

Advice on good nutrition for the elderly



Varied, colourful nutrition contributes to health, functional capacity and quality of life. Balanced eating and adequate food intake support recovery from acute illness and help maintain functional capacity.

Food should provide enough energy.

If your appetite is not what it used to be, you might no longer recognise the feeling of hunger. You should eat smaller portions, have more snacks and use more fat than before.

Regular mealtimes will help keep your food intake sufficient and maintain proper alertness.

Eating about **every three hours** is the best: breakfast, lunch at around noon, an afternoon snack, a second meal at dusk and a snack before bedtime. Don't settle for just coffee and a sandwich at mealtimes.

As we age, we need more protein.

Adequate protein intake prevents muscle loss, helps maintain muscular strength and function, and supports recovery from illness.

Ways to increase your protein intake:

- Have chicken, fish, meat, beans, lentils or peas at mealtime, and choose milk or buttermilk as your beverage.
- Add cottage cheese, an egg or a sandwich with cold cuts to your convenience food.
- As snacks, favour quark, yoghurt, curdled milk or protein puddings.
- Porridge and milk is an excellent breakfast or evening snack.
- Try adding cottage cheese or an egg in your porridge.

Excessive salt intake is harmful for the whole body.

To reduce your salt intake, favour low-salt alternatives such as products with the Finnish Heart Symbol, and replace salt by seasoning your food with vegetables and salt-free herbs.

Eat berries or fruit at least once a day or drink a glass of fruit juice. Add vegetables and root vegetables to your meals:

Eat things like cooked carrots, broccoli, mixed vegetables, or fresh tomato or bell pepper.

Add good fats to your food:

rapeseed oil to your porridge, mashed potatoes, casseroles and salads, or nuts to your curdled milk, for example.

Don't forget to drink 5–8 glasses of liquid per day.

Suitable drinks include water, diluted juice, berry soup, milk-based drinks and tea. Have milk or buttermilk with your meals. Avoid alcoholic beverages.

In addition to regular exercise, adequate intake of vitamin D and calcium will prevent osteoporosis and muscle loss, as well as reduce the likelihood of a fall and resulting fractures.

Take a 20 µg vitamin D supplement each day or as prescribed by your physician. The best sources of calcium are liquid dairy products and cheese.

Weigh yourself at least once a month.

Write down your weight. If you start to lose weight, increase the number of meals.

