

# Good Food and Health Advice for Older People Who Want to Help Themselves:

An Information Booklet for  
Older People, Families and Carers



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## Contents

Purpose of this booklet	5
Good information	6
Best weight	7
Weight record chart	8
Fluids	9
Foods	10
Regular meals	11
Daily menu	12
Food safety in your home	13
Alcohol	14
Vitamin D and bones	15
Constipation	16
Body weight	17
Weight	18
Keeping independent with support	19
Loss of appetite	20
Illness	21
Underweight	22
Sore mouth, teeth or swallowing difficulty	23
Special diets	24
Diabetes	25
Modified fat diets	26
Best weight range for people over 65 years	27
Good food, better health, more independence	
I am going to eat better...not less!	28



## Purpose of this booklet

This client information booklet provides older people with advice about what they need to do to eat good food, have better health and enjoy their independence more. Older people as well as their families and carers will find the ideas in this booklet useful.

Remember, some of the information in this booklet may not be suitable for people who are on a special diet – if in doubt, talk to your doctor and dietitian for advice.

## Good information

- ▶ Be well nourished as an older person living at home.
- ▶ Be as active as you can be, without overdoing it.
- ▶ Keep your weight up.
- ▶ Drink *plenty* of fluids *every* day.

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Remember that you need  
to eat ***better*** ... not less!

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## Best weight

You will feel better and be more independent at a good weight.

- ▶ Weigh yourself every week.
- ▶ Check how your weight is going.
- ▶ Try to make up any weight loss, even two pounds (or one kilogram), as soon as possible.
- ▶ Talk to your doctor and dietitian about your weight.

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*Always* try to keep your weight up

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## Weight record chart

My best weight is  
between ..... and .....

Keep your own weight record here  
(once a week is best).

DATE	WEIGHT

DATE	WEIGHT

Check your best weight range, go to page 27

## Fluids

Try to drink frequently, either water, milk, fruit juice, tea, coffee, soft drinks or cordial.

- ▶ If you can only pass a dribble of urine in the toilet, drink MORE to avoid bladder irritation and overcome this problem.
- ▶ If you experience incontinence, please seek expert help. Drinking less may only make the problem worse.
- ▶ Drink when you feel thirsty or have a dry mouth; drink even when you do not feel thirsty.

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*Always* try to have 6 to 8 cups  
of fluid every day.

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## Foods

The best foods an older person can eat are on the daily 1 3 3 4 5+ food plan shown below.

<b>1 serve</b>	<b>Meat, fish, poultry, eggs, cheese, lentils</b>
<b>3 serves</b>	<b>Milk drinks, milky desserts, yoghurt, cheese</b>
<b>3 serves</b>	<b>Fruits (fresh, canned, stewed, dried, or juice)</b>
<b>4 serves</b>	<b>Vegetables (including one serve of potato)</b>
<b>5+ serves</b>	<b>Breads and cereals</b>
<b>AND</b>	<b>Foods such as cake, biscuits, scones, icecream, sugar, desserts, lollies, chocolates, soft drinks and cordials</b>

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As you grow older always remember to take the most nourishing foods first – particularly if you have a small appetite.

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## Regular meals

Eat at least three meals a day.

Enjoy having a meal with someone else whenever you can.

If you are having Meals on Wheels, always take two extra meals as well each day.

Make sure that you *always* have THREE MEALS EVERY DAY and snacks as well.

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Please help yourself by remembering  
to eat better . . . not less!

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## Daily menu

This daily menu example will provide you with all of the essential and nourishing foods that your body needs.

<b>MORNING</b>	<b>AFTERNOON</b>	<b>NIGHT</b>
Fruit juice	Meat* and vegetables	Soup
Cereal and milk	Milky dessert	Sandwich
Toast	Coffee	Fruit, icecream
Tea		Tea
Fruit	Tea and cake	Milk and a biscuit

\* This includes meat, fish, chicken, eggs, cheese, lentils

- ▶ Use salt sparingly in cooking and at the meal table.

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Remember to always have a variety of foods and drinks.

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## Food safety in your home

Always wash your hands before touching food.  
Always wash your cutlery and dishes in hot soapy water, then rinse them.

Only freeze foods which have been cooked on the same day. Never re-freeze foods.

If you get 24 hours of diarrhoea, it could be due to one of the above reasons.

If in doubt, throw the food out.

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Food hygiene is important.

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## Alcohol

Please be safe if you choose to drink alcohol

To do this:

- Avoid alcohol without food.
- Avoid drinking alcohol if you are going outside by yourself.
- Remember you are even more susceptible to the effects of alcohol when you are taking prescription drugs.

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You can get tipsy and fall over on only one glass of alcohol.

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## Vitamin D and bones

Vitamin D is necessary for good bones

To make sure you have enough Vitamin D:

- ▶ Let the sun shine on your skin for one or two hours every week so that your body can make vitamin D.
- ▶ Eat table margarine enriched with Vitamin D.

If you are housebound *always* use table margarine enriched with Vitamin D.



## Constipation

To have the best health possible, avoid constipation.

To do this:

- ▶ Be as active as you can be, without overdoing it.
- ▶ Get into a regular toilet routine at the same time every day.
- ▶ Slowly increase your fibre intake (over weeks and months).

Fibre is found in wholegrain cereals (for example porridge, *Allbran*, *Fibre Plus*, *Sultana Bran*, muesli), wholemeal or white high fibre bread, fibrous fruits (pineapple, prunes, fresh oranges, apricots) and vegetables, dried peas and beans.

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Take at least 6 to 8 cups of fluid every day (include hot tea and coffee if it suits you).

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## Body weight

As an older person it is a good idea to be the best weight you can possibly be.

