

Older Adults Nutrition and Hydration

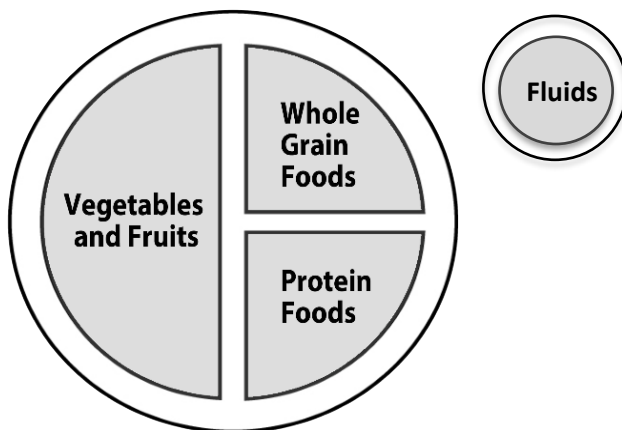
Staying healthy includes eating well and keeping hydrated. This is important for older adults, 65 years and older.

- Eating well can help your body meet its nutrition needs and keep you feeling strong.
- Keeping hydrated means you are drinking enough fluids to feel alert and well.

Use Canada's food guide

A healthy diet should include a variety of foods from [Canada's food guide](#).

- Fill half your plate with vegetables and fruits.
- Include protein foods from a variety of sources.
- Choose whole grain foods.
- Include fluids throughout the day. Limit sugary drinks.



Choose vegetables and fruits

- Vegetables and fruits are high in fibre, vitamins, and minerals. They can help with digestion and bowel movements (pooping).
- Eat lots of vegetables and fruits.
- Fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables and fruit, are all good choices.

Eat protein foods

- Protein helps keep the muscles in your body healthy.
- Older adults need more protein to stay healthy and recover when sick.
- If you do not eat a protein food at each meal, include it as a snack.
- Examples of protein foods include beans, lentils, nuts and seeds, lean meats, poultry, fish, shellfish, eggs, milk, and dairy products, such as cheese, cottage cheese, and yogurt.

Choose whole grains

- Whole grain foods have fibre, vitamins, and minerals. Fibre can help with digestion and bowel movements (pooping).
- Examples of whole grain foods include whole grain bread, cereals, pasta, oatmeal, wild and brown rice, and quinoa.

Staying hydrated

Older adults are more likely to get dehydrated as they have reduced thirst. Drink fluids throughout the day to stay hydrated. Don't wait to feel thirsty.

Why do you need fluids?

- Fluids help to keep the body healthy.
- Fluids may help prevent constipation, and urinary tract infections (UTIs).
- Not having enough fluids can cause dehydration.
- Dehydration may lead to confusion, dizziness, falls, and muscle weakness.

How much fluid do you need?

- 6–8 cups (1500 mL–2000 mL) daily

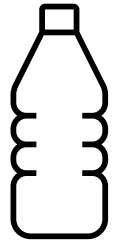
What are fluids?

- Fluids are liquid at room temperature.
- Examples of fluids include water, tea, coffee, milk, almond or soy beverage, broth, vegetable or fruit juice, soda or pop, and nutrition supplement drinks (such as Ensure Plus®, Boost High Protein®, or a store brand).
- Examples of foods high in fluids include gelatin desserts, ice cream, milkshakes, puddings, smoothies, soups, vegetables, and fruits.



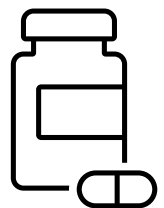
How can you keep hydrated?

- Have 6–8 cups (1500 mL–2000 mL) of fluid daily.
- Drink fluids at meals and in-between meals.
- Eat foods high in fluid.
- Keep a jug of water in the fridge or on the table. This will remind you to drink it.
- Fill a water bottle and carry it with you. You can drink from it during the day.
- Try flavouring water with cucumber or mint.
- Take medications with a full glass of water.
- If you need extra calories, drink milk, milkshake, or nutrition supplement drinks instead of water.



What affects the fluids in your body?

- The amount and type of fluids and food you drink and eat.
- Fluid you lose through urine (pee), stool (poop), diarrhea, vomiting, blood loss, sweating, and breathing.
- Activity and hot weather can make you sweat more.
- Salty foods may make your body hold more water.
- Some medications may make you go to the bathroom more often.
- Conditions such as heart, kidney, or liver disease.



What about caffeine and alcohol?

- Caffeine and alcohol can interact with some medications.
- Limit drinks with caffeine to 1–2 cups (250–500 mL) per day.
- Check with your healthcare provider if you choose to drink alcohol.
- Drinking less is best for your health.
- [Canada’s Guidance on Alcohol and Health \(2023\)](#) suggests the following:
 - To ensure low risk to your health, limit alcohol to 2 or less standard drinks per week.

Vitamins and minerals

- Take a 1000 IU (25 ug) vitamin D pill (supplement) every day unless your healthcare team tells you to take a different amount.
- If you are not able to get all the nutrition you need from food, you may need a vitamin and mineral pill (supplement).
- Ask your healthcare team if you are not sure about taking a vitamin and mineral pill (supplement).

Sample meal plan

Breakfast

- Banana
- Hot cereal with milk
- Greek yogurt
- 1 cup (250 mL) tea or coffee*

Snack

- Bran muffin
- Cheese slice
- 1 cup (250 mL) tea or coffee*

Lunch

- Lentil vegetable soup
- Tuna sandwich on whole grain bread
- Orange slices
- 1 cup (250 mL) milk

Snack

- Carrot sticks
- Whole grain crackers and hummus
- ½ cup (125 mL) milk

Supper

- Baked chicken
- Brown rice
- Steamed broccoli
- Pudding
- 1 cup (250 mL) water*

Snack

- Cottage cheese
- Canned fruit
- Nuts
- ½ cup (125 mL) milk

*If you need more nutrition, drink fluids such as milk, milkshakes, or nutrition supplement drinks instead of water, coffee, or tea.

Some snack ideas

- Boiled eggs
- Cheese and crackers
- Cottage cheese with fruit
- Custard or pudding
- Hummus with vegetables
- Milk, milkshake, fortified soy beverage, or smoothie
- Nuts and seeds
- Peanut butter sandwich
- Soup and crackers
- Soybeans or tofu
- Tuna salad
- Yogurt
- Nutrition supplement drinks, puddings, or bars



Other resources

For healthy eating tips, and quick and easy recipes visit

[healthyeatingstartshere.ca](https://www.healthyeatingstartshere.ca).

For information on where to find free food in Alberta visit [Free Food in Alberta](#).

211 Alberta

- Free and confidential service.
- Provides information on community services.
- Includes information on food hampers, and free or low-cost meals.
- Call, text, or phone 211 Alberta:
 - dial 211
 - text INFO to 211
 - visit www.ab.211.ca and click “live chat”



- [Health Link](#) has dietitians to answer nutrition questions.
- Call 811 and ask to talk to a dietitian or complete a [self-referral form](#) on ahs.ca/811.