



A NUTRITION MODULE:

NUTRITION FOR THE ELDERLY



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NUTRITION FOR THE ELDERLY

We hope you enjoy this inservice, prepared by registered nurses especially for caregivers like you!

Instructions for the Learner

If you are studying the inservice on your own, please do the following:

- Read through **all** the material. You may find it useful to have a highlighting marker nearby as you read. Highlight any information that is new to you or that you feel is especially important.
- If you have questions about anything you read, please ask your supervisor.
- Take the quiz. Think about each statement and pick the best answer.
- Check with your supervisor for the right answers. You need **8 correct** to pass!
- Print your name, write in the date, and then sign your name.
- Email In the Know at feedback@knowingmore.com with your comments and/or suggestions for improving this inservice.

THANK YOU!

After finishing this inservice, you will be able to:

List at least 3 age related changes that impact nutrition in the elderly.



Describe the main nutritional needs outlined in the Modified Pyramid for Older Adults.



List at least three foods that provide special nutrients, such as calcium, vitamin B12, fiber and/or potassium.



Follow a nutritious food plan on a tight budget.



Help your clients choose, prepare and eat nutrient dense foods that meet the nutritional requirements for older adults.



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A Nutrition Module: Nutrition for the Elderly

EATING BETTER TO LIVE LONGER, STRONGER AND SMARTER!

Studies show that many older Americans do not get important nutrients needed to maintain a healthy body.

Poor nutrition may occur in as many as 50 out of every 100 elderly people. The symptoms of poor nutrition include weight loss, confusion, dizziness and lethargy.

It is estimated that 16 percent of seniors consume fewer than 1000 calories a day—which is not enough to maintain adequate nutrition.

One consequence of poor nutrition is *unintentional weight loss*. If a client consumes too few calories to maintain normal body function, the result will be weight loss. If the client is not actively trying to lose weight, it is said to be *unintentional* weight loss.

Unintentional weight loss can lead to muscle wasting, inability to fight off common illness, depression and a higher rate of disease complications.

Eating well, and eating the proper amounts, can make your clients smarter and sharper minded. It can give them more energy, keep them from getting sick, and help them recover more quickly from illness. And, it will help them get control of chronic conditions like diabetes, heart disease and obesity!



Keep reading to learn all about the most important parts of a healthy diet for older adults. Start helping your clients get the calories and nutrients needed to live longer, stronger and smarter!

AGE-RELATED CHANGES THAT IMPACT NUTRITION

As people age, multiple changes occur that can impact the nutritional status of an individual.

MUSCULOSKELETAL CHANGES

- **Muscle Loss:** The loss of lean muscle mass can lead to a loss of strength, functional decline, and poor endurance. This loss also leads to reduced total body water content.
- **Decreased Bone Density:** Another common loss related to aging is changes in bone density, which can increase the risk for osteoporosis.

DIGESTIVE SYSTEM CHANGES

- **Changes in the Mouth:** A decrease in saliva production and problems with teeth can make chewing and swallowing difficult and may lead to changes in food choices.
- **Changes in the Stomach:** There is a decrease in gastric acid secretion that can limit the absorption of iron and vitamin B₁₂.
- **Changes in the Brain:** Messages from the brain that tell the body it is hungry or thirsty may be slow, confused or absent, leading to a feeling of fullness and a lack of feeling of thirst.
- **Constipation:** Slower digestion, and decreased fluid intake can lead to constipation.

SENSORY CHANGES

- **Changes in Vision:** Vision loss makes shopping, preparing food, and even eating more difficult.
- **Changes in Taste:** Loss of taste and smell take away the appeal of many foods and may lead to preparing or consuming food that is no longer safe.

LIFESTYLE AND ILLNESS

- Sedentary lifestyle, social isolation, loneliness, or depression can lead to changes in eating habits.
- Medications can change how food tastes and how it is absorbed.
- Illnesses like Alzheimer's Disease and dementia are other issues that may affect eating habits and food choices.



