



## Planning Meals: Variety and Balance

A healthy diet is essential to feeling well and enjoying life to the fullest. Recent surveys show that most seniors do not eat enough grain products, milk products and vegetables and fruits. Eating too little of those foods can leave you tired, more prone to illness and perhaps even at increased risk of heart disease, cancer, diabetes and osteoporosis.

Eating well starts with following Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating. (See Senior Friendly Ideas for Healthy Eating 1.) The following suggestions also can help you eat a varied and balanced diet that is lower in fat and higher in fibre.

### 1. Enjoy a variety of nutritious foods

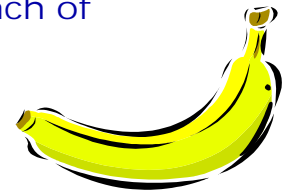
Be adventurous. Try something new each month, whether it is a new fruit, vegetable or grain product. Who knows—you may find a new favourite.

### 2. Eat more grain products to provide energy and fibre

- ⚙ Have a bowl of cooked cereal or high fibre ready-to-eat cereal for a meal or snack.
- ⚙ Enjoy a muffin for a snack, or with cheese and a fruit for a mini meal.
- ⚙ Try brown rice in casseroles and soups.
- ⚙ Eat whole grain bread/buns/bagels/muffins, whole wheat pastas and brown or wild rice.
- ⚙ Try other grains such as bulgur, quinoa or couscous.
- ⚙ For information on fibre, see Senior Friendly Ideas for Healthy Eating 3.

### 3. Eat more vegetables and fruits for a powerful punch of nutrients

- ⚙ Start your day with 100% juice.
- ⚙ Keep a package of frozen berries in your freezer to sprinkle on your cereal.
- ⚙ Start lunch off with tomato or vegetable soup, a salad or some raw vegetables.
- ⚙ Make a vegetable stir-fry. Add some grated cheese and black beans, and you have an instant supper.
- ⚙ Toss a handful of frozen vegetables (or leftovers) into soups and casseroles.
- ⚙ Craving candy? Try some dried fruit.
- ⚙ Have fresh, canned or frozen fruit for a snack or dessert.
- ⚙ Enjoy a baked apple or fruit crisp.
- ⚙ Take advantage of seasonal specials. Buy strawberries, peaches, pears and asparagus when they are in season.



#### 4. Eat more dairy products and other calcium rich foods to keep bones healthy

- ⚙ Use grated cheese on salads, casseroles or soups.
- ⚙ Add milk instead of water to canned soup.
- ⚙ Drink a glass of skim or one per cent milk as a bedtime snack.
- ⚙ Add skim milk powder to sauces, soups, casseroles and omelettes.
- ⚙ Melt cheese on toast for a change from butter and jam.
- ⚙ Try pudding, custard or yogurt for dessert.
- ⚙ Make a “latte” by mixing half a cup of coffee with half a cup of warmed milk.
- ⚙ Have a salmon or sardine sandwich, or add fish to salads.
- ⚙ Add a can of beans or lentils to soups and casseroles.
- ⚙ Sprinkle almonds on salads, casseroles and puddings.

#### 5. Choose leaner meats and lower fat products

- ⚙ Choose lean cuts of meat, such as round, flank and loin. Enjoy poultry, fish and seafood more often.
- ⚙ Trim all visible fat from meats before cooking. Remove skin from poultry.
- ⚙ Enjoy a meatless meal by having baked beans, peas, lentils or eggs at least once a week.
- ⚙ Cut down on butter, margarine, dressing and sauces, and choose lower fat varieties.
- ⚙ Use a non-stick frying pan, adding a teaspoon of oil if necessary.
- ⚙ For tips on reducing fat in your diet, see Healthy Eating for Seniors 4.

#### 6. Use salt, caffeine and alcohol in moderation

- ⚙ Try using pepper and other herbs rather than salt.
- ⚙ Cook without adding salt.
- ⚙ Choose “lower in salt” products.
- ⚙ Eat fewer canned foods, crackers, processed meats and other packaged products.
- ⚙ Drink no more than four cups of coffee a day.
- ⚙ Alternate cups of coffee with cups of hot water or milk. Perhaps what you really like is something hot to drink.
- ⚙ Try decaffeinated teas and coffees or, better yet, fruit juice or cold water.
- ⚙ Limit your alcohol to no more than one drink a day.

#### 7. Keep active to help build stronger muscles and bones and to sleep better, feel better, eat better and maintain a healthy weight.

- ⚙ Go for a walk or join a mall-walking club.
- ⚙ Take the bus; you usually have to walk a bit at both ends.
- ⚙ Garden! Grow flowers and vegetables.
- ⚙ Join an exercise program for seniors, such as aquasize.
- ⚙ Dance, stretch, golf...do what you enjoy—try something new.
- ⚙ For a copy of Canada’s Physical Activity Guide for Older Adults, phone 1-888-334-9769 (toll free).

