



## PROPER NUTRITION FOR OLDER ADULTS

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*Learn pragmatic tips from expert dietitian Eliza Leone Jones, MS, RD, LDN, for healthy aging and disease and chronic illness prevention*

We benefit today from nutritional knowledge and an abundance of resources that our predecessors never imagined was possible. Trusting intuition versus social media influencer marketing and identifying proper nutritional needs for our loved ones can be overwhelming.

Nutrition is at the core of disease and chronic illness prevention, prolonging one's life post-diagnosis, and overall wellbeing. Recognizing nutritional needs, then, is crucial.

"It's never too late to make lasting improvements to your diet," said Eliza Leone Jones, MS, RD, LDN, Senior Wellness Coordinator for Restaurant Associates at Harvard Medical School.

"Reducing sodium and increasing potassium to manage blood pressure, increasing fiber intake to manage blood glucose, or replacing saturated with unsaturated fats for improved cholesterol are all important adjustments that will make a difference, regardless of age."

It is both inspiring and relieving that no diet is irredeemable, irrespective of the time in one's life they seek to make changes. Jones, a registered dietitian, has recommendations for older adults seeking to combat age-related muscle and weight loss.

"Nutrient-dense foods, while important at any age, are essential for the older adult," she said. "Lower in energy and higher in other essential nutrients such as protein, unsaturated fats, and vitamins and minerals, nutrient-dense foods are the key to preventing age-related muscle loss and unintentional weight loss."

Indeed, research is ongoing as physical frailty and age-related muscle loss may precede falls, hospitalization, and mortality. Finding a comfortable exercise routine combined with proper nutrition can aid older adults greatly.

"Sarcopenia—age-related muscle loss—has several causes, including inadequate energy and protein intake," Jones explained. "While older adults tend to require less energy intake due to a slower metabolism, it is essential to continue to focus on energy and protein intake to allow ourselves and our loved ones to maintain independence into the later years."

Independence and autonomy in one's life is often taken for granted until it's no longer possible. There are, however, changes to recognize as possible precursors to age-related weight loss.

"Maintaining a stable weight is important for older adults," Jones said. "Weight gain can lead to difficulty mobilizing, and unintentional weight loss can actually do the same. Paying attention to how one's clothes are fitting is the easiest way to recognize weight changes."

*Did you know that in May, NCECE hosted a webinar on food insecurity among older adults? **Visit the NCECE website** to view the presentation slides and a recording of the webinar!*