

Smart Food Choices For Healthy Aging

You may need to make some changes in your food and beverage choices to achieve a healthy eating pattern. It's easier than you think!

A healthy eating pattern is not a rigid prescription. Rather, it is a framework that lets you enjoy food that meets your personal preferences and fits your budget. To encourage healthy eating patterns, the [Dietary Guidelines](#) suggests that you:

- 1. Follow a healthy eating pattern across the lifespan.** All food and beverage choices matter. Choose a healthy eating pattern at an appropriate calorie level to help achieve and maintain a [healthy body weight](#), meet [nutrient](#) needs, and lessen the risk for [chronic disease](#).
- 2. Focus on variety, nutrient density, and amount.** To meet nutrient needs within calorie limits, choose a variety of nutrient-dense foods across and within all [food groups](#) in recommended amounts.
- 3. Limit calories from added sugars and saturated fats, and reduce sodium intake.** Cut back on foods and beverages that are high in added sugars, saturated fats, and sodium. Aim for amounts that fit within healthy eating patterns.
- 4. Shift to healthier food and beverage choices.** Choose nutrient-dense foods and beverages across and within all food groups in place of less healthy choices. Choose foods you like to make these shifts easier to maintain.
- 5. Support healthy eating patterns for all.** Everyone has a role in helping to create and support healthy eating patterns, at home, school, and work and in communities.

Here's a Tip

Writing down what and how much you eat each day will help you keep track of your total daily calories and also help you see if you are making healthy choices. Try to choose mostly nutrient-dense foods. These foods give you lots of nutrients without a lot of extra calories.



Healthy Food Shifts

You can move toward a healthier eating pattern by making shifts in food choices over time. Here are some ideas:

SHIFT FROM:
High-Calorie Snacks



SHIFT TO:
Nutrient-Dense Snacks



Fruit Products with Added Sugars



Fresh Fruit



Refined Grains



Whole Grains



Snacks with Added Salt or Sugars



Snacks Without Added Salt or Sugars



Solid Fats












Oils



Healthy Beverage Shifts

You have plenty of beverage options that are low in added sugars, saturated fats, and sodium.

SHIFT FROM:		SHIFT TO:
Medium café latte made with whole milk		Small café latte made with fat-free milk
		
Regular cola		Water or water flavored with fruits or vegetables
		
Sweetened lemon iced tea		Sparkling water with natural lemon flavor
		

100-Calorie Snacks

Another way to think about the idea of nutrient-dense and calorie-dense foods is to look at a variety of foods that all provide the same calories. Let's say that you wanted to have a small snack. You might choose:

- 7- or 8-inch banana
- 20 peanuts
- 3 cups low-fat popcorn
- 2 regular chocolate-sandwich cookies
- 1/2 cup low-fat ice cream
- 1 scrambled large egg cooked with fat
- 2 ounces baked chicken breast with no skin
- 1/2 of the average-size candy bar



These choices all have about 100 calories but provide different amounts of nutrients. The right choice for you may depend on what else you're eating throughout the day.

Check out our tips for [choosing healthy meals as you get older](#).

How Many Calories Do You Need?

If you are over age 50 and you want to stay at the weight you are now—not lose and not gain, how many calories do you need to eat each day? The Dietary Guidelines suggests:

For a Woman	Calories	For a Man	Calories
Not Physically Active	1,600	Not Physically Active	2,000-2,200
Moderately Active	1,800	Moderately Active	2,200-2,400
Active Lifestyle	2,000-2,200	Active Lifestyle	2,400-2,800

“Not physically active” means a lifestyle that only includes basic movements from daily life activities. “Moderately active” means a lifestyle that adds about 1.5 to 3 miles of brisk walking per day or a similar amount of a different physical activity. “Active” means a lifestyle that adds more than 3 miles of brisk walking per day or a similar amount of a different physical activity. Other physical activities include dancing, jogging, tennis, or swimming.



We Can Help!

Alzheimer's Orange County

Call 844.373.4400

For more caregiver tips

Visit us at:
www.alzoc.org/resources

Information taken from the National Institute on Aging, part of the National Institutes of Health

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health> | NIH Apr 2019 | Reviewed by AlzOC April 2022