



# SUPPORT OLDER PERSONS' AWARENESS GO BLUE: 1 - 30 SEPTEMBER



## EATING AS YOU AGE – MAKE EVERY MOUTHFUL COUNT

As you age, your body changes in both appearance and function. Very often the elderly do not give their bodies the food it needs to cope with these changes. This is sometimes due to the high cost of food or because cooking no longer becomes important in one's life, especially when you are cooking for one! As one ages one's appetite often decreases, however many nutrients that one needs, increases. It is therefore very important to make sure you make every mouthful count! There are some common changes that occur as you age, but there are also some things you can do to help cope with these changes:

Changes that occur as one ages	Ways to cope with these changes
The ability to absorb nutrients from one's food diminishes with age.	Make sure you include food sources that are high in vitamin B12 and iron: beef liver, fortified breakfast cereals, tuna, haddock, lean beef, milk, yoghurt, cheese, eggs and chicken. Try to eat fresh raw fruits and vegetables where possible. This will ensure no nutrients are lost during the cooking process.
One doesn't produce as much saliva, therefore food is difficult to swallow.	Make stews and soups or serve food with a low salt gravy.
One's bones become more brittle.	Incorporate dairy products into your diet daily. This could be in the form of milk, maas, cheese or yoghurt. A yoghurt with a probiotic culture offers excellent benefits to the body. Get adequate time outside in the sunshine.
One starts to lose lean muscle (and sometimes gain fat).	Eat protein daily (choose cheaper protein sources such as eggs*, beans, peas, lentils, chickpeas and liver). Do some light strength training exercises weekly. Eat nutrient dense foods. Include "good" fats in your diet. This includes fatty fish (such as pilchards or salmon), olive and canola oil, avocado, nuts and seeds.
One loses one's appetite and can get full quickly. One's thirst mechanism is also blunted so one doesn't feel as thirsty.	Try and not eat meals alone – eating with someone can make mealtimes more appealing. Make it a habit to drink 6-8 glasses of water per day and limit tea and coffee intake to 2 cups per day.
Constipation may be a problem	Fibre, fluid and exercise are all essential to help our bodies keep "regular". You should try to include fibre sources in your diet daily and participate in light exercise daily. Tips to increase your fibre intake include: eating at least one fruit daily (stewed prunes can be added to your breakfast cereal), eating vegetables at lunch and supper, including beans/lentils/split peas in your stews or soups.

\*Healthy individuals can eat eggs daily

By making changes to your diet and your approach to eating you will benefit in numerous ways. These changes will help:

- Improve your mental acuteness
- Help manage the symptoms of certain illnesses
- Build resistance to illness and disease
- Give you higher energy levels
- Help boost your immune system



- Aid you in faster recuperation times when you are sick
- Help you manage chronic health problems (many common diseases are a result of an unhealthy diet)

#### Eating on a budget while still meeting nutritional requirements

- Planning ahead is very important (write out a weekly menu/look for specials in the newspaper)
- Shop for fruits and vegetables that are in season
- Make a shopping list (and stick to it!)
- Look for generic brands
- Have left overs:
- Try making leftovers into another meal the next day (e.g. Roast chicken can be used in a pasta dish or on sandwiches)
- Buy food in bulk
- Limit drinks e.g.: fizzy drinks. Rather drink water – it is free!
- Save on protein foods (include alternative protein sources such as beans, lentils, chickpeas, peanut butter, nuts, soya). An example is to add beans or split peas to your stews or add lentils to your mince so that it is extended).
- When making food in bulk, freeze small meals for another day. Mince, stews, soups and rice all freeze very well
- Think frozen (frozen vegetables are as nutritious as fresh vegetables)
- You can keep leftovers for 3-5 days, but make sure you refrigerate them within 2 hours after serving

Lindsay Hayward  
Dietician, Capitol Caterers