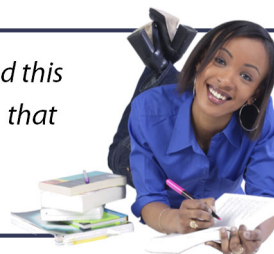
The Facts

NUTRITIONAL STATUS IN THE ELDERLY

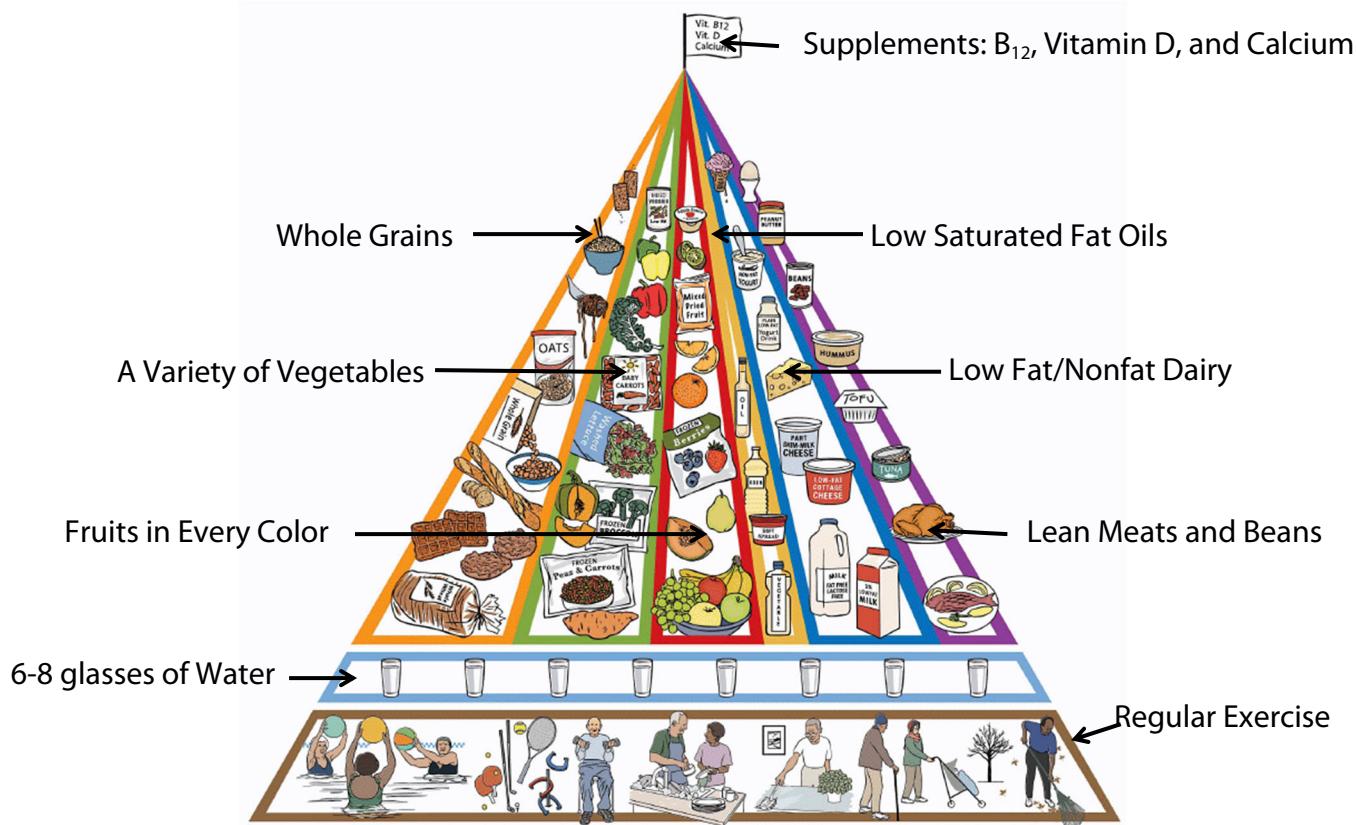
- The USDA lists "poor nutritional status" as a primary concern for the elderly.
- Chronic diseases and poverty are the two main causes of poor nutrition in the elderly.
- Studies show that many older Americans do not get important nutrients needed to maintain a healthy body.
- Low-income elderly are at the greatest risk of getting too few calories, and not enough calcium, magnesium, and zinc.
- In addition, isolation, depression, attitudes, and lifestyles can all affect nutritional status by altering appetite, eating patterns, and energy level.

WHAT'S NEW?

Grab your favorite highlighter! As you read this inservice, **highlight five things** you learn that you didn't know before. Share this new information with your co-workers!



