Making Healthy Eating Fun

Nutritious food doesn’t have to be boring! Keep healthy eating interesting with these tips and tricks.
Sarah Van Eerden, RD

Objectives

- Know the key recommendations of the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

- Understand at least one healthy recommendation from all five food groups.

- List at least three reasons why it’s important for older adults to consume a nutrient rich diet.
2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

- Updated every 5 years.
- 2010 was the first year the Guidelines addressed an overweight population, including those at increased risk for chronic disease.
- Some specific recommendations exist for those in different life stages, such as older adulthood.

2010 Dietary Guidelines

- Two overarching concepts:
  - Maintain calorie balance over time to achieve and sustain a healthy weight.
    - Most Americans should decrease calorie intake and increase physical activity levels.
    - Calorie balance is ever-changing
  - Focus on consuming nutrient rich foods and beverages.
    - Nutrient Rich – relatively rich in nutrients for the number of calories contained.
2010 Key Recommendations

- **Four Key Recommendations**
  1. Balance Calories
  2. Foods to Reduce
  3. Foods to Increase
  4. Building Healthy Behaviors

- **Balancing calories to manage weight**
  - Improve food choices and increase physical activity.
  - Maintain appropriate calorie intake for each stage of life.
    - Calorie needs reduce in older age.

---

2010 Key Recommendations

- **Foods to Reduce**
  - Reduce sodium to 1,500 mg per day for:
    - Person 51 years and older
    - African Americans
    - Those with hypertension, diabetes or chronic kidney disease
    - Others reduce to 2,300 mg sodium
  - Aim for less than 300 mg dietary cholesterol
  - Avoid trans fats
    - Found on food label as “partially hydrogenated”
  - Reduce intake of SoFAS (Saturated Fats & Added Sugars)
2010 Key Recommendations

**Foods to Increase**
- Increase fruit and vegetable intake.
- Increase whole grain intake.
- Choose a variety of lean proteins.
- Increase the amount and variety of seafood in the diet.
- Use healthy oils to replace solid fats.
- Choose foods higher in potassium, fiber, calcium and Vitamin D.
- Specific for those 50 and older:
  - Consume more foods fortified with Vitamin B₁₂.
  - One of the few recommendations specific to older adults.

2010 Key Recommendations

**Building Healthy Eating Patterns**
- Select an eating pattern that meets nutrient needs over time at an appropriate calorie level.
- Account for all foods and beverages consumed
  - Including beverages, alcohol, condiments and snacks between meals.
- Follow food safety recommendations when preparing and storing foods.
2010 Recommendations for Older Adults

- Older adults are encouraged to achieve and maintain a healthy weight.
- Those over the age of 65 who are overweight are encouraged to avoid weight gain.
  - Intentional weight loss can be beneficial.
  - Studies show a moderate reduce risk of mortality, type 2 diabetes and heart disease with intentional weight loss.
- Older adults: Aim for 1,500 mg sodium per day.
- Vitamin B\textsubscript{12}
  - A large proportion of adults over 50 may have reduced ability to absorb naturally occurring vitamin B\textsubscript{12}.

Unique Needs for Older Adults

- Different nutrient needs arise at each life stage.
  - People may become less active as they age.
  - Older adults absorb and utilize many nutrients less efficiently.
    - i.e. - Vitamin B\textsubscript{12}
  - Metabolism slows and energy requirement decreases.
    - But as calorie needs decrease, nutrient needs remain the same or increased…making a NUTRIENT RICH diet very important for older adults.
  - Chronic conditions and medications can affect nutrition requirements.
Achieving a Nutrient Rich Diet

• Importance of a nutrient rich diet for older adults.
  • Adequate nutrient consumption has a positive effect on:
    • Physical and cognitive condition
    • Bone and eye health
    • Vascular function
    • Immune system.
  • Make the most of calories consumed.
  • Give the body a better chance of absorbing the nutrients it needs.

