

# Older Adults Dietary Guidelines for Americans Tip Sheet

For lifelong good health, make every bite count with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans

The [Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs)](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/resources/about-process) are created by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services to provide nutritional guidelines for the general population. The DGAs are used by federal food, nutrition, and health policies and programs to help the population consume a healthy and nutritionally adequate diet. Under the Older Americans Act, all Senior Nutrition Programs (SNPs) are required to ensure meals and menus meet the DGAs and Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs). This tip sheet reviews the DGA’s main goals, SNP menu considerations, and nutrients of concern in the older population.

Older Adults have a Healthy Eating Index Score of 63, which is the highest compared to all other life stages!

## Guidelines

1. Follow a healthy dietary pattern at every life stage.
2. Customize and enjoy nutrient-dense food and beverage choices to reflect personal preferences, cultural traditions, and budgetary considerations.
3. Focus on meeting food group needs with nutrient-dense foods and beverages and stay within calorie limits.
4. Limit foods and beverages higher in added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium, and limit alcoholic beverages.

## Dietary Principles

* Meet nutritional needs primarily from foods and beverages.
* Choose a variety of options from each food group.
* Pay attention to portion size.

## SNP Menu Considerations

* Ensure that all meals served using OAA funds comply with the following requirements:
  + Adhere to the current DGAs.
  + Provide a minimum of one-third of the DRIs.
  + Meet state and local food safety and sanitation requirements.
  + Are appealing to older adults.
* Solicit advice and expertise from your consumers through surveys, menu councils, etc.
* Consider cultural and ethnic food diversity when planning menus.
* Make sure that meals contain variety in the areas of color, texture, and food choice.

## Nutrients of Concern for all Populations

The 2020-2025 DGAs indicate that most Americans under-consume calcium, potassium, dietary fiber, and vitamin D in their diet. These nutrients are essential for the body to function properly, and underconsumption can lead to adverse health effects, such as osteoporosis, fatigue, and heart disease. Use the tip sheets below to learn more about these under-consumed nutrients:

## Older Adults Special Considerations

The 2020-2025 DGAs include special dietary considerations for older adults that include underconsumption of protein, vitamin B-12, and fluids, which can lead to muscle loss, anemia, and dehydration. Overconsumption of alcohol is also a special consideration since it can lead to an increased risk of falls and other adverse health effects. Use the tip sheets below to learn more about the special nutrient considerations:

## Government Resources

[ACL Nutrition Services and OAA Requirements](https://acl.gov/programs/health-wellness/nutrition-services)

[DGA Development Process](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/resources/about-process) (USDA)

[Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/sites/default/files/2020-12/Dietary_Guidelines_for_Americans_2020-2025.pdf)

[FoodData Central](https://fdc.nal.usda.gov/) (USDA)

[MyPlate.gov](https://www.myplate.gov/) (UDSA)

[Nutrition.gov](https://www.nutrition.gov/) (USDA)

[Protein Tip Sheet](https://acl.gov/senior-nutrition/DGAtoolkit) (NRCNA)

[Using the Nutrition Facts Label: For Older Adults](https://www.fda.gov/food/new-nutrition-facts-label/using-nutrition-facts-label-older-adults) (FDA)

[Vitamin D and Vitamin B-12 Tip Sheet](https://acl.gov/senior-nutrition/DGAtoolkit) (NRCNA)

[Calcium and Potassium Tip Sheet](https://acl.gov/senior-nutrition/DGAtoolkit) (NRCNA)

### MyPlate App



* Share and download the MyPlate app to help participants improve their health and well-being over time
* The app provides
  + Goal setting
  + Real-time progress
  + Badges and challenges
  + Tips for implementing nutrient goals
  + Recipes

[*Learn more at myplate.gov*](https://www.myplate.gov/resources/tools/startsimple-myplate-app)

## Older Adults Dietary Guidelines

*Adults Ages 51 and Older*

| **Macronutrients** | **Female 51 and Older** | **Male 51 and Older** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Calorie level assessed** | 1,600 | 2,000 |
| **Protein (% kcal)** | 10-35 | 10-35 |
| **Protein (g)** | 46 | 56 |
| **Carbohydrate (g)** | 130 | 130 |
| **Fiber (g)** | 22 | 28 |
| **Added sugars (% kcal)** | <10 | <10 |
| **Total lipid (% kcal)** | 20-35 | 20-35 |
| **Saturated fatty acids (% kcal)** | <10 | <10 |

| **Minerals** | **Female 51 and Older** | **Male 51 and Older** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Calcium (mg)** | 1,200\* | 1,000 \* |
| **Iron (mg)** | 8 | 8 |
| **Magnesium (mg)** | 320 | 420 |
| **Phosphorus (mg)** | 700 | 700 |
| **Potassium (mg)** | 2,600 | 3,400 |
| **Sodium (mg)** | 2,300 | 2,300 |
| **Zinc (mg)** | 8 | 11 |

| **Vitamins** | **Female 51 and Older** | **Male 51 and Older** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Vitamin A (mcg RAE)** | 700 | 900 |
| **Vitamin E (mg AT)** | 15 | 15 |
| **Vitamin D (IU)** | 600 \* | 600 \* |
| **Vitamin C (mg)** | 75 | 90 |
| **Thiamin (mg)** | 1.1 | 1.2 |
| **Riboflavin (mg)** | 1.1 | 1.3 |
| **Niacin (mg)** | 14 | 16 |
| **Vitamin B-6 (mg)** | 1.5 | 1.7 |
| **Vitamin B-12 (mcg)** | 2.4 | 2.4 |
| **Choline (mg)** | 425 | 550 |
| **Vitamin K (mcg)** | 90 | 120 |
| **Folate (mcg DFE)** | 400 | 400 |

*Adapted from 2020-2025 DGAs Daily Nutritional Goals, Ages 2 and Older (Table A1-2)*

\*Calcium DRI for males ages 71+ years is 1,200 mg

\*Vitamin D DRI for males and females ages 71+ years is 800 IU

*Disclaimer: All resources provided are from government websites or have been gathered from the National Agricultural Library.*