THE MODIFIED FOOD PYRAMID FOR OLDER ADULTS



The Modified Pyramid for older adults addresses the specific needs of the body as it ages. Specifically, nutrient dense, low fat and high fiber foods are recommended.

- **WHOLE GRAINS:** Look for whole, enriched, and fortified grains and cereals such as brown rice and 100% whole wheat bread.
- **VEGETABLES:** Serve brightly colored vegetables such as carrots and broccoli.
- **FRUIT:** Offer deep-colored fruits such as berries and melon.
- **DAIRY:** Low and non-fat dairy products such as yogurt and low-lactose milk are best.
- **PROTEIN:** Prepare dry beans and nuts, fish, poultry, lean meat and eggs.
- **FATS AND OILS:** Use liquid vegetable oils and soft spreads low in saturated and trans fat.
- **FLUIDS:** Aim for 6 to 8 eight ounce glasses per day. Or, take half your client's weight (in pounds) and aim for that many ounces per day. For example, if your client weighs 110 pounds, half that is 55. So, shoot for a minimum of 55 ounces of fluids a day (which is roughly 7 eight ounce glasses).
- **EXERCISE:** Encourage any low impact physical activity the client can comfortably do (with the doctor's or physical therapist's permission).

FOCUS ON CALORIES

The number of calories needed each day depends on the age, gender and activity level of the client.

If your client has an order for a specific amount of calories, follow that order. If there is no calorie goal ordered, then follow these guidelines for adults age 51 and older:

For women who are:

- Sedentary (not active) 1,600 calories per day
- Moderately active 1,800 calories per day
- Active 2,000 calories per day

For men who are:

- Sedentary (not active) 2,000 calories per day
- Moderately active 2,200 to 2,400 calories per day
- Active 2,400 to 2,800 calories per day

Make Calories Count

When choosing or recommending foods for your client, think of foods as nutrient-rich rather than “good” or “bad.”

Look for foods that are packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutrients. Most of these choices will also be lower in calories.

Since most older adults need fewer calories than they did when they were younger, making smart food choices can help them stay healthy, manage weight and even prevent some illnesses.



The Healthy Eating Plan

Over the next few pages you will learn some specific foods and the specific amounts of those foods that can be combined to create a healthy eating plan for older adults.

Keep in mind that a healthy eating plan:

- Focuses on variety and should (when possible) include foods that the client prefers.
- Emphasizes fruit, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat or fat-free milk and milk products.
- Includes lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs and nuts.
- Is low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium) and added sugars.



WHAT EXCITES YOU?

Mealtime is not just for eating . . . it's also for socializing!

Many people find it depressing to eat alone, and lose their appetite. Try to make mealtime enjoyable—even for those clients who have no one to eat with.

A relaxed and positive setting with easy social interaction during meals helps improve nutritional intake and overall health.

- ***Have you considered playing music, inviting friends or family, or having a picnic?***
- ***How do you provide a relaxed and positive atmosphere for mealtimes?***
- ***Find out what your co-workers are doing.***
- ***Share your creative ideas!***



THE NEXT STEP!

BRING BACK THOSE COMFORT FOODS!

It's no secret that family and upbringing shape your relationship with food.

The foods you enjoyed with your family as a child are probably the foods you refer to now as your "comfort foods."

- What are your comfort foods?
- Are they healthy?
- Do you find yourself eating (or over eating) these foods at certain times?
- What are those times?

If your client is suffering from a poor appetite, ask her about "comfort foods."

Think of healthy ways to rework the recipes for your client's "comfort foods."

Make meatloaf with ground turkey instead of beef, or make mac n' cheese with whole wheat pasta and cheese melted in low fat milk.

FOCUS ON WHOLE GRAINS

An older adult on an 1800-2000 calorie a day eating plan should eat about six (6) servings of whole grains each day.

Examples of one serving of whole grains include:

- 1 slice of whole-grain bread
- ½ whole-grain English muffin, bagel, or bun
- 1 ounce of ready to eat whole-grain cereal
- ½ cup of oatmeal, brown rice, or whole-wheat pasta (cooked)
- 5-6 whole-grain crackers
- 3 cups of popped popcorn

Meeting the target of 6 servings of whole grains each day has the potential to prevent or improve symptoms of diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and even constipation.

