

# Healthy Eating Key Messages

## **Key Message:**

Eat regular, healthy meals.

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## **Why is the message important?**

Many older adults find eating healthy regular meals a difficult task. The reasons for poor eating are varied and extensive. Some people don't have funds for proper meals, some don't know how to cook for one person, and some are not sure what they should or should not be eating. Proper nutrition is vital for good health and we must remind people to consistently eat well.

## **Details of the message:**

- Eat a minimum of 3 balanced meals per day.
- Eat 7 servings of fruit and vegetables per day.
- Eat your fruit don't drink it.
- Follow Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide.

## **Examples of how to support the message:**

- Change the type of snacks that are offered at activities and at your own workplace to create a culture of healthy eating.
- Provide fruits and vegetables at activities in place of cookies or donuts.
- Hand out/distribute/display the Canada's food guide.
- Put up a display or poster than indicate what healthy serving sizes are.
- Host a meal planning and shopping workshop to help people plan meals for each week.

## **Key Message:**

Take Calcium and Vitamin D

## **Why is the message important?**

Research indicates that older adults are not getting enough calcium and Vitamin D.

## **Details of the message:**

- Research is indicating that a vitamin D supplement and calcium are important in a healthy diet and many Canadians are not receiving the daily recommended dosage for their age group that is important for bone health and the prevention and treatment of Osteoporosis.
- These 2 supplements provide many benefits to older adults.

- It is important to recommend talking to their doctor to ensure proper amounts of supplements for individuals.
- Inadequate or too much may cause more harm than good.

**Examples of how to support the message:**

- Encourage people to talk with their doctor about all their medications and vitamins as they could have an impact on their effectiveness.
- Try having calcium & vitamin D enriched foods such as milk, salmon, broccoli, and rice as samples at an activity.
- Consider a dairy tasting event like soy milk, goats' milk and Paneer.
- Promote small sunshine breaks. (remember your sunscreen)
- Consider asking a pharmacist to come talk to your group about supplements.
- Provide Eat Right Ontario promotional items, such as a fridge magnet or bookmark to encourage people to call with their specific dietary questions with free access to a registered dietitian.

**Key Message:**

Drink plenty of water.

**Why is the message important?**

Many older adults are in a constant state of dehydration. In a dehydrated state illness becomes much more serious and overall good health is compromised. Dehydration can also cause dizziness, headache, and can increase risk of hospitalization for flu and other chronic disease.

**Details of the message:**

- Drink 6 to 8 glasses of water per day. Try to drink water during the day.
- Drink more water during hot humid days.
- Drink water before, during and after being physically active.
- Avoid sugary drinks such as pop, juice, and adding sugar to coffee or tea.
- Some older adults don't want to drink a lot for fear of incontinence.
- Tap water is tested for safety more often than bottled water.

**Examples of how to support the message:**

- Suggest participants keep a designated water container to help track the amount of water they drink each day.
- Consider putting jugs of water and glasses on tables during events/activities/meetings.
- Consider making a routine that activity leaders remind participants to bring water to class and drink before, during and after exercise.

**Key Message:**  
Food Security.

**Why is the message important?**

Older adults may not want to waste food or live on a very tight budget and may keep food well beyond the expiry date on the label. This food can become contaminated with bacteria and cause illness. Preparing raw meats require certain processes to ensure contamination or cross contamination of bacteria is kept to a minimum. Some bacteria can exist in uncooked food or can develop if food is not stored at the correct temperature. It is important to know the proper storage, preparation and cooking for all food types.

**Details of the message:**

- As the body ages it becomes harder for the immune system to fight harmful bacteria making food borne illness more serious.
- Chronic diseases such as Diabetes and Kidney disease can make fighting off infections more difficult.
- Follow safe food-handling and cooking practices to reduce risk of illness.
- Pay attention to expiry dates.
- Wash re-usable grocery bags.

**Examples of how to support the message:**

- a. Post proper hand washing and surface cleaning techniques in washrooms and above all sinks.
- b. Ask Peel Health to present information on food security.
- c. Ask a community food advisor to come to a program.
- d. Learn about food borne illness and high risk foods.
- e. Display information on food storage, food preparation and cooking.

**Key Message:**

Watch for sudden weight fluctuations.

**Why is the message important?**

A sudden increase/decrease in weight could be a sign of a number of health concerns. For example, depression, medication side effects, or immobility. It is an indication that a visit to the doctor may be required.

**Details of the message:**

- Promote healthy body images. Rather than focusing on size of an individual talk about energy in (food intake) and energy out (physical activity) and balancing energy levels.
- Promote that sudden weight changes can indicate health issues and should be investigated by a physician.

**Examples of how to support the message:**

- Post information about why sudden weight changes could occur.

- Learn who in your organization is best suited to discuss sensitive personal issues and how to talk about weight changes within your organization.

**Key Message:**

There is a strong social component to eating.

**Why is the message important?**

Sharing meals with others is integral to good physical, mental and spiritual health.

**Details of the message:**

- Eating with others is important for good nutrition maintaining mental health and reducing social isolation.
- Sharing meals can address a number of areas such as loneliness lack of appetite, eating well balanced meals etc.
- Eating with someone else eliminates the challenges of cooking a full meal for one.

**Examples of how to support the message:**

- Ask if participants could meet earlier or after the activity to share a meal.
- Encourage anyone who has lost an appetite for more than a day or two to talk with their doctor.
- Promote Take over Tuesdays. Take your meal or a portion of a meal to a friend's house and eat together.
- Plan events around a well balanced meal. (ie. Pot luck meal before an evening or lunch event)
- Try a multicultural food tasting event.

**Key Message:**

Modify diet for chronic disease and chronic disease prevention.

**Why is the message important?**

Eating healthy meals with modifications for chronic diseases can assist in the management and prevention of chronic disease. Some individuals feel that medication will "solve" the health concerns they are dealing with. However healthy eating can impact over all health almost as much as medications.

**Details of the message:**

- Research indicates that diet has a significant impact on the prevention and management of chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and mental health.

- It is important that people living with chronic disease or at risk for chronic disease are aware of the importance of following recommend food choices as an effective way to prevent or manage a chronic disease.
- Remind people that taking a medication is only part of disease management and it is important to follow the recommended food changes/modifications as prescribed by their doctor or a registered dietitian.

**Examples of how to support the message:**

- Review the health promotion calendar for designated months such as Nutrition month in March, February is Heart month, April is Cancer etc. This is an opportunity to display nutritional information that affects these diseases.
- Learn some food changes for various diseases and identify items that are healthier choices. For example low fat milk, a low sodium diet, reduced sugar intake, and increased fibre.
- Get more information on pre-prepared meals for your health conditions such as Meals on Wheels and other companies such as Copper County Foods.
- If you are having meals catered ask for diabetic friendly or heart friendly menus.
- Encourage small changes over time. Such as changing a double double coffee to a black coffee will reduce daily calories considerably, exchanging fruit juice for water and eating the fruit will reduce calories and provide more overall benefits.