This is because:

- You are less likely to fall if you have some muscle.
- If you fall, body fat will help protect you from injury.
- If you cannot eat for a few days, your body fat is a good reserve of energy for you.

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You may be surprised to know that being a little overweight helps to protect older people from the effects of illness and injury.

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## Weight

Are you so overweight that it is affecting your health and activity?

- ▶ Try to keep your body strong by being well nourished.
- ▶ Be as active as you can be, without overdoing it.
- ▶ Follow the 1 3 3 4 5+ plan (page 10), but do not take the extra foods.
- ▶ You can always safely avoid sugar, fats and alcohol without making yourself weak.

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In the older person, diets to lose weight can do more harm than good so if you have to lose weight, consult an expert dietitian to help you do it without harm.

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## Keeping independent with support

Can you shop and prepare food for yourself all of time?

- ▶ When you can, go with the person who does your shopping.
- ▶ Get to know what foods are available in your shops.
- ▶ Check if your local shop will deliver your order.
- ▶ Some new kitchen equipment may help you, such as special utensils, a microwave oven, a small deep freeze.
- ▶ Will prepared meals assist you?

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Every month, ask yourself if you are getting enough help to remain independent – if not, please contact local council community services in your local area.

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## Loss of appetite

There may be times when you find you have lost your appetite and you are eating less than before.

If this happens:

- Ask yourself if any of your pills are upsetting you.
- Talk to your doctor or pharmacist.
- Take three small meals and three snacks every day.
- Talk to your local council community services about getting more help with shopping or food preparation.

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Remember to weigh yourself every week to check that you are not losing weight.

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## Illness

If you have one or more of the following health problems you need more nourishment than usual.

- underweight
- loss of weight
- fighting an infection
- sore mouth or throat
- a leg ulcer or a wound
- recovering from an illness that is healing
- recovering from surgery
- recovering from breaking one of your bones.

Until you are completely better you need to eat more than the 1 3 3 4 5+ food plan for several weeks, and perhaps months; if this is difficult to do, talk to a dietitian about the right food for your situation.

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Good food, better health,  
more independence.

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## Underweight

If you are you losing weight or are underweight, try to do something about it.

To do this:

- ▶ Start to eat little and often.
- ▶ Take your food when you feel your best.
- ▶ Start taking one cup of extra milk every day.
- ▶ Slowly take more sugar, margarine, thick soups and cream.
- ▶ Treat yourself to the foods you enjoy.
- ▶ Take a low dose multivitamin and mineral pill (3 or 4 times a week).

Putting on weight can take weeks or months, just keep going.

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Keep your best weight for your health and independence. To put on weight talk to an expert dietitian.

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## Sore mouth, teeth or swallowing difficulty

You can ease a sore mouth, or sore teeth, or difficulty with swallowing.

- Use lip balm if your lips are dry.
- Eat soft, wet foods if your mouth is dry.
- Take regular drinks (including milk) throughout the day, to keep your mouth moist.
- Sip a drink if your mouth is dry or your lips are cracked.
- Avoid peppers and spices if your mouth is sore.
- Take a low dose multivitamin and mineral pill (3 or 4 times a week).

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Talk to your dentist, pharmacist, doctor or dietitian for advice about chewing and swallowing

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## Special diets

A special diet is for a special purpose and to improve your health.

If you are on a special diet ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I feel OK about this diet?
- Do I still need to follow this diet as I get older?
- Have I had my yearly check up about this diet?

Being on an incorrect diet can do you more harm than good.

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To make sure you are on the best diet, seek advice from your doctor and dietitian.

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## Diabetes

If you have diabetes, it is important to manage carefully.

- Keep a good weight.
- Be as active as you can be, without overdoing it.
- Take regular meals and snacks, and nourishing foods.
- Make sure you have the best and latest information to keep yourself well?

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Remember to have a regular diabetes check with your doctor and a thorough check every year; review your diet every year with a dietitian.

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## Modified fat diets

If you are following a modified fat diet or a low cholesterol diet, check if it is still useful to you.

- ▶ Ask yourself and your doctor if you still need this diet.
- ▶ If you are underweight, or feeling weak or frail, or losing weight without trying to do so, you may need to improve the nourishing value of your diet.
- ▶ Ask your doctor for a yearly blood fat and cholesterol test.
- ▶ Review your diet every year with a dietitian.
- ▶ Have the best up-to-date information to keep yourself well.

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Remember to keep your weight up.

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## Best weight range

This chart shows the best weight range for people over 65 years\*

HEIGHT		IDEAL WEIGHT RANGE				
ft in	cm	st'lb	kg	to	st'lb	kg
4' 10"	147	7 6	47.5	to	9 1	58.3
4' 11"	150	7 10	49.5	to	9 7	60.8
5' 0"	152	7 13	50.8	to	9 10	62.4
5' 1"	155	8 4	52.9	to	10 2	64.9
5' 2"	158	8 8	54.9	to	10 8	67.4
5' 3"	160	8 11	56.3	to	10 11	69.1
5' 4"	163	9 2	58.5	to	11 2	71.7
5' 5"	165	9 5	59.9	to	11 7	73.5
5' 6"	168	9 10	62.1	to	11 13	76.2
5' 7"	170	9 13	63.6	to	12 5	78.0
5' 8"	173	10 4	65.8	to	12 9	80.8
5' 9"	175	10 7	67.4	to	13	82.7
5' 10"	178	10 12	69.7	to	13 5	85.5
5' 11"	180	11 2	71.3	to	13 9	87.5
6' 0"	183	11 7	73.7	to	14 2	90.4

\* Always slightly higher in older people, when compared to younger adults

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Good food, better health,  
more independence

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I am going to eat *better* . . . not less!

If you need more help, contact the Department of  
Community Services at your local city council.