Some strategies for increasing whole-grain intake include:

- Serve whole-grain breakfast cereals, such as wheat flakes, shredded wheat, and oatmeal. Bran cereals are not actually whole-grain cereals, but their high fiber content also makes them a good breakfast choice.
- Substitute whole-grain breads, rolls, tortillas, and crackers for those made from refined (white) grains.
- Substitute whole-wheat pasta or pasta made from 50% whole wheat and 50% white flour for conventional pastas.
- Substitute brown rice for white rice.
- Add barley to soups and stews.
- When baking, substitute whole-wheat flour for white flour.

EATING WHOLE GRAINS ON A GLUTEN FREE DIET

Gluten is the protein in wheat. Some clients may have an allergy or a sensitivity to gluten.

Here are some gluten free, whole grain options:

- Corn
- Rice
- Potato
- Soy
- Arrowroot
- Millet
- Quinoa
- Teff
- Tapioca



FOCUS ON FRUITS AND VEGGIES

Studies show that eating three or more fruits or vegetables a day helps people maintain a healthy weight, decreases the risk of chronic diseases, and increases energy and brain function. Yet, only 27 percent of all Americans eat three or more fruits or vegetables each day.

That means MOST Americans are NOT eating their fruits and vegetables! Which means MOST Americans are at risk for obesity, heart disease, diabetes, stroke, low energy and poor brain function.

An older adult on an 1800-2000 calorie a day eating plan should eat about:

- 1 ½ cups of fruits, and
- 2 ½ cups of vegetables

Examples of fruits that are packed with beneficial nutrients are:

- Bananas
- Apples
- Cherries
- Peaches
- Pears
- Grapes
- Plums
- Papayas
- Apricots
- Oranges
- Grapefruits
- Cantaloupe, and honeydew melons
- Strawberries
- Blueberries
- Cranberries
- Raspberries
- Blackberries
- 100% fruit juices

Some great vegetable choices include:

- Boiled, baked, or mashed potatoes
- Broccoli
- Spinach
- Collard or mustard greens
- Kale
- Carrots
- Sweet potatoes
- Squash
- Tomatoes
- Tomato juice
- Green beans
- Beets
- Cabbage
- Cauliflower
- Corn
- Eggplant
- Green peas,
- Lettuce
- Bell pepper
- Snow peas
- Brussels sprouts

When choosing fruits and vegetables, fresh is best. If you can't get fresh, then frozen is a better choice than canned.

Some strategies for increasing fruit and vegetable intake include:

- Toss raisins, dried cranberries or bananas into cereal, oatmeal or yogurt.
- Pick one day a week to be “vegetarian day” and get creative with combinations of fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- Serve an egg white veggie omelet with onions and mushrooms for any meal of the day.
- Add chopped bell peppers and zucchini to pasta sauce.



GET OUT!

THINK OUTSIDE OF THE BOX!

Working with clients in the home often requires coming up with creative solutions to uncommon problems.

- **THE PROBLEM:** You are caring for James, a 73 year old man who suffers from high blood pressure and kidney disease.
- He is on a special diet that includes eating fresh fruits and vegetables and restricting salt. However, James refuses fresh fruits because they make him too “gassy” and he adds salt to all his meals.
- **WHAT YOU KNOW:** You know that fruits and vegetables are important to maintain health and that the salt can be very dangerous for James.
- **GET CREATIVE:** What will you do? Think of three creative solutions to this problem.
- **TALK ABOUT IT:** Share your ideas with your co-workers and supervisor and find out how they would solve this problem.



THINK ABOUT IT!

KEEPING FOOD SAFE

Food preparation safety is just as (or maybe even more) important than good nutrition!

If you prepare or serve food, then follow these food safety tips:

- Always wash your hands before handling your client's food!
- If you prepare food in the home for your client, wash all surfaces used for food preparation before and after cooking.
- Wash ALL fruits and vegetables before preparing.
- Use two cutting boards, if possible—one for meats and one for fruits and vegetables. If separate boards are not available—clean board with bleach solution when switching between meats and fruits and vegetables.

FOCUS ON PROTEIN (MEATS AND BEANS)

It is a common myth that the elderly need to increase protein intake. Unless your client needs additional protein to heal from surgery or an injury, the protein intake should not increase.

In fact, protein is processed in the kidney and having excess protein can actually place unnecessary stress on the kidneys.

