



**Let's Move**  
by UnitedHealthcare®



## Nutrition 101 for longevity and vitality

Research<sup>1</sup> tells us that people who focus on eating wholesome, unprocessed foods may experience fewer chronic health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer. The main causes<sup>2</sup> of chronic illnesses are often poor eating, inactive lifestyle and stress.

Fueling wisely helps you meet your nutritional needs, prevent disease, and support your overall health in ways including:

- Brain health
- Heart health
- Digestive function
- Bone and muscle strength
- Injury and illness prevention
- Improved mental outlook and well-being

Aging may impact your eating habits. You may need to eat less due to a slower metabolism or being less active, but it's still important to get enough nutrients. Individual nutrient needs vary and may change over time based on factors such as age, activity level, body composition and health conditions.

Food is the body's fuel. Nutrients in foods are needed so the body can function properly. The 5 classes of nutrients are carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins and minerals. Water is also vital for the brain and body to function well.



### Fuel wisely for aging well:

Get a variety and balance of nutrients by including these foods in your meals and snacks:

- Colorful vegetables and fruits
- Fiber-rich whole grains: wild rice, brown rice, quinoa, oats
- Lean proteins: fish, turkey, chicken, lean meats, tofu, beans, lentils
- Favorable fats: nuts, seeds, avocado, olive oil

**Be mindful** of foods (and drinks) that have added sugars (sweeteners) and saturated fats. If you consume alcohol, practice moderation.

**Hydrate for health:** Ensure you get enough fluids. Aging can affect your sense of thirst. And some medications increase your need for hydration. Water, seltzer and herbal tea are great ways to stay well hydrated.

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# Discovering longevity hotspots: Insights from the blue zones

Several blue zones have been identified by National Geographic explorer Dan Buettner and his research teams. They've discovered regions of the world where people live much longer than average, including more centenarians (those living 100+ years). The blue zones are Okinawa, Japan; Sardinia, Italy; Nicoya, Costa Rica; Ikaria Greece; and Loma Linda, California. In 2023 Singapore was added as a longevity hotspot.

People in the blue zones have several things in common: strong social networks, natural physical activity in their daily lives, a primarily plant-based diet and moderation in eating. Blue zones food guidelines include 95–100% plant-based foods — especially daily servings of leafy greens and other vegetables and beans; nuts as snacks; fish a few times a week; and meat as a treat.

## Tips for adding nutritious foods into your eating routine

- Maintain a regular eating schedule. Start your day with an energizing morning meal that includes protein, enjoy a well-balanced midday meal and consider having your lightest meal of the day in the evening. Include healthy snacks as needed throughout the day to help meet your nutritional needs.
- Prepare a few meals on the weekend, such as one-pot meals or vegetable-based soups, that you can have for meals during the week.
- Liven up the flavor of your meals with herbs and spices.
- Socialize. Eating with others is shown to support healthier eating habits and make eating more pleasurable. Cook with family. Organize a potluck with friends or neighbors.
- Need help with food shopping? Consider using a grocery delivery service.
- If you have any trouble swallowing, chewing, tasting or smelling your food, check with your health care provider. A dental problem, health condition or medication could be a cause.

## Additional resources

MyPlate for Older Adults: <https://www.myplate.gov/tip-sheet/healthy-eating-older-adults>

Blue Zones Food Guidelines: [https://www.bluezones.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/BZL\\_Food-Guidelines-Printable\\_02.pdf](https://www.bluezones.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/BZL_Food-Guidelines-Printable_02.pdf)

“The Blue Zones Secrets for Living Longer: Lessons From the Healthiest Places on Earth” by Dan Buettner

<sup>1</sup><https://medlineplus.gov/nutritionforolderadults.html>

<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/weight-management/healthy-eating-physical-activity-for-life/health-tips-for-older-adults?dkrd=/health-information/weight-management/health-tips-older-adults>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9304814/>

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