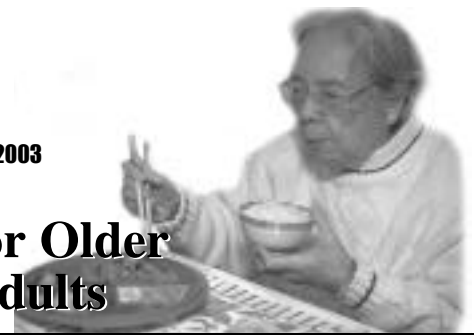


# Active Living Tips for Older Adults



Practical, leading edge research results applied to physical activity for older adults, in plain language for health practitioners and leaders.  
 Sponsored by the Active Living Coalition for Older Adults (ALCOA).

## Healthy Eating and Regular Physical Activity: A Winning Combination for Older Adults

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**O**ur bodies and lives change, as we grow older. Some of these changes can lead to chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease, and some kinds of cancer. People sometimes assume these conditions are a natural part of growing older, but research tells us that these chronic diseases might occur because we are not active enough or are not eating a healthy diet. Eating a healthy diet and staying active are two important ways to improve our health and quality of life. In combination, they slow down the progress of diabetes, heart diseases and some cancers.

### What is healthy eating?

As we get older we need fewer calories but the need for other nutrients remains the same or even increases in some cases. This makes meal planning important. We must remember to:

\* Eat foods from each of the four different food groups (milk products, grain products, vegetables and fruits, meat and alternatives) and eat a variety of foods from within each food group (e.g., different kinds of grain products such as breads, rice, pasta, bagels, etc.) Also, think of variety in terms of the type of food (e.g., fresh, canned, frozen), color, flavor, texture and method of preparation. See Canada's

Food Guide to Healthy Eating for descriptions of the different food groups.

- \* Eat grains, fruits, vegetables, milk products and protein (such as meat, fish, beans, etc.) every day.
- \* Eat lesser amounts of foods that have a lot of sugar, fat and salt in them.

### Some general tips on how you can eat well

- ✓ Enjoy a variety of foods from different food groups (such as grain products, fruits and vegetables) every day.
- ✓ Choose whole grain and enriched products more often.
- ✓ Choose lower-fat foods (e.g., more fruits and vegetables since these are generally low in fat).
- ✓ Choose dark green and orange vegetables and orange fruit.
- ✓ Choose lower-fat milk products.
- ✓ Choose leaner meats, poultry and fish.
- ✓ Choose dried peas, beans and lentils.
- ✓ Eat lesser quantities of non-nutritious foods and beverages.

To obtain more information on eating well, order a free copy of **Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating** by either calling 613-954-5995 or by visiting the website at [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/nutrition](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/nutrition).

## What is active living?

Active living includes activities such as walking, yoga, dancing, gardening, housework, getting out to visit others and so on. Physical activity is an important part of active living.

Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Older Adults recommends that generally an older adult should be physically active for 30 to 60 minutes every day and should try to do activities that improve endurance, strength, balance, and flexibility.

### Some general tips on how you can keep active and healthy

- ✔ Be active, in a way that suits you, on a regular basis.
- ✔ Take part in activities that increase endurance four to seven days a week. These activities could include walking, swimming, dancing, aerobics, bicycling, cross-country skiing, etc.
- ✔ Increase flexibility activities every day. These could include stretching, reaching and bending, bowling, Yoga, Tai Chi, etc.
- ✔ Take part in activities that increase strength and balance two to four days a week. These could include lifting weights or household items such as laundry or groceries, climbing stairs, wall push-ups, etc.

More information about physical activity can be obtained by ordering a free copy of Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Older Adults. To order call 1-888-344-9769 or visit the website at [www.paguide.com](http://www.paguide.com).

## How do diet and exercise affect bones and muscles?

As we get older we lose bone strength and muscle mass. Here are some ways to keep bones and muscles strong:

- \* Eat enough protein
- \* Include calcium and vitamin D in your diet
- \* Do weight-bearing activities like walking or lifting

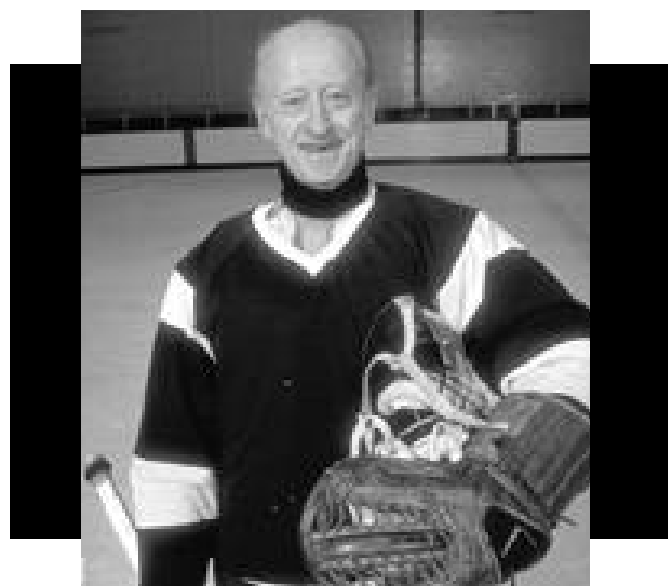
- \* Do exercises that help build muscles

For more information on some of these topics and for other useful information, visit the following sites:

- Active Living Coalition for Older Adults: [www.alcoa.ca](http://www.alcoa.ca)
- Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating: [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/nutrition](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/nutrition)
- Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Older Adults: [www.paguide.com](http://www.paguide.com)
- Canadian Health Network: [www.canadianhealthnetwork.org](http://www.canadianhealthnetwork.org)
- Canadian Centre for Activity and Aging: [www.uwo.ca/actage](http://www.uwo.ca/actage)
- Osteoporosis Society of Canada: [www.osteoporosis.ca](http://www.osteoporosis.ca)
- Dietitians of Canada: [www.dietitians.ca](http://www.dietitians.ca)

If you are an older adult who is planning to start a physical activity program or you are thinking of making changes to your present level of physical activity, it is important to get the proper advice. To increase the benefits of physical activity you should discuss your particular situation, and also any concerns you may have (such as the risk of injury, etc.), with a qualified health practitioner or your doctor.

For advice on diet and nutrition, please consult a registered dietitian.



*Health practitioners, leaders and others please post, copy and distribute this article to older adults.*

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