

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:

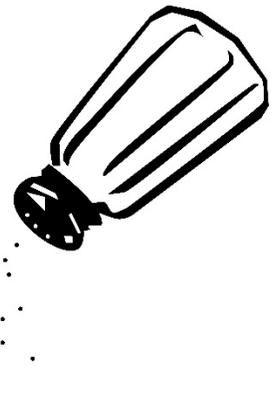
- **Sodium-free** – Less than 5 milligrams of sodium per serving and contains no sodium chloride
- **Very low sodium** – 35 milligrams or less per serving
- **Low sodium** – 140 milligrams or less per serving
- **Reduced (or less) sodium** – At least 25 % less sodium per serving than the usual sodium 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:

<https://www.who.int/>
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<https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/sodium/how-to-reduce-sodium>



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