
Guideline 9:

Smart Choices for Seniors: Eat Well, Read Right

Graceful Aging Begins on the Plate

◊ Why It's Vital

As people age, metabolic rate slows and nutrient absorption declines. This makes smart food choices essential to maintain immunity, bone health, and energy levels.

◊ Must-Have Nutrients

- Calcium and Vitamin D: Reduce risk of osteoporosis
- Protein: Maintains muscle tone and tissue repair
- Fiber: Aids digestion and lowers cholesterol
- Omega-3 fats: Supports brain and heart health
- Vitamin B12 and Iron: Prevent fatigue and anemia

◊ Practical Eating Tips

- Cook soft-textured meals with appealing aromas and flavors
- Include antioxidant-rich foods like turmeric, berries, spinach
- Avoid skipping meals; schedule light dinners and nourishing breakfasts
- Use herbs and spices to flavor meals instead of excess salt

Build a Senior-Friendly Plate

◊ Balanced Meal Components

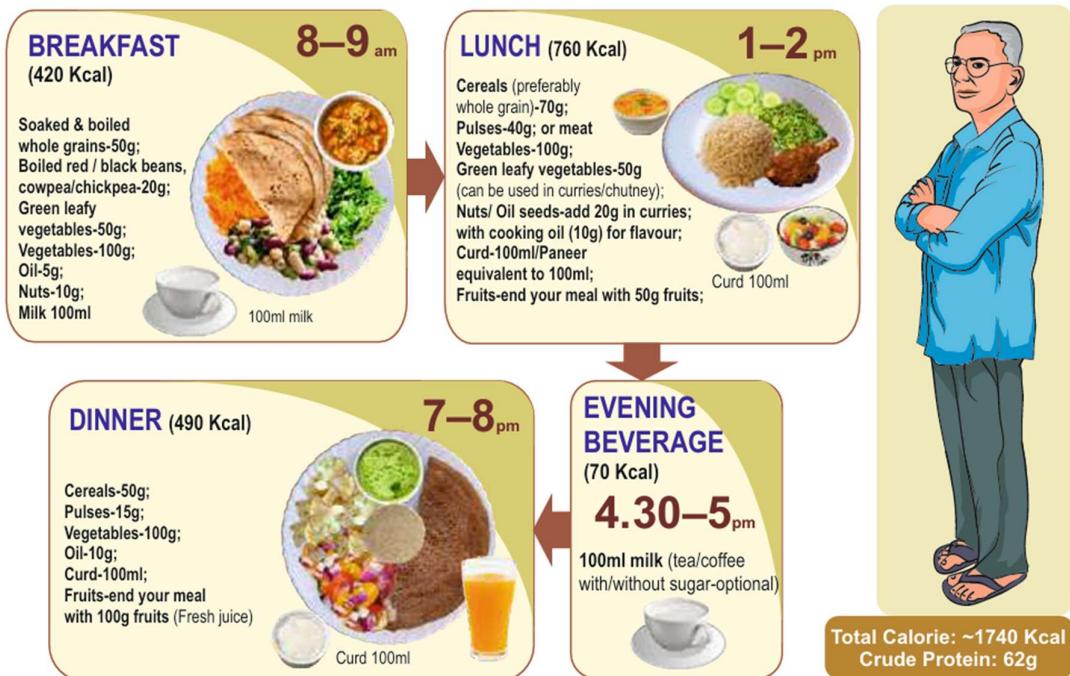
Food Group	Sample Items	Health Benefits
Dairy	Curd, milk, paneer	Supports bone health
Pulses & Legumes	Moong, chana, soy	Protein and fiber source
Fruits & Veggies	Banana, papaya, spinach, beetroot	Essential vitamins and fiber
Whole Grains	Ragi, oats, brown rice	Energy and digestive support
Healthy Fats	Groundnut oil, sesame seeds	Supports heart and brain

❖ Tips for Senior-Friendly Meals

- Steam, mash, or puree vegetables for ease of chewing
- Keep sodium in check—opt for natural seasoning
- Combine grains and pulses for complete protein
- Include small snacks to avoid long fasting gaps



Suggested diet for normally nourished elderly women



Suggested diet for normally nourished elderly men

Crack the Code—Understanding Food Labels

◇ Why Label Awareness Matters

Older adults are more sensitive to excess sodium, hidden sugars, and additives that sneak into processed foods. Reading labels helps protect health and avoid misleading claims.

◇ What to Focus On

- Serving size: Watch out for misleading portion counts
- Nutrient table: Choose foods with lower sodium and no trans fats
- Ingredients list: Shorter and more recognizable items are better
- Common traps: "Low-fat" often means added sugars, and "natural" isn't always healthy

◇ Simple Label Reading Tips

- First three listed ingredients show the bulk of the product
- Beware of unfamiliar additives, artificial sweeteners, and preservatives
- Scan labels for terms like "partially hydrogenated oils" and "E-numbers"

Smart Swaps and Grocery Wisdom

❖ Packaged Food Replacements

Common Product	Healthier Alternative	Benefit
Instant noodles	Millet khichdi or poha	Lower sodium, better nutrients
Flavored yogurt	Plain curd with fresh fruits	No additives, full control
Biscuits	Roasted makhana or mixed nuts	Rich in fiber and healthy fat
Packaged soup	Homemade vegetable broth	Lower salt, immune-friendly
Cereal bars	Jaggery with seeds or chana	Energy minus added sugar

❖ Grocery Tips

- Read ingredient count—prefer less than five
- Choose products with whole food items listed first
- Avoid bright packaging and buzzwords like “diet” or “fit” without checking content

Daily Nutrition Tracker and Label Checklist

❖ Quick Reference Table

Action	Daily Target	Helpful Tip
Protein intake	2–3 servings	Add pulses, dairy, nuts
Calcium-rich foods	1–2 servings	Include milk, curd, ragi
Hydration	6–8 glasses	Include herbal teas and soups
Packaged food check	Each item before buying	Look for sodium and sugar levels
Whole food snacking	Prefer unprocessed items	Keep fruit and seeds ready