

## **Boosting Nutrition, Boosting Appetite**

Proper nutrition is basic to good health. An older person's diet should not contain high calorie, low-nutrient food. As the body ages, a person has to make more of an effort to eat wisely. Older people need fewer calories to maintain normal body weight. They must get more nutrients from less food. If a person does not get enough calories, the body will use stored nutrients for energy. When this happens, the person becomes weaker and is more likely to get infections.

### **Note – Choking Danger**

The muscles in an elderly person's esophagus are weaker than in a younger person's so it is more difficult to swallow large bites of food without choking. Shred or cut food into small pieces.

### **Perk Up The Appetite**

- Make sure dentures fit correctly and that eye glasses are the correct strength. (We eat with our eyes before we ever touch our food.)
- Drink water or liquids at mealtime to make chewing and swallowing easier.
- Seniors have a reduced sense of taste and smell. To improve sluggish appetites, increase the flavors by using dressings, spices, and vinegar, especially if salt is restricted. Vary textures, such as adding granola to yogurt.
- Eat frequent smaller meals and favorite foods.
- Eat food with the fingers if it increases intake.

The USDA food patterns suggests that people 50 or older choose healthy foods every day from the following:

- **Fruits — 1-1/2 to 2-1/2 cups**  
What is the same as 1/2 cup of cut-up fruit? A 2-inch peach or 1/4 cup of dried fruit
- **Vegetables — 2 to 3-1/2 cups**  
What is the same as a cup of cut-up vegetables? Two cups of uncooked leafy vegetable
- **Grains — 5 to 10 ounces**  
What is the same as an ounce of grains? A small muffin, a slice of bread, a cup of flaked, ready-to-eat cereal, or 1/2 cup of cooked rice or pasta
- **Protein foods — 5 to 7 ounces**  
What is the same as an ounce of meat, fish, or poultry? One egg, 1/4 cup of cooked beans or tofu, 1/2 ounce of nuts or seeds, or 1 tablespoon of peanut butter
- **Dairy foods — 3 cups of fat-free or low-fat milk**  
What is the same as 1 cup of milk? One cup of yogurt or 1-1/2 to 2 ounces of cheese. One cup of cottage cheese is the same as 1/2 cup of milk.
- **Oils — 5 to 8 teaspoons**  
What is the same as oil added during cooking? Foods like olives, nuts, and avocado.

*Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

*Hopefully we are at the end of flu season and everyone will be healthy again soon. We are looking forward to more daylight hours and warmer weather. Happy Spring!*

