

What's Missing In Your Pantry?: Nutrients Likely to be Lacking in the Diets of Older Adults

Nutritionists have identified several nutrients which are often not consumed in adequate amounts by adults over the age of 50 years. This lesson discusses those nutrients, their food sources and functions. To make the lesson more interesting a self-assessment survey should be handed out before the class begins. After the participants have completed their self-assessment, they can follow-along during the lesson to determine if they have dietary shortfalls which may benefit from improvement. The single overhead may serve as a useful visual as you lead the class. A handout can be passed out at the end of the lesson to help reinforce concepts discussed.

Protein is important for optimal immune function, wound healing, and fluid balance. The major sources of protein among US adults are beef, poultry, milk, cheese, fish, eggs, pork and ham. All of these sources contain saturated fat. Moderation and portion control are important to obtaining a healthful diet. Select lean cuts of meat, skim milk and egg whites.

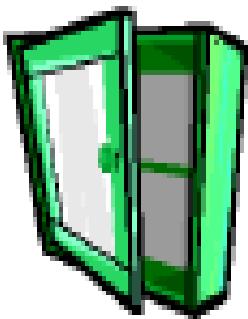
Calcium, vitamin D and physical activity help to reduce the risk of osteoporosis. Both women and men can get osteoporosis which causes bones to become brittle and break. The major dietary sources of calcium are milk, cheese and calcium fortified orange juice. The major sources of vitamin D are milk and breakfast cereal. Sunlight is another source; however older adults may need to limit their sun exposure due to skin cancer risk, medications or other health considerations.

Vitamin B-12 is important for nerve function including cognitive performance and healthy blood cells. Natural dietary sources include beef, milk and fish. However, the absorption of vitamin B-12 diminishes with age. Therefore it is recommended that adults over the age of 50 years get their vitamin B-12 from fortified foods such as breakfast cereals or from a vitamin supplement.

Folate, also called folic acid, is needed for growth and repair of all body tissues including healthy blood cells and may help reduce the risk for heart disease and some forms of cancer. The best dietary sources of folic acid are fortified grain products such as bread, rice, pasta, and breakfast cereal. Folate, the natural form, can be found in orange juice, dark green vegetables, and beans. However, the absorption rate of folate is only half of folic acid. Therefore, enriched grain foods are the better choice for folic acid.

Zinc is required for wound healing. This is very important because open wounds can easily become infected. The major dietary sources of zinc in the US adult diet are beef, some breakfast cereals, and whole grains.

Water is the ‘Forgotten Nutrient.’ It is recommended that adults consume eight 8-ounce glasses of liquids each day. Water helps with temperature maintenance and transportation of oxygen, nutrients and medications to every cell of the body. With age, the ability to detect thirst diminishes. Therefore, older adults are more susceptible to dehydration which can cause bladder infections, kidney stones, confusion, convulsions, cardiac arrest and even death. The best beverages are water, skim milk, 100% fruit juices and decaffeinated coffees and teas.



What's missing in your pantry?

Self Assessment Survey

Take this survey to see how your diet stacks up.

Thinking about what you ate yesterday can help you have a better tomorrow.

Yesterday...



How many total servings of meat, poultry, milk, cheese, fish or eggs did you have? _____

How many total servings of milk, cheese, yogurt or calcium fortified orange juice did you have? _____



Did you spend at least 20 minutes out in the sun? YES NO

Did you engage in 30 minutes of physical activity such as walking?
YES NO

Did you eat fortified breakfast cereal? YES NO



Did you take a multi-vitamin supplement? YES NO

How many servings of grain foods such as bread, rice, pasta, tortillas did you eat? _____ How many of them were whole grain? _____

Did you have any beef yesterday? _____

How many glasses of water or other beverages (not counting alcohol) did you drink? _____

