

# Aging Healthfully Newsletter

Illinois Department on Aging

## What does it mean to be healthy?

The World Health Organization defines **HEALTH** as “*a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.*”

**As we age it becomes even more important** to focus on the types of food we eat, the amount of exercise we do and the social activities we participate in for our overall health and wellbeing. It is a balance of all these things that truly shapes our health.

## Nutrition:

- **Calorie needs are slightly lower** (1,600/day for women; 2000/day for men 60+ years), **while other nutrient needs are higher** such as Vitamin B6, Vitamin D and calcium. Adequate protein and fiber intake are still very important!
- **Risk for chronic health conditions increase with age** such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, kidney disease and age-related eye disorders. These conditions can be improved with balanced nutrition and diet modifications.
  - Budget friendly shopping and cooking meals that are simple and in smaller quantities can help in a big way! Use MyPlate (see image below) as a guide for portion control and to help combat chronic health problems.
- **Loss of appetite and decreased sense of taste and smell** affect not only what we eat, but how much we eat and how we prepare food. **Finding ways to enhance flavor without adding salt or sugar can positively affect nutrition status.**

## Physical Activity:

- **Arthritis and joint pain are common factors** contributing to reduced physical activity. Loss of muscle mass (known as sarcopenia) is a natural part of aging that starts around 30 years of age and continues to decline by 3% to 5% every 10 years. This loss of lean body mass can lead to increased risk for falls and injury.
- **Increasing weight bearing exercises** such as lifting weights or resistance bands can help slow down and reduce the amount of muscle loss.

## Socialization:

- **Seniors that participate in social interactions** on a routine basis have reduced risk of depression, stress and anxiety.
- **Individuals that socialize** are more likely to exercise, have greater self-esteem and tend to live longer!



## To Salt or Not to Salt

**Sodium is an essential nutrient in the body that helps regulate blood pressure and helps nerves and muscles to work properly.**

With that said, the average American consumes **approximately 3400mg of sodium** per day which is about **1 ½ to 2 days' worth of sodium**. It is estimated that roughly **75% of the sodium** Americans consume, comes from processed foods **and NOT the salt shaker**.

### How much sodium is in table salt?

- 1/4 teaspoon salt = 575 mg sodium
- 1/2 teaspoon salt = 1,150 mg sodium
- 3/4 teaspoon salt = 1,725 mg sodium
- 1 teaspoon salt = 2,300 mg sodium - **this is the recommended daily limit!**

### What do all the sodium-related terms mean on food packages:

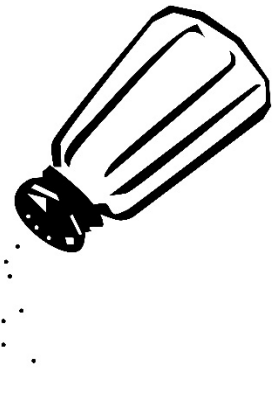
- **Sodium-free** – Less than 5 milligrams of sodium per serving and contains no sodium chloride
- **Very low sodium** – 35 milligrams or less per serving
- **Low sodium** – 140 milligrams or less per serving
- **Reduced (or less) sodium** – At least 25 % less sodium per serving than the usual sodium level (this doesn't necessarily mean it is a "low sodium" food)
- **Light (for sodium-reduced products)** – If the food is "low calorie" and "low fat" and sodium is reduced by at least 50 percent per serving

### Foods do not have to be bland because they are lower in sodium:

- Onions, garlic, celery, spices and herbs can add a salty element without increasing sodium in recipes
- Try using vinegars like red wine or balsamic to add a salty zing with zero sodium
- Drain and thoroughly rinse canned vegetables like black beans, corn and green beans **to cut sodium content by up to 40 %!**
- Cook pastas, cereals and rice without salt – it will not impact the final product
- Look for no-salt-added or lower sodium versions of foods such as "unsalted" chicken or vegetable broth/stock

#### **Attachments:**

- DGA How to Build a Healthy Eating Pattern
- 10 Tips to Building a Healthy Plate – MyPlate & MyPlate Graphic
- How Much Sugar Do You Eat?
- May Recipes – Orange Cream Smoothie; Spring Blueberry Walnut Salad
- 2019 OAM Poster



## **May is Older Americans Month (OAM) and the theme for 2019 is Connect, Create, Contribute.**

**Here are some ideas to bring the community together to celebrate:**

### **Connect:**

- Bring everyone together by holding a nutrition themed trivia, game or crafting day to provide additional opportunities to connect and socialize.
- Have a storytelling day and invite people to share about their life experiences, memories from their childhood and accomplishments.
- Consider holding an OAM recognition day to celebrate community members that have left an impression on the community. Invite local leaders to speak or attend.

### **Create:**

- Plan a workshop for seniors that is centered on common concerns such as keeping up with technology (internet, smart phones, social media), eating healthy on a budget, exercises to help relieve arthritis (e.g. yoga class, chair exercises).
- Hold a theme each week that encourages socialization, exercise and balanced nutrition such as music/dance, senior “top chef” competition (simple recipes such as smoothies), how to build a MyPlate meal.

### **Contribute:**

- Host a fundraiser such as a community walk, cook off or May social.
- Organize a community improvement activity such as gardening, community cleanup or donation drive.
- Create an online forum for older adults and community supporters to provide ideas and time for the benefit of others.

### **References:**

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