

Nutrition and Aging gracefully

Old age /ˌoʊld ˈeɪj/: *noun*
The later part of normal life.

Staying healthy and feeling your best is important at any age. Aging gracefully isn't about trying to look like a 20 year old, it's about living your best life and having the physical and mental health to enjoy it.

A 2002 study by psychology researchers in Yale University's department of epidemiology and public health are now showing that individuals who live long, and lead healthy lives are typically ones who have a positive view on aging.

One of the major challenges with aging is coping with change. This is difficult, no matter how old you are. The particular challenge for older adults is the sheer number of changes and transitions that start to occur—including children moving away, the loss of parents, friends, and other loved ones, changes to or the end of your career, declining health, and even loss of independence. It's natural to feel those losses. But if that sense of loss is balanced with positive ingredients such as

- moderate daily exercise,
- being socially engaged by getting involved in community to build a growing network of family and friends, and being actively engaging in life,
- reducing your stress by praying, meditating, walking and doing deep breathing exercise and
- activities such as crossword puzzles, board games, reading, learning a second language, painting, listening to classical music and developing new skills are also considered valuable to brain health,

then you have a formula for staying healthy as you age.

Eating healthy becomes especially important as you age. Older persons are particularly vulnerable to malnutrition. Moreover, attempts to provide them with adequate nutrition encounter many practical problems.

As people grow older, their nutritional needs change, including their caloric, vitamin and mineral requirements. This is due to changes in the body that occur naturally with age. Some older individuals have health problems that make it more difficult for them to meet their nutritional needs.

There are things you can do to help prevent deficiencies and other age-related changes. For example, eating nutrient-rich foods and taking the appropriate supplements can help keep you healthy as you age.

Also, practicing healthy habits throughout your life is ideal, but it's never too late to reap the benefits of taking good care of yourself - even as you get older.

TIPS FOR AGING GRACEFULLY:

“Changing how you eat, rather than what you eat”, can make a bigger impact on longevity.

Older adults may need fewer calories to maintain their weight, since they tend to move and exercise less and carry less muscle.

- Include more whole grains such as barley, buck wheat, brown rice, quinoa, rye, rolled oats and millet in the diet. And fiber rich foods make you feel full for longer. It also helps to reduce cholesterol, lowers blood pressure, helps manage weight and prevents constipation.
- Tips to include fiber in the diet:
 - Whole grain cereal for breakfast
 - Top cereal or pancakes with fruit
 - Choose whole fruits more often than juices
 - Toss dried fruits and nuts into salads
 - Use whole wheat flour in baked goods
 - Add chickpeas, kidney beans, or your favorite beans to salads, soups or stews
- Support your immune system with a diet high in dark leafy greens, brassicas (such as cabbage, broccoli and brussel sprouts), alliums (Onions, Garlic, Chives, Leeks, Shallots and Scallions) and mushrooms.
- Choose lean protein and limit processed foods. Rely more on unprocessed foods as they usually contain more nutrients and less fat, added sugar and sodium.

- You should also keep your salt intake to a minimum to keep your blood pressure down.
- H₂O is the way to go! - Have fluids regularly during the day.
- Reduce your alcohol intake and cut down on the smoking habits as they aren't the best ways of having a healthy lifestyle in the long run and are supremely harmful.
- See a doctor regularly: Ask your doctor how often you should go in for checkups and screening tests as you age. Also, see your doctor anytime you experience concerning symptoms. Seeing a doctor regularly can help you find problems early or even before they start.
- Aim to eat earlier, whenever possible, to allow digestion to kick in well before bedtime. This means less disturbed sleep and a longer overnight fast, too.

Aging gracefully is more about being healthy and happy than keeping wrinkles at bay. Maintain a healthy lifestyle; surround yourself with people you love, and do things that bring you joy. Older people with better health habits live healthier for longer.

References (5)

- [World Health Organization: Nutrition for Older Persons](#)
- [Colorado State University Extension: Nutrition and Aging](#)
- [Geriatric Nutrition: Clinics in Geriatric Medicine](#)
- [Journal of the American Geriatrics Society: Increasing Dietary Protein Requirements in Elderly People for Optimal Muscle and Bone Health](#)
- [American Journal of Clinical Nutrition: Micronutrient Requirements in Older Women](#)