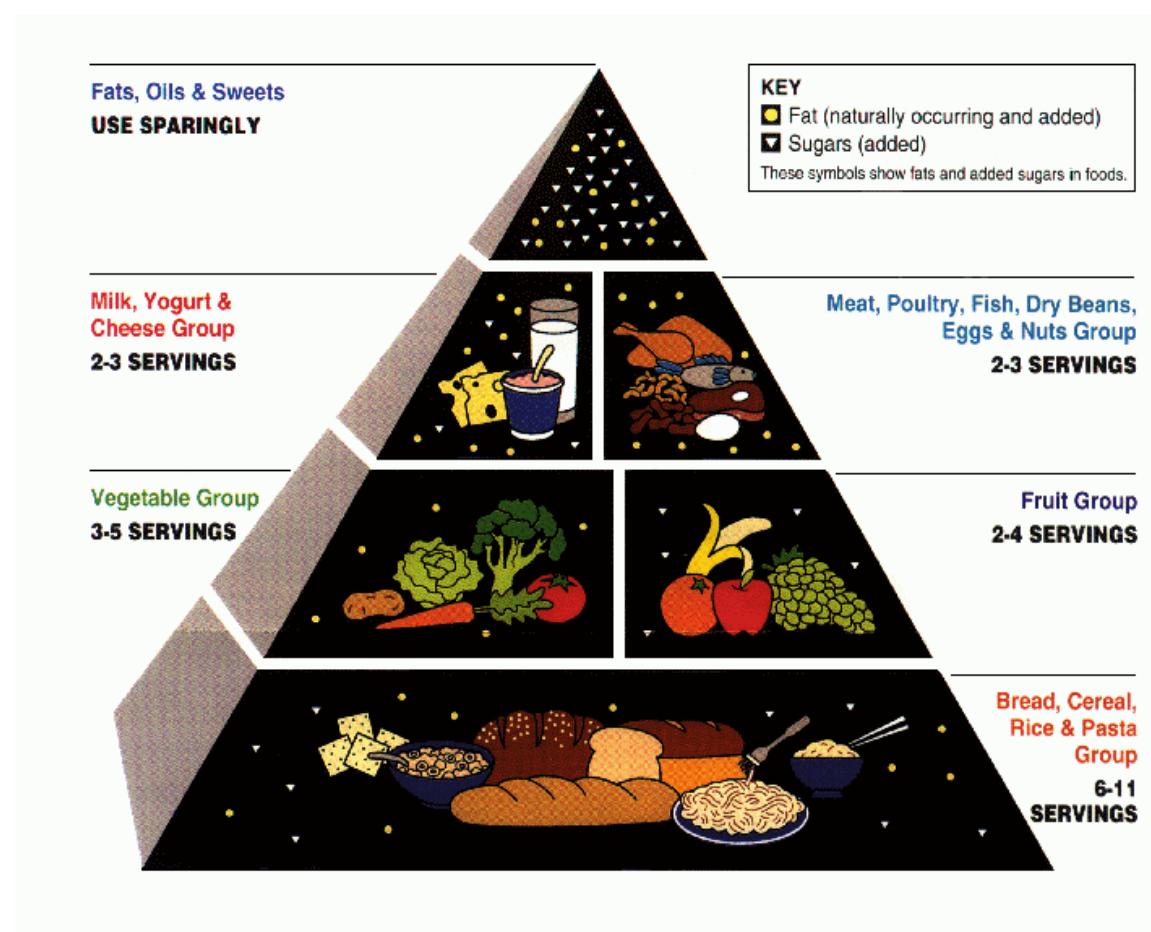


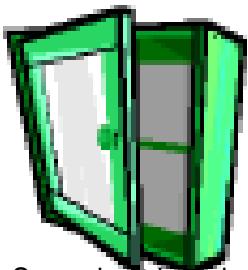
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- Protein
- Calcium
- Vitamin D
- Vitamin B₁₂
- Folate
- Zinc
- Water





What's Missing In Your Pantry?: Nutrients Likely to be Lacking in the Diets of Older Adults

Several nutrients have been identified that are often NOT consumed in adequate amounts by adults over the age of 50 years. These nutrients are needed for optimal health and well-being.

, **PROTEIN**- Important for optimal immune function, wound healing, and fluid balance

Food sources:

- T Lean cuts of meat
- T Skim milk
- T Egg whites



, **Calcium and Vitamin D**- Keep bones strong and helps prevent osteoporosis

Food sources:



- T Milk
- T Cheese
- T Yogurt
- T Fortified orange juice



, **Vitamin B12**- Important for nerve function, cognitive performance, and healthy blood cells

Food sources:

- T Beef
- T Milk
- T Fish



, **Folate**- Also called folic acid, is needed for growth and repair of all body tissues

Food sources:



- T Fortified grain products such as: bread, rice, pasta, and breakfast cereal
- T Orange juice
- T Dark green vegetables
- T Beans



, **Zinc**- Needed for wound healing

Food sources:

- T Beef
- T Breakfast cereal
- T Whole grains

, **Water**- Helps with temperature maintenance and transportation of oxygen, nutrients, and medications to the cells of the body

Food sources:



- T Water
- T Skim milk
- T 100% fruit juices
- T Decaffeinated coffees and teas