



## **Geriatric Nutrition**

**Dr. Mustaque Ahmed**

M.SC, B.H.M.S, P.G.D.H.M

Attached to Kolkata Swasthya Sankalp, a Heath N.G.O

Geriatric nutrition applies nutrition principles to delay effects of aging and disease, to aid in the management of the physical, psychological, and psychosocial changes commonly associated with growing old.

Calorie requirements decrease with age, although individuals vary greatly depending on their activity level and health status. Diets that fall below 1,800 calories a day may be low in protein, calcium, iron, and vitamins, so should feature nutrient-dense foods.

The cornerstone of geriatric nutrition is a well-balanced diet. This provides optimal nutrition to help delay the leading causes of death: heart disease, cancer, and stroke. In addition, ongoing research indicates that dietary habits, such as restricting one's calorie intake and consuming antioxidants, may increase longevity.

As we age, our lifestyle may be less active; we may sit more and perform less vigorous exercises or physical labor. Also, our body's metabolism may be less efficient or slower. These lifestyle and metabolism changes may cause weight gain and less efficient absorption of nutrients. We should select more nutrient-dense foods with lower amounts of fat and sugar (empty calories). If we have problems losing weight, then we should limit our fat or sugar intake. We should eat a variety of foods that are good sources of protein, vitamins, minerals, and fiber.

What do you mean by Food Guide Pyramid?

The Food Guide Pyramid is a general guideline to help children, youth, and adults eat a wellbalanced diet. It is based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Everyone should eat at least the minimum servings from each group of the Food Guide Pyramid. This gives you a variety of daily vitamins, minerals, protein, and fiber.

The following Food Guide Pyramid is recommended for adults aged adults. Use the Food Guide Pyramid to help plan your meals and snacks. Specific nutritional recommendations are based on age, gender, health status, and physical activity levels.

1. Eat at least the minimum number of servings for each food group in the Food Guide Pyramid. Eat a variety of foods that are good sources of protein, vitamins, minerals, and fiber. It is important to eat nutrient dense foods with calories. Eating fewer foods or calories may be due to poor appetite, less activity, or medical conditions, which may result in weight loss.
2. Eat at least three servings of calcium-rich foods. Calcium and vitamin D are important to maintain bone health.
3. Drink eight cups of water as the base of the 70+ Pyramid. This is needed because of higher intake of medications and to prevent dehydration and constipation.
4. Eat fiber-rich foods from grains, fruits, vegetables, dried beans, and nuts.

5. Eat fortified foods with vitamin B12, calcium, and vitamin D. Consult a doctor or dietitian, if you need a dietary supplement.

**What do you mean by balance diet?**



*Food Guide Pyramid For Aged Persons*

### **Fiber-Rich Diet**

Fiber or roughage is important to have a healthy digestive system and proper bowel function. Constipation is a problem for many aging adults. Choose a variety of high-fiber foods - vegetables, fruits, beans, nuts, and whole-grain products - drink plenty of water and be physically active to stay regular. Eat at least one high fiber food (pears, dried beans and peas, corn, dates, 100% bran cereals, or potatoes with skins) every day to help you get 20-35 grams of fiber each day.

**Intake of Enough Fluids.** Water or other liquids are needed to avoid and prevent constipation and dehydration. Drink six to eight (8-ounce) glasses of fluid every day - water or other liquids (100% juices, milk, beverages, or soup). Limit the amount of caffeinated drinks (coffee, tea, and soda) and be sure to drink at least 2 glasses of water per day. If you are taking medications, you need more water. Throughout the day take water breaks, or in the morning, fill up a glass to remind you to drink water.

### **Calcium-Rich Foods**

Calcium and Vitamin D are essential to maintain strong bones and teeth. After age 50, more calcium or 1,200 milligrams are needed to prevent a disease called osteoporosis. As you age, minerals in your bones are lost and bones may get thinner. Protect your bones by choosing calcium-rich foods, such as milk, cheese, yogurt, greens, broccoli, sardines, canned salmon with bones, dried beans and peas, tofu, and calcium-fortified foods. If you have problems digesting milk,

- Drink lactose reduced milk.
- Eat yogurt or cheese, where the lactose has been broken down,

- Drink a smaller amount of milk or buttermilk at a time,
- Eat other calcium-rich foods that are not milk-based.

### **Vitamin D**

Helps the absorption of calcium. It is found in fluid milk, dried milk products, and fortified cereals. Your body can make its own Vitamin D when your skin is exposed to the sunshine. Several times a week try to take a walk or sit in the sun for 20-30 minutes. This is especially important in the winter when there is less sunlight. Remember to use sunscreen.

### **Protein-Rich Foods**

Body proteins are constantly being made and used during your lifetime to maintain cell and organ functions. Adequate protein intake and protein reserves are important for older adults, especially during periods of emotional and physical stresses. Protein helps to prevent muscle loss. Eat protein-rich foods such as meats, fish, dried beans and peas, or tofu. Also, these foods are good sources of iron and zinc. As you age, blood levels of vitamin B-12 usually decrease. Vitamin B-12 is needed to make red blood cells and maintain the central nervous system. Animal foods are good sources of vitamin B-12.

### **Plant-Based Diet**

Research reveals that a variety of nutrient-dense fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain foods may protect cells against free radicals (unstable compounds). They also may help protect you against the adverse effects of everyday cancer causing agents such as pollution, dietary factors, tobacco smoke, and viruses.

Antioxidants are compounds, such as vitamins A, C, and E, which are found in foods. They protect us from cell damage and may reduce the risk of cancer and heart disease, and may slow down the aging process.

Phytochemicals are chemicals or ingredients naturally found in all plant foods. Some phytochemicals help to protect a healthy, normal cell from turning into a cancerous cell. Also, phytochemicals may slow down the growth of tumor cells.

Eat colorful meals and snacks by choosing lots of fruits, vegetables, dried beans, nuts and whole-grain foods. It is the easiest way to get all of these important nutrients.

- Vitamins - A, C, E, D, & niacin, riboflavin, thiamin, folate, B-6 & B-12.
- Minerals - calcium, iron, & zinc.
- Fiber - soluble & insoluble.
- Proteins, Carbohydrates, & Fats.
- Antioxidants & Phytochemicals.

### **Do you require Supplements?**

Every day in the media we see ads for dietary supplements that promise to prevent aging changes or improve physical, mental, and nutritional health. Although we know that vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and possibly particular herbs are beneficial to health, it is important that we don't use supplements in place of food or in extremely high amounts. Some herbal remedies or high potency vitamin or mineral supplements can interfere with the action of certain prescription and over the counter medications. Be sure to check with your doctor before starting any dietary supplements.