



Older adults' unique nutrition needs

Simple adjustments can go a long way toward building a healthier eating pattern. Follow these tips to get the most out of foods and beverages while meeting your nutrient needs and reducing the risk of disease:

- Enjoy a variety of foods from each [food group](#) to help reduce the risk of developing diseases such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart disease. Choose foods with little to no [added sugar, saturated fats, and sodium](#).
- To get enough protein throughout the day and maintain muscle, try adding seafood, dairy, or fortified soy products along with beans, peas, and lentils to your meals. Learn more about [protein and other important nutrients](#).
- Add sliced or chopped fruits and vegetables to meals and snacks. Look for pre-cut varieties if slicing and chopping are a challenge for you.
- Try foods fortified with vitamin B12, such as some cereals, or talk to your doctor about taking a B12 supplement. Learn more about [key vitamins and minerals](#).
- Reduce sodium intake by seasoning foods with herbs and citrus such as lemon juice.
- Drink plenty of water throughout the day to help [stay hydrated](#) and aid in the digestion of food and absorption of nutrients. Avoid sugary drinks.

USDA Food Patterns

Eating habits can change as we grow older. The [USDA has developed Food Patterns](#) to help people understand different ways they can eat healthy. The food patterns include:

- **Healthy U.S.-Style Eating Pattern:** This is based on the types of foods Americans typically consume. The main types of food in this eating pattern include a variety of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, fat-free or low-fat dairy, seafood, poultry, and meat, as well as eggs, nuts, seeds, and soy products. Check out this [sample menu](#) to get started.
- **Healthy Mediterranean-Style Eating Pattern:** This one contains more fruits and seafood and less dairy than the Healthy U.S.-Style Eating Pattern.
- **Healthy Vegetarian Eating Pattern:** This pattern contains no meat, poultry, or seafood, but does contain fat-free or low-fat dairy. Compared with the Healthy U.S.-Style Eating Pattern, it contains more soy products, eggs, beans and peas, nuts and seeds, and whole grains.