per 100g of any food item.

8. Limit amount of foods high in ‘empty calories’ like biscuits, cakes, savoury snacks (crisps, peanuts), sweets, confectionary. These foods are rich in calories, fat, sugar and salt, so remember – not too much and not too often.

9. Stay hydrated. Among other things, dehydration causes tiredness, dizziness and constipation. Get plenty of fluids (water, fruit cordials, juice, milk) on board each day. As a general guide, about 8 glasses a day should be adequate.

10. Alcohol should be enjoyed in moderation. The recommendations are no more than 11 standard drinks a week for women or 17 standard drinks a week for men. A standard drink is one small glass of wine (100mls) or a half pint of beer or one pub measure of spirits (35mls). You should aim for a number of alcohol free days in the week.
Some Important Nutrients to Consider

As we get older, our bodies have different needs, so certain nutrients become especially important for good health:

**Fibre:** Eating fibre-rich foods helps bowels move regularly, lowering the risk of constipation. A high-fibre diet can also lower the risk for many chronic conditions including heart disease, obesity and some cancers. Good sources of fibre include:
- 100% wholemeal or wholegrain bread
- Breakfast cereals such as porridge, weetabix, shredded wheat, branflakes
- Other cereals such as brown rice, brown pasta
- Potatoes eaten in their jackets
- Fruits and vegetables
- Pulse vegetables such as beans, peas and lentils.

Breakfast can be a super way to get a high fibre start to the day: Add linseed to a wholegrain cereal or to yoghurt or have prune juice instead of orange juice to boost your fibre intake.

**Calcium and Vitamin D:** Older adults need extra calcium and vitamin D to help maintain bone health. Being a healthy weight can help keep bones strong. Take three servings of vitamin D-fortified milk, cheese, or yoghurt each day. Other calcium-rich foods include fortified cereals, dark green leafy vegetables and canned fish with soft bones (like sardines).

**TOP TIP!** Our website has lots more advice on keeping your bones strong. Ask your doctor or dietitian whether you need a calcium supplement.

**Iron and Vitamin B12:** Iron is responsible for carrying oxygen around the body, while vitamin B\textsubscript{12} keeps your brain and nervous system healthy. Many older adults do not get enough of these important nutrients in their diet. The best sources of iron include red meats such as beef, liver, kidney, lamb, pork, ham, corned beef & black & white pudding, while fortified cereals, lean meat and some fish and seafood are sources of both iron and vitamin B\textsubscript{12}. Taking a vitamin C-rich food like orange juice at meal time can help your body to absorb iron. Ask your doctor or dietitian whether you would benefit from an iron or a vitamin B\textsubscript{12} supplement.

**A word on exercise....**

Combining an active lifestyle with a healthy diet is your best recipe for healthy ageing.
- Try to be physically active for at least 30 minutes most days.
• It is okay to break up your 30 minutes physical activity into 10-minute sessions throughout the day.

• If you are currently inactive, start with 5 minutes of exercise, such as walking, gardening, climbing stairs or dancing and gradually increase this time as you become stronger.

• Always check with your doctor or nurse before beginning a new physical activity programme.

**TOP TIP!** See our information 'Keeping Active - Advice for the Older Person' for even more suggestions on how to improve your fitness.

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