

NUTRIFAX[©]

2008

Nutrition Guidelines for Older Americans

Tufts University researchers have developed a modified version of the USDA Food Guide Pyramid. The “over-70” pyramid is intended as a guide for the specific nutrient needs of people over 70. These recommendations are aimed at healthy, mobile seniors with the resources to prepare adequate meals.

As we age, calorie needs decrease to an estimated 1200 to 1600 calories per day, so elderly consumers need to focus on eating a lot of nutrient-dense foods to meet their needs. The pyramid thus emphasizes whole grain foods, brightly colored fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy products, and lean meats, fish and poultry. There are various components of a healthy diet that are especially important for seniors over 70. They include:

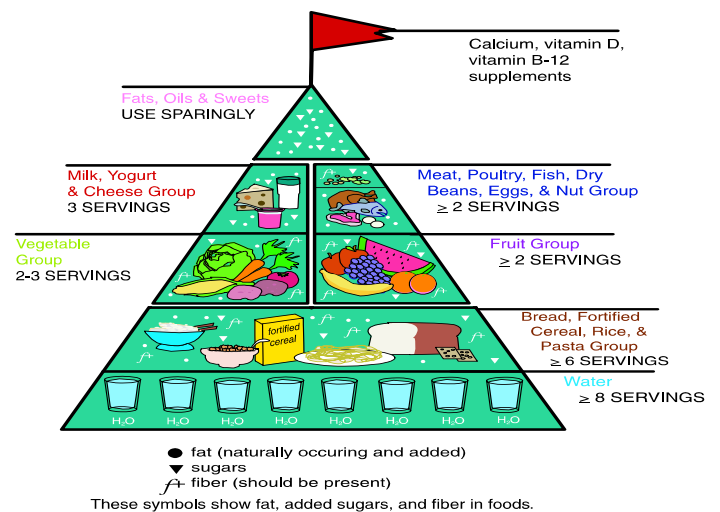
Fluid

The base of the “70+” pyramid is water. Adequate hydration is a problem for older adults. As we age, our thirst sensation declines, leading to an increase in the incidence of dehydration. Dehydration is a serious problem that can worsen existing kidney dysfunction and cause constipation. It is recommended that seniors drink at least 8 glasses of fluid a day.

Fiber

Constipation is a common problem among the elderly, and it can be improved by including adequate fiber in the diet. Fiber can be obtained from whole grain cereals and fruits and vegetables.

Food Guide Pyramid for the 70+ Adults



Protein

Adequate protein is required for adequate immune function and for the repair of cells and tissues. Protein can be obtained by taking 2 servings of lean meats, fish, poultry or legumes daily. Beans provide fiber and nutrients as well as protein. Fish is a great source of omega-3 fatty acids, which have many health benefits.

Vitamins and Minerals

The over-70 pyramid is topped with a flag icon that represents the need for supplements for older adults. The ability to absorb calcium, Vitamin D and Vitamin B12 decrease with age. Calcium and Vitamin D are necessary for prevention of fractures and Vitamin B12 is needed for normal nerve function. Not all seniors require supplements if they are eating a balanced diet, but these remain relatively common nutrient deficiencies among seniors.

Food and Nutrition Services can assist in providing nutrition information. Call 703-813-4800 and ask for a Registered Dietitian.

Food Guide Pyramid for 70+ Adults Lesson Plan

Handouts:

1. Food Guide Pyramid for 70+ Adults
2. Pencils
3. Bingo, chips
4. Fiber brochure (optional)
5. Water brochure (optional)

Outline

I. Introduction

- a. Introduce ourselves, explain that we will be talking about the Food Guide Pyramid, then we will play Give Me 5! Bingo.

II. Quiz

III. Have Them Take Quiz

- a. **Go over scores, interpret what the answers mean, and explain that we will use the Food Guide Pyramid to help improve nutritional health.**

IV. THE FOOD GUIDE PYRAMID

- a. Many of you may be eating less now than when you were younger and may be less active now. But your nutrient needs are the same or greater. Choose a variety of high nutrient foods that are low in fat.
- b. Liquids are on the base of this pyramid to emphasize that it should be the base of your diet. This includes water, soups, juices and others. Fluids are essential to carry nutrients to all of your body's cells and help rid the body of waste. It will ease the process of elimination and help to prevent kidney stone formation. It will help prevent dehydration and keep he body functioning well.
- c. Bread/grain group, this group is also large and should make up a large part of your diet. The foods in this group will give your body B vitamins as well as fiber.
- d. Fruits and vegetables are some of the most important food groups that we need to increase in our diet. We suggest you try to get 5 A Day (5 fruits and vegetables a day). This group will provide many different kinds of vitamins and minerals. They are low in fat and calories as well as high in fiber. They make up good snacks and fruit can often be considered nature's candy and can be used as dessert. Even dried fruit contains all the benefits.
- e. The dairy group is essential to provide the calcium your body needs. It will help keep your bones strong and healthy. If you don't like milk, try yogurt, cottage cheese, any type of low-fat cheese, and calcium fortified orange juice.
- f. Meat provides the protein needed to help repair your body.
- g. The tip of the pyramid is the smallest part; which means the smallest amount of servings should come from this group each day. Remember to use these foods sparingly.

V. Bingo

- a. Pass out bingo sheets and explain how it will work. If someone gets bingo then they should say "Give Me 5!" to emphasize the 5 fruits and vegetables a day. Pass out a treat to each winner.