

Healthy eating



People aged 70 years and over are at greater risk of more serious illness if they are infected with COVID-19. And they are likely to have to self-isolate for longer than younger age groups. For this reason the team at NARI, with input from our research volunteers, has developed a series of tip sheets. This one is about healthy eating.

It is important to follow the [Government's recommendations](#) to minimise spread of the COVID-19 virus, and to care for yourself and your loved ones. **However, there are also things you can do to make sure you are eating well.**

Why eating well is important

- Eating nutritious well-balanced meals can help fight infection and manage chronic illness.
- A balanced diet filled with a variety of nutritious foods can boost your energy levels and help you maintain a healthy weight.
- Maintaining proper nutrition and hydration, eating regular meals and keeping up physical activity, can increase your strength and help fight infection.
- As we get older, it's important to maintain weight, and muscle and bone health, so your need for nutrients such as calcium increases.

"Trying new recipes has been fun."

- Tina

Nutrients for healthy eating

The following table summarises some of the most important nutrients for inclusion in healthy meals for older people.

NUTRIENT	EXAMPLES OF GOOD SOURCES	RECOMMENDATIONS
Protein		
✓ Maintains energy, strength and muscle mass	✓ Meat, poultry, eggs, and seafood (canned or fresh) ✓ Cheese, fresh and long life milk, milk powder, yoghurt, and custard ✓ Legumes (e.g. tinned or dried beans, chickpeas, lentils) and tofu ✓ Nuts and seeds (whole or as pastes/butters)	Try to incorporate at least one of these at each meal and snack to help ensure you are getting enough protein.

NUTRIENT	EXAMPLES OF GOOD SOURCES	RECOMMENDATIONS
Calcium		
✓ Maintains bone health ✓ Reduces risk of fractures	✓ Dairy products (cheese, fresh and long life milk, milk powder, yoghurt, custard, ice cream) ✓ Soy milk and other dairy alternatives that contain added calcium ✓ Almonds with skin on ✓ Sardines and salmon with bones (tinned or fresh)	Try to eat 3-5 serves of calcium-containing foods per day . Examples of one serve include: 250ml milk or fortified non-dairy drink, 2 slices of cheese, 200g yoghurt or custard, 2/3 cup almonds, 60g sardines, 1/2 cup salmon
Fibre		
✓ Maintains gut health ✓ Regulates bowel movements	✓ Wholemeal and wholegrain bread, pasta, rice, biscuits, crackers, and flours ✓ Cereal that contains wheat, barley or oats, with or without dried fruits and nuts ✓ Fruits and vegetables, raw and cooked (especially with skin on), dried and tinned fruits, and fruit juice with pulp, are also good sources ✓ Legumes (e.g. tinned or dried beans, chickpeas, lentils), nuts and seeds	Try to include one or more of these foods at each meal and snack every day. When eating a high fibre diet, drinking enough fluids (see below) is also essential to prevent constipation.
Fluids		
✓ Essential for almost all bodily functions	✓ Water is the best option, but other drinks like juice, milk and cordial also count as fluids ✓ Since they contain caffeine, coffee and some teas are less hydrating and should be consumed in moderation.	Aim for 2 litres (8 cups) for females and 2.5 litres (10 cups) for males each day. Keeping a water bottle or water jug on hand may be helpful to track your intake.



More information

Australian Government Department of Health

- Latest coronavirus (COVID-19) health updates <https://bit.ly/3bXFSb6>
- Collection of COVID-19 resources, including translated resources. <https://bit.ly/380OwHe>
- Tip sheet: Coronavirus advice for older people <https://bit.ly/3aMvsLp>

National Coronavirus Health Information Line

Call **1800 020 080** if you are seeking information on novel coronavirus. The line operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you require translating or interpreting services, call 131 450.

Advice for Carers

Carers Australia: Visit carersaustralia.com.au for a range of information for carers.

Call **1800 242 636** for short-term counselling support services for carers and their families.