

# NUTRITION NEWS

## Choosing Healthy Meals as You Age



Building health-focused and nourishing meals can become a daunting task as you age. With appetite or taste bud changes, decreasing calorie needs, and other physical or lifestyle changes can make meal planning difficult. Here are a few tips for choosing foods and creating meals to help you feel your best as you age.

First, prioritize protein and fiber with each meal. Protein is essential for muscle maintenance, proper physical function, and overall health and wellness. Fiber helps support digestion, reduces risk of heart disease, irregular blood sugar levels, and helps reduce inflammation in the body. Instead of thinking about fiber as simply fruits and vegetables, try thinking of it as "color." Challenge yourself to see how many different "colors" you can eat in a day. Aim for 3-5 different colors with each meal. This helps make fruit and vegetable intake a bit more enjoyable and you might even surprise yourself with the variety of fruits and vegetables you actually eat in a day!

Next, utilize convenience items to create appetizing, balanced meals without all the hassle. Things like overnight oats, hard boiled eggs, individual cups of greek yogurt, granola, protein smoothies or shakes, rotisserie chicken, canned tuna or salmon, pre-made salad kits, pre-chopped, frozen, or canned veggies and fruits are all great ways to create meals that not only nourish your body, but also keep you full for longer.

Lastly, be a smart shopper. Try to avoid ultra processed foods which are typically higher in fat, sodium, and added sugars. Check the food labels to ensure you're picking foods that align with your health goals and promote a healthy lifestyle. If finances are a concern, try to shop seasonally as these foods are often on sale due to surplus. If getting to a grocery store is difficult, consider meal delivery services. Most grocery stores now provide this service either for free or a small fee. This could be an excellent way to ensure you are getting the proper nutrition you need without needing to risk going to the grocery store yourself.

For any further questions, please contact your primary care provider or reach out to your COA dietitian, Vanessa.

Written By: Vanessa Hasslinger, MS, RDN  
Sources: Administration for Community Living, National Council on Aging