Most older adults need about 5 ounces of lean protein each day.

Sources of lean protein include:

- Broiled, baked or grilled fish.
- Canned tuna in water.
- Skinless chicken or turkey.
- Turkey bacon.
- Cornish Hen.
- Ground beef (less than 10-percent fat).
- Boiled ham.
- Lean, well-trimmed pork chops.
- Canadian bacon.
- Low fat lunch meats.
- Eggs.
- Tofu.
- Pinto, black, kidney, or navy beans.
- Nuts.
- Almond or peanut butter.

Estimate portions!

- 3 ounces of cooked meat, poultry or fish is about the size of a woman's palm or a deck of cards.
- 1 Tablespoon of peanut butter is about the size of a walnut.



FOCUS ON DAIRY PRODUCTS

Dairy products are a good source of calcium. Calcium can help slow bone loss that leads to osteoporosis. Older clients may cut back on dairy products because it's harder to digest lactose (the sugar in milk). Recommend lactose-free milk and cheese, or a supplement that digests lactose to help your client to continue using dairy products.

It is recommended that older adults get about 3 servings a day of dairy. A serving of dairy may be:

- 1 cup of low fat, non-fat or skim milk (a half pint container)
- 1 cup of low fat or not fat yogurt (a regular 8 ounce container)
- 1 1/2 ounces of natural cheese (like cheddar or Swiss)



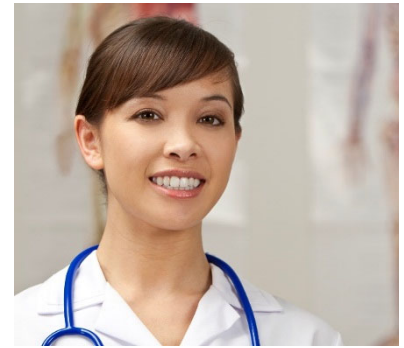
Estimate portions!

1 1/2 ounces of cheese is about the size of two dominoes!

FOCUS ON SPECIAL NUTRIENT NEEDS

CALCIUM AND VITAMIN D

- Older adults need more vitamin D and calcium to help maintain bone health. Most people will meet this increased need when they get the recommended three servings of low-fat or fat-free milk and yogurt each day. Other calcium-rich foods are fortified cereals and fruit juices, dark green leafy vegetables and canned fish with soft bones. If your client takes a calcium supplement or multivitamin, check to see that it also contains vitamin D.



TIME TO LAUGH!

An elderly woman went to her doctor for a physical.

- Her blood pressure was high.
- Her cholesterol was high.
- She'd gained some weight, and didn't feel so hot.

The doctor said eating right doesn't have to be complicated and it would solve some of her physical problems. He said:

- Just think in *colors*. Fill your plate with the colors of the rainbow!
- Try some greens, oranges, reds, maybe something yellow, etc.

So she went right home and ate an entire bowl of . . .



And sure enough, she felt better immediately!



VITAMIN B₁₂

- Changes in digestion make it more difficult for the body to absorb certain vitamins, like B₁₂. Vitamin B₁₂ is needed for mental alertness, memory and good circulation. B₁₂ can be found in fortified cereal, lean meat and some fish and seafood.

FIBER

Slower digestion can lead to constipation! Fiber keeps everything moving! Fiber also can help lower the risk for heart disease, and control or prevent type 2 diabetes. Good sources of fiber include whole grain breads and cereals, beans and peas and fresh fruits and vegetables.



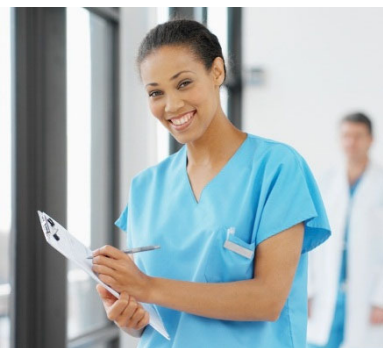
The recommended fiber intake for people over 50 is:

- 21 grams per day for women.
- 30 grams per day for men.

POTASSIUM

- Increasing potassium while reducing sodium (salt) can lower the risk of high blood pressure. Fruits, vegetables and low-fat or fat-free milk and yogurt are good sources of potassium. Also, choose and prepare foods with little or no added salt.





FIVE KEY POINTS!

REVIEW WHAT YOU LEARNED!

