

Nutrient Needs as We Age

As we grow older and our bodies and lifestyles change, our nutritional needs also change. We need about 20% fewer calories at age 80 than at age 30. About two-thirds of this decrease in energy needs is due to lower activity levels. The remaining one-third is related to having a lower metabolic rate.

Although healthy older adults who eat a balanced diet don't necessarily need dietary supplements, several aspects of aging increase the likelihood of a deficiency in key vitamins and minerals:

- Having a reduced sense of taste and smell
- Spending more time indoors
- Difficulty chewing
- Following a restricted diet due to a health condition
- Eating alone
- Loss of appetite
- Medication that may prevent absorption of vitamins and minerals



Key Nutrients for Healthy Aging

Calcium

Calcium helps keep bones, muscles, and nerves healthy. Calcium also reduces the risk of osteoporosis, which causes bones to thin and increases the risk for fractures.

- Good sources of calcium: low-fat or fat-free dairy products, fortified cereals and fruit juices, dark, green leafy vegetables, canned fish with soft bones.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D helps the body process calcium and keeps bones strong. Vitamin D also plays an important role in maintaining heart health and may reduce the risk of certain cancers and improve immune function. A supplement may be recommended by your medical provider if your vitamin D levels are low.

- Good sources of vitamin D: fortified cereals and dairy products, high fat fish such as salmon and tuna.

Vitamin B12

Vitamin B12 may help reduce the risk for heart disease and stroke and helps protect against memory problems and dementia as well as balance and walking problems. As we age, due to a decreased production of stomach acid, vitamin B12 can be difficult to absorb from the diet. A supplement may be recommended by your medical provider if your vitamin B12 levels are low.

- Good sources of vitamin B12: fortified cereal, lean meats, some fish and seafood

Potassium

Increasing potassium along with reducing sodium (salt) in the diet may lower your risk of heart disease by keeping you blood pressure at normal levels (120/80 Hg mm).

- Good sources of potassium include: fruits, vegetables, low-fat or fat free dairy products.

