

Eating Well for Aging Well

Is aging about getting old or getting to enjoy new adventures? While previous generations may have considered getting older to be boring or scary, aging today means new experiences, continuous learning, strong relationships, and vital community.

General Mills recently interviewed consumers ages 45-65 to better understand the role of food in their lives. A common sentiment around aging was that it was inevitable and difficult to control, but that you can always choose a positive attitude. Many consumers are optimistic about this new stage in life. As people age, they often become more purposeful about what they eat, focusing on food as good medicine and preferring food to a pill.

In 1950, one in every 12 people in the world was age 60 or older—by 2050, that population will increase to one in every six people, according to the United Nations World Population Aging. With more older adults in the world, it makes sense to focus on aging well and living well across the lifespan.

Key motivations for eating well include cardiovascular health, muscle health/mobility, energy, and brain function. Since people naturally want to enjoy good health as they age, it makes sense to focus on the activities and food that can promote wellness from the inside out.

NO “BEST” BUT A LOT OF GOOD


While there is not one “best” diet for aging well, there are many “good” choices to support healthy eating, according to Christine Rosenbloom, PhD, RDN, FAND and co-author of *Food & Fitness After 50: Eat Well, Move Well, Be Well*.





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According to MyPlate, the healthy eating guide based on the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, a healthy eating pattern for older adults features a variety of colorful fruits and veggies, moderate salt intake, whole grains, low-fat dairy, protein-rich foods (nuts, beans, fish, lean meat, and poultry), herbs and spices to enhance flavor, healthy oils to provide important fatty acids and some fat-soluble vitamins, as well as ample fluids from water, tea, coffee, soup, fruits, and vegetables.

While a lot of adults still have “carb phobia” says Rosenbloom, many people have an inadequate understanding of the importance of carbohydrates in a healthy diet. Particularly for active adults, carbs provide energy and stamina and literally serve as “food for thought,” contributing to focus and concentration.

EATING WELL AFTER AGE 50

While calorie needs generally decrease with age, depending on activity level, calories consumed should be nutrient-dense. However, most adults ages 51 and up fall short when it comes to consuming adequate calcium, magnesium, fiber, potassium, and several key vitamins. On that note, many do not fill up with adequate amounts of whole grains, fruits and vegetables, or dairy. And even though most adults consume ample protein, they do not eat the recommended amount of seafood, which is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which support both physical and mental health.

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WANT TO LEARN MORE?

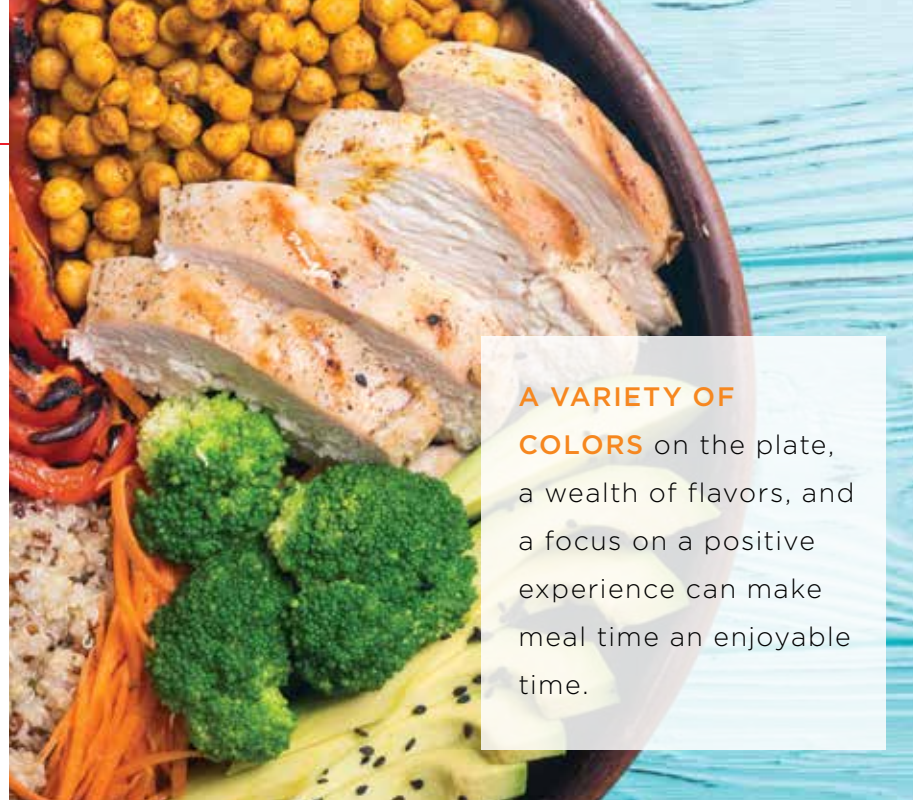
General Mills Foodservice recently conducted a free webinar, “Eating Well for Aging Well” that can be accessed at: generalmillscf.com

You can also check out the recent publication from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, *Food & Fitness After 50*. Written by Christine Rosenbloom, PhD, RDN, FAND and Bob Murray, PhD, FACSM, it provides practical information on food, nutrition, and exercise for those in their 50s, 60s, 70s, and beyond.

What does a healthy diet for an older adult look like?