1. The USDA lists "poor nutritional status" as a primary concern for the elderly.
2. Eating well, and eating the proper amounts, can make your clients smarter and sharper minded.
3. Good nutrition can give your clients more energy, keep them from getting sick, and help them recover more quickly from illness.
4. The Modified Pyramid for older adults addresses the specific needs of the body as it ages. Specifically, nutrient dense, low fat and high fiber foods are recommended.
5. Studies show that eating 3 or more fruits or vegetables a day helps people maintain a healthy weight, decreases the risk of chronic diseases, and increases energy and brain function.

GOOD FOOD ON A TIGHT BUDGET

If you care for clients who live at home and still purchase their own foods, you may be faced with the challenge of buying, preparing and serving nutritious meals on a fixed budget.

Here are some tips:

- **Plan ahead!** Plan meals and snacks for a week at a time. Make a shopping list, then buy only those items on the list.
- **Shop the outside isles!** Buy nutrient-dense items like fruits and vegetables, lean meats, fish, and whole-grain cereals and breads, low-fat or fat-free milk and milk products, eggs, dried beans, and nuts. Many of these items are found on the outer ring of the grocery store.
- **Forget convenience!** Skip convenience foods, like baked goods, candy, crackers, and chips, even if they're on sale. These foods are higher in sodium, sugar, and fat and provide fewer nutrients for the calories.
- **Become a label gazer!** Take time to read the Nutrition Facts label on food packages. The label tells you how many calories and which nutrients the food provides. It also tells you how much fat, cholesterol, sodium, carbohydrate, and sugars a single serving of the food contains.
- **Cook in advance!** Plan to buy enough ingredients to cook more than one meal and then freeze meal-sized portions. These can replace purchased frozen dinners that may have more fat and sodium in them. Many soups, casseroles, fish, and meats freeze well for later use.
- **Buy in season!** Choose fresh fruits and vegetables when they're in season, and buy frozen produce when fresh items are out of season.
- **Casseroles are cool!** A casserole with brown rice as the main ingredient or dried beans that are cooked in a crock-pot can be very nutritious, filling, and affordable.
- **Shop Smarter!** Save money by choosing store brands, buying foods on sale, and clipping coupons.
- **Reach out!** Contact your Area Agency on Aging to learn more about food stamps, the Senior Farmers' Market Program, home-delivered meals and other food assistance programs.
 - The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program gives coupons to older adults with low incomes that can be used at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and some other places. The coupons can be exchanged for fresh, nutritious, locally grown fruits, vegetables, and herbs.





A Nutrition Module:
Nutrition for the Elderly

EMPLOYEE NAME
(Please print):

DATE: _____

- *I understand the information presented in this inservice.*
- *I have completed this inservice and answered at least eight of the test questions correctly.*

EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE:

SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE:

Inservice Credit:

<input type="checkbox"/> Self Study	1 hour
<input type="checkbox"/> Group Study	1 hour

File completed test in employee's personnel file.

***Are you "In the Know" about nutrition for the elderly?
Circle the best choice. Then check your answers with your supervisor!***

- An age related change that can impact nutrition is**
 - A. Decreased saliva.
 - B. Social isolation.
 - C. Constipation.
 - D. All of the above.
- The Modified Pyramid for Older Adults recommends**
 - A. 2-3 glasses of water daily.
 - B. 4-5 glasses of water daily.
 - C. 6-8 glasses of water daily.
 - D. 10 glasses of water daily.
- Most older adults need**
 - A. 2,400 to 2,800 calories per day.
 - B. More calories than they did when they were younger.
 - C. Fewer calories than they did when they were younger.
 - D. The same amount of calories than they did when they were younger.
- An example of one serving of a whole grain is**
 - A. A bowl of white rice.
 - B. 1/2 cup of oatmeal.
 - C. A half of a plain bagel.
 - D. A slice of angel food cake.
- True or False**
When choosing fruits and vegetables, canned is best.
- True or False**
A proper serving of meat is about the size of a deck of cards.
- True or False**
Older adults need more vitamin D and calcium to help maintain bone health.
- True or False**
It's impossible to eat healthy, nutritious foods on a tight budget.
- True or False**
Sausage, bacon and hot dogs are good, healthy choices for older adults.
- True or False**
Liquid vegetable oils are better choices than solid fats such as butter, lard or shortening.

