

Proper Nutrition for Elderly: Quiz

By Kate McCarthy

We all know about the correlation between diet and health. For the elderly, a nutritious diet is essential to maintaining health and promoting longevity. A proper diet keeps aging muscles, bones, organs and other body parts in good working order for the long haul. Getting the necessary vitamins and minerals from healthy food boosts immunity and fights off illness-causing toxins. Beyond reducing the risk of heart disease, stroke and high blood pressure, eating a proper diet also fights against type -2 diabetes, bone loss, anemia, cancer and Alzheimer's disease. Yet studies show most elderly don't eat a nutritious diet. Test your understanding of diet and nutrition for the aging by taking this quiz and see if you know the essentials of a healthy diet for a healthy senior.



1) The average person puts on 10 to 20 pounds from 45 to 65.

This is_____?

- A. quite normal. We need to expect body changes as we age.
- B. to be avoided. A person's recommended weight should remain the same throughout the adult years.
- C. caused by aging, not by inactivity or overeating.
- D. not that common. Most people don't put on weight as they age.

ANSWER: B In fact, dramatic changes in weight can lead to negative health issues. Maintaining a proper weight through a lifestyle of health diet and exercise, even if started later in life, contributes to longevity and a better quality of life.



2) Being notably underweight _____.

- A. is a sign of possible health problems.
- B. is wonderful! Don't we all want to shed a few pounds?
- C. can lead to fatigue, cognitive confusion and depression.
- D. both A and C.

ANSWER: D Significant lose of weight is a red flag to health concerns. Many of today's elderly suffer from malnutrition from not eating enough food or getting the proper nutrients from the food they consume. Poor diet increases risk of falls, mental confusion and osteoporosis.



3) Elderly get all their nutrients or vitamins and minerals from the food they eat.

- A. true
- B. false

ANSWER: B In fact, the aging are less able to absorb some nutrients from their diet and may need to take vitamin supplements. For example, after 50, the stomach produces less gastric acid making it difficult to absorb vitamin B-12 from food, which is necessary to keep blood and nerves vital. Another important nutrient combination is calcium and D. Calcium is needed for maintaining bone strength, but cannot be absorbed without vitamin D. With age, the body is less able to synthesize vitamin D on its own and so supplements become necessary.



4) Elderly with urinary incontinence should _____.

- A. cut back on the amount of water they drink each day. We don't want to risk any embarrassing accidents.
- B. supplement with coffee or soft drinks.
- C. drink eight 8 oz. glasses of water daily.
- D. not worry about drinking water unless they feel thirsty.

ANSWER: C Incontinence can be embarrassing, but should not stop an elder from drinking enough water. Getting enough fluids can be an issue for the aging because they do not always realize when their body is thirsty. Usually drinking eight eight-ounce glasses of fluids per day is enough but if in doubt, check the urine color. Pale yellow urine is best. Bright or dark yellow means you need to drink more liquids.



5) Elderly are less active and so should consume fewer calories to avoid putting on weight.

- A. True
- B. False

ANSWER: B For the majority of elderly, diet isn't about losing weight anymore; it's about eating healthy meals. Eating a balanced diet is more important than counting calories, but for those who count this is a good guideline.

Women over 50: not physically active = 1,600 calories a day
some physical activity = 1,800 calories a day
very physically active = 2,000 calories a day
Men over 50: not physically active = 2,000 calories a day
some physical activity = 2,400 calories a day
very physically active = 2,800 calories a day



6) Elderly often lose interest in food due to _____.

- A. changes in sense of taste and smell.
- B. poor fitting dentures make eating painful.
- C. medications affecting their appetite.
- D. eating alone.
- E. All of the above.

ANSWER: E All of the above can affect the eating habits of the elderly causing them to lose interest in eating properly. Not maintaining proper meals is a leading cause of malnutrition among this age group.



7) Food choice has nothing to do with Alzheimer's disease.

- A. True
- B. False

ANSWER: B Key nutrients are very important for the brain to function at its best. Eating a selection of brightly colored fruit, leafy veggies, fish and nuts packed with omega-3 fatty acids can improve focus and decrease the risk of Alzheimer's disease.



- 8) The best diet for the elderly to follow is _____.
- A. Vegan Diet
 - B. Atkins Diet
 - C. Mediterranean Diet
 - D. Western Diet

ANSWER: C Known for increasing lifespan by 8-14%, the Mediterranean Diet is also credited with lowering the risk of heart disease. A veggie loaded diet with legumes, fruits, fish and unsaturated fats like olive oil, the Mediterranean Diet is ideal for the elderly.



- 9) Seniors and the Elderly need 1,200 mg. of calcium daily to maintain good bone health. A common source for calcium is milk, yogurt and cheese. Non-dairy sources include _____.
- A. tofu, broccoli, almonds and kale
 - B. mushrooms, molasses and salmon
 - C. basil, soybeans and sardines
 - D. All the of the above

ANSWER: D There are a lot of great sources for calcium even for those who don't tolerate dairy easily. Getting enough calcium prevents osteoporosis and bone fractures, which to the aging, is a major issue.



- 10) Being carb smart for the aging means limiting consumption to about 6-7 ounces of grains daily. An ounce of grain is equal to _____?
- A. a crouton
 - B. a croissant
 - C. a slice of bread
 - D. a loaf of bread

ANSWER: C A couple of slices of bread a day sounds fine, but most people don't realize that pasta, cereals, beans and many vegetables all are considered carbs. Filling up on carbohydrates is a problem for everyone, but for the elderly it means missing out on getting the proper nourishment from their diets. Eating carbs labeled "whole" is better as they have more nutrients and fiber.

As people age, eating well can be an important element of maintaining a positive mental outlook and remaining emotionally well balanced. Eating a healthy diet is no longer about sacrificing and watching one's weight. It is about enjoying fresh, colorful foods and being creative in the kitchen. Enjoy a healthy meal with friends today and you will feel vibrant and healthy, inside and out.



HomeAid Health Care
Helping Hands at Home

Kate McCarthy is Director of Operations for HomeAid Health Care which provides non-medical home services for the elderly who wish to remain safe and independent at home. HomeAid is a sister company to Prairie Home Assisted Living. Together the two companies provide comprehensive care for the elderly in the Fox Valley.