



Strong bones, muscles and healthy eating

A balanced diet and weight bearing exercise is important to maintain good health, strong bones and muscles as well as provide sufficient energy to undertake the day's activities.

Eat well every day and enjoy sharing meals with others.

Weight bearing or resistance exercises are important as these help to build and maintain strong bones. Such exercises include activities where you support your own body weight like brisk walking, dancing, hiking, stair climbing, jogging and exercises using resistance or weights. If you have been inactive for a while or have a health condition, check with your doctor before starting physical activity.

Do you look after your bones?

I have not done 30 minutes of weight bearing exercise today (e.g. walking)

Yes ☐ No ☐

If you answered 'Yes'

Each day, you need to be active in as many ways as you can. At least twice each week, you need to include some weight bearing or resistance exercises as these help to build and maintain strong bones.

I have back pain that started suddenly

Yes ☐ No ☐

If you answered 'Yes'

If you experience sudden back pain for no apparent reason, this could be a sign of osteoporosis or other serious medical conditions. Visit your doctor for medical attention as soon as you can.

I have become shorter over the years

Yes ☐ No ☐

If you answered 'Yes'

Becoming shorter over the years could be a sign of osteoporosis. Visit your doctor for medical attention as soon as you can.

I have had broken bones in the past few years

Yes ☐ No ☐

If you answered 'Yes'

Broken bones can be a sign of osteoporosis. Visit your doctor as soon as you can and ask if you qualify for an osteoporosis risk assessment (bone mineral density test). This test will determine your bone strength as well as possible treatment options to help to reduce your risk of fractures in the future.

Do you eat healthy meals that help you to keep strong and active?

Each day, I eat less than three to four servings of high calcium foods (such as milk, yoghurt, cheese, salmon, sardines or calcium enriched products)

Yes ☐ No ☐

If you answered 'Yes'

For adults, the recommended daily intake of calcium per day is 1000mg. For women (post-menopause) and men aged over 70 years, the recommended daily intake of calcium is 1300 mg per day.

To achieve this daily intake, you need to eat three to four servings of high-calcium foods. One serving is 250 ml of milk, 40g cheese, 200g of yoghurt or 100g of tinned salmon or sardines. If you do not eat enough calcium-rich food, see your doctor or dietitian for further advice on calcium supplements.

I do not take any Vitamin D supplements

Yes ☐ No ☐

If you answered 'Yes'

Being deficient in Vitamin D can affect your bone and muscle strength as this vitamin helps our bodies to absorb calcium from food. While Vitamin D comes from sunshine this is not always straightforward (and carries a risk of sunburn or skin cancer). It's best to consult your doctor, pharmacist or dietitian to see if you need Vitamin D supplements.

I have difficulty chewing or eating food

Yes ☐ No ☐

If you answered 'Yes'

Talk to your dentist about any problems with your teeth, gums or false teeth. Ask your doctor if a speech pathologist could be helpful for you.

I have a reduced appetite so am often not hungry

Yes ☐ No ