

# Detailed Nutrient Needs for Older Adults

**As adults age, calorie needs change due to more body fat, less lean muscle and less activity. The challenge for older adults is to meet the same nutrient needs while consuming fewer calories.**

The answer to this problem is to choose foods high in nutrients in relation to the calories they contain ("nutrient-dense"), such as low-fat milk instead of regular milk.

## Water

Of all the nutrients, water is the most important, serving many essential functions, such as:

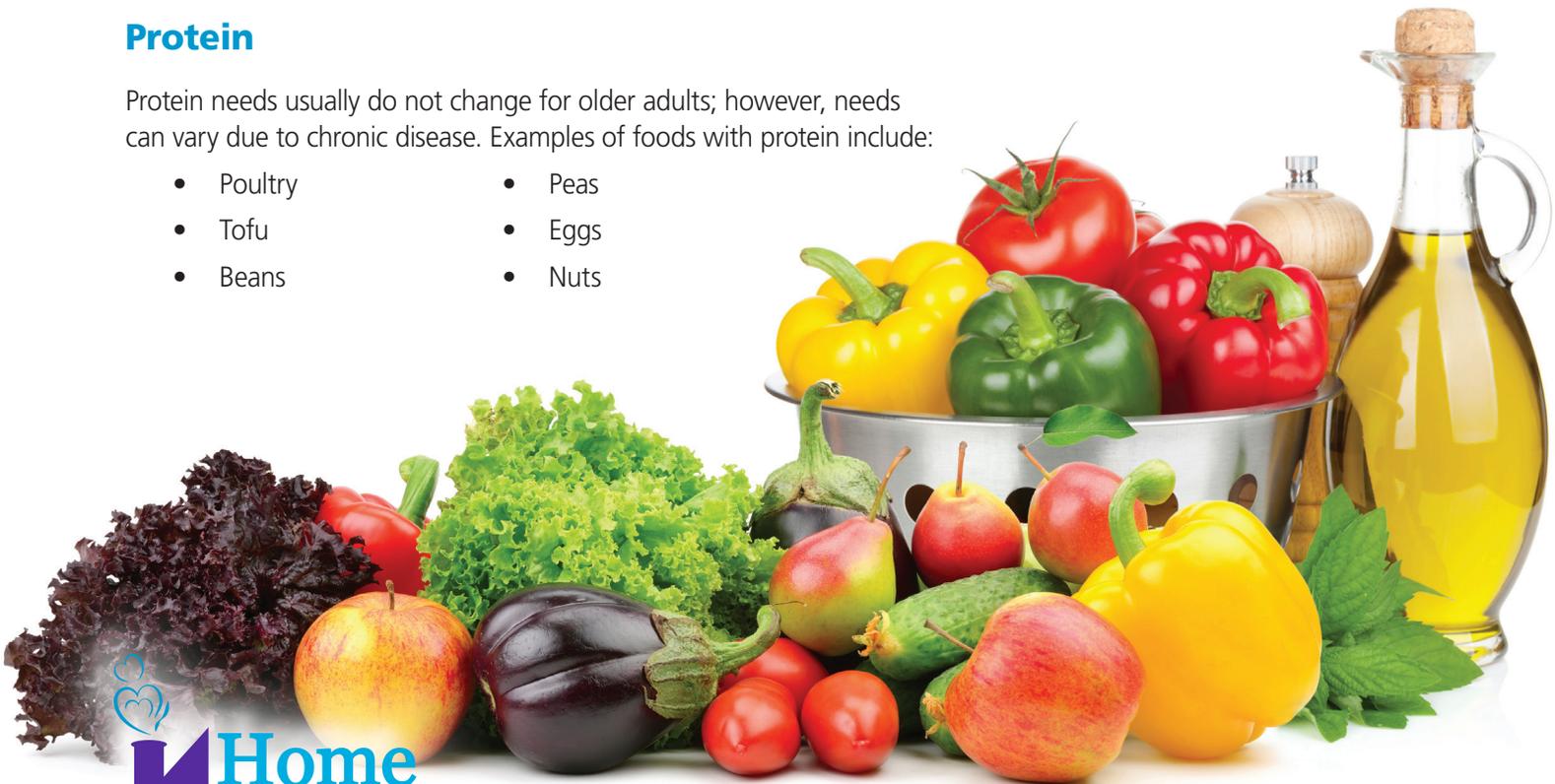
- Eases constipation
- Helps keep joints flexible and the mind clear
- Flushes toxins from the body
- Reduces stress on kidney function

The equivalent of five to eight glasses of water should be consumed every day, as well as foods with high water content (such as melons, soup, and apples). Some foods, such as prunes, figs and raisins contain natural laxatives as well as fiber, and some people find it helpful to include these foods in their daily diet.

## Protein

Protein needs usually do not change for older adults; however, needs can vary due to chronic disease. Examples of foods with protein include:

- Poultry
- Tofu
- Beans
- Peas
- Eggs
- Nuts



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## Fat

Reducing overall fat content is the easiest way to cut calories. “Good” fats come from oils, such as:

- Sunflower oil
- Avocados and avocado oil
- Nuts
- Olive oil
- Seeds

## Carbohydrates

About 60% of calories should come from carbohydrates, with emphasis on complex carbohydrates, which put less stress on blood glucose than refined carbohydrates.

Whole grain nutrition (brown rice, whole wheat, oats) is preferred over refined “white” products (white bread, white rice or products made with white flour).

## Vitamins and Minerals

**Calcium** helps minimize bone loss and prevent osteoporosis, while Vitamin D helps absorb and properly consume calcium. Milk, cheese and yogurt retain their calcium content; cream cheese and butter do not. Other foods high in calcium include:

- Figs
- White beans
- Cabbage/bok choy
- Tofu
- Kale

**Zinc, along with vitamins C and E, and the phytochemicals lutein, zeaxanthin and beta-carotene** may help prevent or slow the onset of age-related macular degeneration. The best way to obtain these nutrients is to consume at least five servings of fruits and vegetables daily, especially dark green, orange and yellow ones, such as:

- Kale
- Spinach
- Broccoli
- Peas
- Cantaloupes

Eating foods with **vitamin E** may also help reduce the risk of Alzheimer’s disease. These include:

- Whole grains
- Peanuts
- Nuts
- Vegetable oils
- Seeds

**Zinc** deficiency can be related to specific diseases in the elderly, and can also be a factor with Vitamin K in wound healing. However, a physician should be consulted before adding zinc supplements to the diet.

Low levels of **vitamin B12** have been associated with memory loss and dementia and linked to age-related hearing loss in older adults. To avoid deficiency, older adults are advised to eat foods rich in vitamin B12 regularly:

- Meat
- Poultry
- Dairy foods
- Fish
- Eggs

Home Sweet Home In-Home Care understands the challenges of preparing healthy meals as frailty becomes an issue. We use proven techniques to prepare nutritious meals at home that are not only eaten, but welcomed by clients.

Source: Colorado State University Extension ProgramSources: Disabled-World.com, Aging Well Magazine, Senticare