- **It focuses on fruits and vegetables**, at least 2 to 2 ½ cups per day, since this food group delivers fiber for digestive health, potassium to regulate blood pressure, and vitamins A, C, and E. All forms—fresh, frozen, and canned—can be consumed in smoothies, salads, soups, and as snacks throughout the day.
- **Seafood takes the place of meat** at least twice a week; great options include salmon, trout, sardines, anchovies, and mackerel. While fresh seafood can be expensive for older adults on a fixed budget, canned and pouched seafood is more affordable and convenient.
- **Daily dairy** consumption provides calcium, vitamin D, and potassium, which can help prevent bone loss and fractures. Greek yogurt is a great option for meals and snacks (not to mention sauces and dressings) in addition to milk and cheese.
- **Whole grains** supply fiber, B vitamins, and magnesium, and are found in many breakfast cereals. Look for at least eight grams of whole grain per serving.

Choosing nutrient-dense foods can help meet nutrition recommendations without overdoing it on calories, which can be an important consideration for older adults. Fortified foods—such as breakfast cereals and yogurt—can help fill in the gaps. For instance, women should consume about 25 grams of fiber per day and men 38 grams—this helps with feeling full



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and satisfied as well as regularity and avoiding constipation. Starting the day with a high fiber, fortified breakfast cereal can help people meet recommendations as well as provide other important nutrients, especially when paired with milk or yogurt. When it comes to potassium (4,700 milligrams a day for older adults), top contributors are milk, coffee, tea, and potatoes (but not bananas as most people might think!). Recommended intake of vitamin D also increases with age—800 to 1,000 international units a day—as it helps prevent fractures and supports calcium absorption. Great sources of vitamin D are some fortified breakfast cereals and yogurts, eggs, fish, and fortified soy beverages.

As with every other age group, older adults should limit added sugars (less than 10 percent of total calories) and saturated fats (trans fats, in particular) and also focus on reduced sodium intake (less than 2,300 grams per day).

HEALTHY EATING PATTERNS ADD UP TO HEALTHY AGING

Older adults who focus on healthy eating patterns throughout the days and weeks don't have to focus as much on individual foods. A diet

full of colorful fruits and vegetables, whole grain and lean protein provides nourishment, energy, and a host of essential vitamins and minerals.

Finally, meal time should be pleasurable. People should not be afraid of certain food groups or overwhelmed by food choices. A variety of colors on the plate, a wealth of flavors, and a focus on a positive experience can make meal time an enjoyable time. Ideally, meals are served without the distraction of a TV, phone, or tablet, and in the company of family or friends.

Naturally, everyone wants to age gracefully and healthily and no one wants to struggle with loss of bone density, muscle mass, or independence. In addition to eating well, other keys to aging well are moving well—regular exercise and movement—and being well—which can include a healthy amount of sleep, stress reduction, and social connections and support.

“We can't remove stress from our life, but we can develop resilience to deal with stress,” Rosenbloom adds. Finally, “social support is so critical... what makes people happy is good relationships.” **E**

RECIPES



KAÑIWA PROTEIN STRAWBERRY POMEGRANATE SMOOTHIE

Yield: 17, 6 oz. Servings

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups Applesauce, unsweetened, chilled
- 8 cups Greek vanilla yogurt
- 4-1/2 cups Strawberries, fresh, sliced
- 1/4 cup Pomegranate juice, chilled
- 1-1/2 cups Kañiwa, cooked, cooled

METHOD

1. Place all ingredients in large capacity blender (or prepare in batches).
2. Blend on high speed 1 minute; stop blender.
3. Scrape down sides with spatula; blend an additional 30 seconds or until all ingredients are thoroughly incorporated.
4. Pour 6 ounces into each of 17, 8-oz cups; serve immediately.

TIP

If desired, garnish with pomegranate seeds and strawberry slices.



GLUTEN-FREE CHICKEN COCONUT CURRY SOUP

Yield: 40, 4 oz. Servings

INGREDIENTS

- 2 Tbsp. Vegetable oil
- 2-1/2 cups Chicken breast, raw, diced
- 4-1/4 cups Yellow onion, diced
- 3 cups Celery, diced
- 9 cups Gluten-free chicken stock, no salt added
- 12 cups Coconut milk, lite
- 1-1/2 tsp. Paprika
- 3 tsp. Turmeric, ground
- 2-1/3 Tbsp. Gluten-free yellow curry powder
- 1-1/2 tsp. Chili powder
- 4 tsp. Garlic powder
- 8 tsp. Lemongrass paste
- 1-1/2 tsp. Kosher salt
- 2 tsp. Black pepper, ground
- 32 oz. Greek vanilla yogurt
- 1 cup Cilantro, chopped

METHOD

1. Heat oil in a 5-gallon stock pot and add chicken, onions.
2. Add chicken stock, coconut milk, and remaining ingredients except yogurt and cilantro.
3. Simmer for 45 minutes on low heat or until desired flavor/texture is achieved.
4. Remove from heat. Slowly stir in yogurt and cilantro.
5. Serve immediately or keep warm in a steam well.

Recipes provided courtesy of General Mills Convenience & Foodservice. For more healthcare-specific recipes that nourish and ideas that inspire, visit www.generalmillscf.com.