

*Partner*MD



**The Basics of Healthy Aging: Nutrition and Exercise Guidelines to Carry You Through Retirement**

# THE BASICS OF HEALTHY AGING: NUTRITION AND EXERCISE GUIDELINES TO CARRY YOU THROUGH RETIREMENT

Thanks to modern medicine, people are living longer than ever before. Make the most of your older years by staying healthy and active longer. Nutritious foods and regular exercise can keep you active longer and help prevent some chronic illnesses, such as diabetes. Not sure where to start? Below are healthy guidelines to keep you fit at fifty and beyond!

## What's On Your Plate?

Aging well starts with a balanced diet. As we age, it is important to limit your intake of certain foods, like sugar, salt and processed grains (white flour).

Heart disease remains the number one cause of death in America<sup>1</sup> and while some risk factors, such as family history and age, cannot be altered, others can be heavily influenced by your diet. These include high blood pressure, which can be made worse with excessive sodium in the diet; high cholesterol levels, which is often linked to your diet and intake of unhealthy foods and fats; and diabetes<sup>2</sup>. Cutting back on sodium, which is often found in canned and processed foods, can help reduce your risk of heart disease. Additionally, you can reduce your risk of Type 2 diabetes by cutting back on sugar and white flour products. A diet high in sugar can cause blood sugar spikes and weight gain, which are both risk factors for the disease.

Osteoporosis, a condition most common in women in which bones become brittle from loss of tissue, can hinder an active lifestyle. Women lose muscle mass more quickly after age 50; older women can stay strong and active by getting enough calcium in their diet, which can help maintain muscle and keep bones strong.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/the-leading-causes-of-death-in-the-us/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/hearttruth/lower-risk/risk-factors.htm>

# MAKE HEALTHIER MEAL CHOICES

Instead of overhauling your whole diet, it's easier to make a few simple changes as you go. Here are some great tips for healthier meal choices:



## Cut Back on Sodium

- Reduce your salt intake by rinsing canned vegetables and beans before eating them. Also avoid frozen vegetables that come in prepared sauces, opting for plain frozen, steamed veggies instead.
- Use flavorful spices, like garlic powder, and herbs, like basil and oregano, rather than salt to flavor foods.
- If using fresh vegetables, steam or microwave them to retain maximum nutrients. By steaming fresh veggies, you'll avoid adding the sodium that can often be found in canned and frozen vegetables in sauces. Additionally, you'll save many of the nutrients in the vegetables that may be lost with other cooking methods.



## Get Enough Calcium

- Beyond just a glass of milk and other dairy products, you can also find a substantial amount of calcium in kale, broccoli and oranges.

## Reduce Sugar and Refined Carbohydrates



- If it's white, don't bite! White flour (think white bread or pasta) gets metabolized the same as straight sugar. Good alternatives to these starches are whole or sprouted grain breads, zucchini noodles and mashed cauliflower.
- Try to limit processed carbohydrates, like those often found in snack cakes, chips and other processed foods, to avoid adding excess sugars to your diet.
- Limit the amount of sugar you add to coffee, tea and other beverages. If you must use a sweetener, try a healthier option like stevia.



## Stay Hydrated

- Get a refillable water bottle and keep it near you at all times. When you feel hungry, first drink a glass of water. Often, our bodies confuse thirst for hunger, so drinking a glass of water first could cure "hunger" pangs.

# SAMPLE MEAL PLAN

So what should your daily meals look like? Eating three protein and fiber filled meals a day with two reasonably-sized snacks will help keep you from getting too hungry during the day and will keep your metabolism working. Ideally, each meal should contain a lean protein, a healthy fat and a complex carbohydrate, like a vegetable. Your mid-morning and mid-afternoon snacks should always have protein and fiber.

A sample healthy meal plan is provided below. Speak with your physician or a certified health coach for more specific recommendations based on your unique health needs.

## Breakfast

- Lean protein, such as eggs
- Healthy fat, like some avocado
- Complex carbohydrate, such as a piece of whole grain toast

## Mid-Morning Snack

- Try pairing a lean protein, like nut butter, with an apple, a healthy complex carbohydrate

## Lunch

- Lean protein, like grilled chicken
- Healthy fat, such as extra virgin olive oil (EVOO)
- Complex carbohydrate, like spinach and carrots
- For lunch, you could make a grilled chicken and spinach salad, with EVOO and lemon juice for dressing

## Mid-Afternoon Snack

- Your mid-afternoon snack should meet the same two out of three components as your mid-morning snack
- Try making leafy lettuce wraps with lean turkey

## Dinner

- Dinner, like lunch, should be made up of all three components: a lean protein, healthy fat and complex carbohydrate, with at least half your plate being vegetables
- A good example would be a chicken breast, brown rice and broccoli stir fry



**Lean proteins include** canned tuna in water, white meat chicken and turkey, turkey bacon and sausage, fish, beans, quinoa, eggs, and nut butters.

**Healthy fats are** foods like olive and avocado oils, nuts, and avocados. With healthy fats, it's very important to watch portion size so that you don't consume too much.

**Complex carbohydrates are** leafy greens, like kale, and other veggies, like sweet potatoes and squash. Other complex carbohydrates include brown rice, whole grains, and high fiber fruits, like strawberries and apples.

## TIME FOR YOUR PHYSICAL (FITNESS)

Exercise is crucial to aging well. Regular exercise can reduce your risk of disease and keep you active longer. As you age, you may need to switch to more low-impact aerobic activities, such as walking or swimming to stay fit, to reduce the risk of falling and joint damage.

If you're age 50 or older and have just started exercising, it's recommended that you get 150 minutes of aerobic exercise per week. If that sounds daunting, it's not! Even as few as 10 minutes a few times a day is helpful, and you can work up to 150 minutes over a course of days or weeks. In addition to aerobic exercise, it's important to include strength training and balance workouts to your regimen 2-3 times a week. These will help strengthen bone density and prevent falls.

Here's a look at what your week may look like. Try doing something active almost every day.

<b>SUNDAY</b>	20-minute walk
<b>MONDAY</b>	30-minute walk 10-minute balance exercises
<b>TUESDAY</b>	45-minute water aerobics class
<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	Body-weight strength training Balance exercises
<b>THURSDAY</b>	30-minute walk - Try joining us for our PartnerMD weekly walks if you're in the neighborhood.
<b>FRIDAY</b>	Body-weight strength training Core and balance exercises
<b>SATURDAY</b>	25-minute walk