Nutrient Rich Challenges

• Aging is often accompanied by a loss of appetite and changes in taste and smell.
• General oral health often declines with age, and a reduced ability to swallow is sometimes an issue.
• Mobility constraints may make it difficult to shop for food, open containers, cook, etc.
• Income issues for aging populations may make it difficult for many older adults to access high quality foods.
Nutrient Rich Food Groups

- Make the most of the Food Groups
  - Fruit
  - Vegetable
  - Grain
  - Dairy
  - Protein
  - Healthy Fats
    - Not a true group, but so important!

Fruit

- Look to fruit to satisfy your sweet tooth.
- Try it dried, fresh, blended, frozen and cooked.
- Enjoy fruit with added nuts or low fat dairy, instead of added refined grains and sugar.
- FUN TIP
  - Turn on the heat! Grilling or roasting your fruit, then topping with a little balsamic vinegar, is a real treat.
  - Try roasting grapes, peaches, pineapple or pears!
**Vegetables**

- Increase the variety of vegetables in the diet, especially dark green, red and orange vegetables, and beans and legumes.
- If using canned or frozen vegetables, keep your eye out for added sodium.
- Aim for a majority of non-starchy vegetables
  - Includes all but corn, potatoes, winter squash and lima beans.
  - These are nutritious, but do raise blood sugar.
- **FUN TIP!**
  - **Roast** vegetables! An easy way to prep produce that amplifies the flavor without much effort
    - Try roasted kale, green beans or chickpeas!
  - **Blend** vegetables! Add baby greens to your favorite smoothie recipe.

**What is a Whole Grain?**

- **ENDOSPERM** (source of complex carbohydrates, B-complex vitamins and proteins)
- **BRAN** (fiber, B-complex vitamins, trace minerals and phytonutrients)
- **GERM** (essential fatty acids, vitamin E, B-complex vitamins and trace minerals)
Whole Grains

- Whole grains can bring much needed fiber to the older adults diet.
- Get creative with “in-tact” grains, thinking beyond wheat.
- FUN TIP!
  - Try whole grains in soups, “salads”, and sautéed dishes.
  - Cook grains in bulk and freeze them.
    - Be sure to label well!

Types of Whole Grains

- Barley
- Buckwheat*
- Bulgur
- Farro
- Wheatberries
- Quinoa*
- Oats**
- Rice/Wild Rice*
- Wheat
- Rye
- Sorghum*
- Spelt
- Teff*
- Triticale
- Kamut
- Millet*
- Amaranth*
- Corn*
**Dairy**

- Aim for 2-3 servings of low fat dairy.
  - Seek alternative calcium sources if lactose intolerant.
- Give your bones a boost with physical activity.
- Aim for dairy choices without added sugar.
- **FUN TIP!**
  - Use strong flavored cheeses so you can use less, but still get great flavor.
  - Blend milk with fruit, freeze in small dishes for a warm weather healthy treat.

**Protein**

- Choose high quality, lean proteins.
- Plenty of meatless options:
  - Beans, eggs, nuts, seeds, whole grains
- Fish is recommended 2 times per week.
- **FUN TIP!**
  - Think of meat as a condiment, something to enhance the vegetables on your plate.
  - Get creative with beans – blend, bake, toss, “burgers”, etc.
Healthy Fats

- Choose
  - Mostly Unsaturated Fats
  - Limit Saturated Fats
  - Avoid Trans Fats

- Get healthy fats from olive oil, avocado, cold water fish, nuts and seeds.

- FUN TIP!
  - Try making your own vinaigrette salad dressing!

More Tips for Making Healthy Fun

- Focus on Flavor
  - Vinegar, “Aromatics”, herbs and spices

- Get Creative
  - Think outside the box, going beyond the “typical” food uses

- Make cooking a fun time
  - Turn on music, invite a friend

- Get inspired
  - Review cookbooks and recipes, talk food with friends and neighbors

- Be adventurous
  - Try new foods and recipes!
Resources

- Whole Grains Council
  - [www.wholegrainscouncil.org](http://www.wholegrainscouncil.org)
- USDA 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans Executive Summary

Questions?

- Sarah Van Eerden, Registered Dietitian
  - [Sarah.VanEerden@KentCountyMi.gov](mailto:Sarah.VanEerden@KentCountyMi.gov)
  - (616) 632-7286