

## Eat the Right Stuff

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Eating a healthy diet may not be on your list of priorities as you age, but eating right remains the cornerstone to wellbeing and a means of supporting your overall health.

It is important to check with your doctor to learn if you have any dietary restrictions. Then begin by thinking of **food as fuel**, not entertainment. Don't approach mealtime or snacks as something fun to do, but rather how the food you choose can help your body and mind.

Go for fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, beans, fish, legumes, and other lean protein. Choose **nutrient-dense foods** which give you lots of nutrients without a lot of extra calories. Calorie dense foods with little nutritional value, like chips, sweetened drinks, candy, deep fried foods, and bakery products are "empty calories." They sap your energy and pack on the pounds.

According to the largest biomedical research agency in the world, *National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Aging Dietary Guidelines* suggest that people over 50 should choose the following foods every day:

- Fruits—1½ to 2½ cups
- Vegetables—2 to 3½ cups
- Grains—5 to 10 ounces
- Protein foods—5 to 7 ounces
- Dairy foods—3 cups of fat-free or low-fat milk
- Oils—5 to 8 teaspoons
- Solid fats, added sugars and sodium (SoFAS) minimal amounts

Be mindful of how many calories you're consuming each day.

### For a Woman

- Not physically active 1,600 calories
- Moderately active 1,800 calories
- Active lifestyle 2,000-2,200 calories

### For a Man

- Not physically active 2,000-2,200 calories
- Moderately active 2,200-2,400 calories
- Active lifestyle 2,400-2800 calories

Physical activity refers to the voluntary movements you do that burn calories. “Moderate activity” might include brisk walking, dancing and swimming. Jogging, cycling, singles tennis, or swimming laps would be examples of an “active lifestyle”.

As you age you can lose muscle strength, but can also get more fat tissue. This makes you frail, which will lead to problems getting around and taking care of yourself. **So if you eat to fuel your body, you’ll have the energy you need to be more ACTIVE :** ) You’ll also be less prone to inflammation (arthritis and cancer for example) and not as susceptible to insulin resistance (pre-diabetes).

Hydration, especially water is essential. Gradually increase your intake. General guidelines suggest half your body weight in ounces of water per day (i.e. you weigh 160 lbs, you should consume 80 oz.) and make sure your urine is clear. If it is cloudy or apple juice color, you’re likely dehydrated. Dehydration is often mistaken as a hunger signal. Ample water consumption can ease joint and back pain by plumping muscles and cartilage. A mere two percent drop in body water can cause fuzzy short term memory and difficulty concentrating.

Talk to your healthcare providers if you are having problems chewing or swallowing. There are solutions. Our senses change as we age including our taste and smell. Meds can make food taste "off". Despite this, be sure to get the recommended amount of healthy foods so that your body can continue to build new cells to heal and repair itself.

Frozen entrees might be convenient but most are loaded with sodium and additives that are not as healthy as fresh produce and smaller cuts of lean meat. Go with frozen vegetables or hit the salad bar and select ingredients for homemade soup or stew. Freeze leftovers in individual servings. Don't overcook your food or feel compelled to add unnecessary ingredients. The less you do to food, the healthier it is for you. Keep it simple and get "fired up" about cooking basic meals.

Shopping for food can be difficult. Throughout the week, keep a list of healthy food and supplies you need. This will help your budget, too. Shop when it’s not crowded like weekday mid-mornings. Grocery delivery used to be common back in the day, so try that old concept with a new twist. If you use the computer you can shop online with area supermarkets and try their delivery or pick-up services. Get together with someone who can show you how to do it. THE MARIELDERS has “Tech Support” by appointment! We can also fill you in on affordable private chef services in the area.

Put more life into your years and more years into your life by eating the right stuff.