

## SPECIAL NEEDS FOR MEN OVER 50

Nutrition plays different, yet important roles during the various stages of adulthood. As we get older, lifestyle plays a prominent role in our health. A healthy diet can help minimize the progression of chronic disease, keep the mind sharp and the body strong.

### Be Proactive

The best way to prevent or manage disease is to be proactive with your healthcare. Make sure to get an annual physical exam, routine visits to other specialists, and schedule screenings as needed. Remember that early detection is key!

### Eat Right and Maintain a Healthy Weight

Our food choices play a big role in both our health and weight. Due to a drop in metabolism, a natural part of aging, you may find it harder to keep extra pounds off as you get older. Men often lose muscle and gain fat, mainly in the belly area, during middle age. Men can also be at increased risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes, especially as they age. Keep in mind – it's never too late to make changes to your eating and exercise habits!

- **Focus on Food Choices.** Men need fewer calories as they get older but still require foods that are high in nutritional value. Consuming fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, low fat/nonfat dairy, whole grains, and healthy plant-based fats are important for controlling calories while increasing nutrient intake.
- **Reduce Your Portions.** Eat smaller meals and snacks throughout the day to rev up your metabolism. Do not skip meals; it can lead to overeating and a sluggish metabolism.
- **Limit Alcohol.** Alcohol can negatively impact weight and health. If you drink alcohol, limit yourself to one drink a day. A serving of alcohol is 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5-ounces of spirit.
- **Exercise Regularly.** Engage in cardiovascular and strength training exercises most days of the week. Toning and maintaining muscle mass can prevent sluggish metabolism, maintain bone health, and increase energy levels while boosting your mood. Always make sure to discuss with your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.

### Know Your Nutrients

Older men require certain nutrients to maintain function, brain health, and overall health:

- **Fiber.** Dietary fiber helps maintain proper bowel function, decrease risk of type 2 diabetes and heart disease, while also serving a role in weight maintenance. Aim for 30 grams of fiber per day from foods such as whole grains, fruits, vegetables, beans, legumes, nuts, and seeds.
- **Calcium and Vitamin D.** Older men are equally at risk for developing osteoporosis as women. Calcium and vitamin D are important for maintaining strong and healthy bones. Calcium is found in foods like dairy, leafy greens, almonds, and fish with bones. Consume foods such as fatty fish, eggs, dairy, and mushrooms for good sources of Vitamin D.
- **Potassium.** Increasing potassium while decreasing sodium intake can help lower risk of high blood pressure. Sources of potassium include fruits, such as bananas, oranges, and kiwi; vegetables such as potatoes, spinach; and legumes such as beans and lentils. Lower sodium by choosing low sodium foods and swapping salt for herbs and spices when cooking.
- **Healthy Fats.** Aim to consume more heart-healthy unsaturated fats such as those found in fatty fish, nuts, seeds, and oils. Limit saturated fats found in foods such as meats, full-fat dairy such as cheeses, and butter.

### Sarcopenia and Protein

After reaching a peak in young adulthood, the body's muscle stores begin to decline at about 45 to 55 years of age. Current recommendations for protein for older adults is 1 gram of protein for every kilogram of body weight. Examples of protein-rich foods include: 3-ounce piece of baked salmon, about the size of a deck of cards (21 grams of protein), a 6-ounce container of vanilla yogurt (about 8 grams), an ounce of part-skim mozzarella cheese (7 grams of protein), ¼ cup soy nuts (17 grams).

- **Food Focus:** High-quality protein can be found in fish, poultry, lean meats, eggs, low-fat and nonfat dairy like yogurt, and soy foods like tofu, soy milk, soy burgers, soy nuts and edamame.

### Heart Disease

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women. Healthy lifestyle choices, including diet, play a major role in keeping the heart healthy. Quitting smoking, getting more exercise, reducing stress, and getting 7-9 hours of sleep a night can also reduce risk of heart disease.

- **Food Focus:** Reduce total fat and saturated fat by limiting fried foods, fatty meats and whole fat cheese; increase fiber, especially cholesterol lowering soluble fiber by including oats, beans, barley, fruits and vegetables. Eat fatty fish for omega-3s like salmon, mackerel, and sardines twice a week. Limit alcohol to one drink per day.

### Preventing Alzheimer's and Dementia

Studies suggest that daily consumption of fruits and vegetables, as well as weekly consumption of fish and other sources of omega-3s were linked to less incidence of dementia and fewer cases of Alzheimer's disease. Increased physical activity, controlling blood pressure, and cognitive training have all been shown to be helpful in preventing decline in cognitive function.

- **Food Focus:** Salmon, mackerel, sardines, walnuts, and canola oil

### Cancer Concerns

**Prostate Cancer** Prostate cancer is the second most common cause of cancer death in men, preceded only by lung cancer. An annual prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test is recommended for men over 50 to help with early prostate cancer detection. Lycopene, found in tomatoes, watermelon, and pink grapefruit, may help reduce the risk of prostate cancer. Diets high in lycopene-containing foods – not supplements – could prevent 11% of prostate cancers.

- **Food Focus:** Processed tomato products, like tomato sauce, salsa, tomato soup and tomato juice, are the best sources because heat processing makes the lycopene more available to the body. Fill ⅔ of your plate with vegetables, beans, whole grains, and fruits. Include cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, and kale, as they contain cancer-fighting compounds whose protective effect appears to be strongest for cancers of the mouth, larynx, pharynx, esophagus, and stomach.

**Colon Cancer.** The American Cancer Society recommends all men should be screened for colon cancer from ages 45-75. There are several types of colon cancer screenings, so talk with your doctor about the best option.

- **Food Focus:** High fiber foods including fruits, vegetables, and whole grains have been linked to less incidences of colon cancer. Eating fewer red and processed meats can also reduce your risk.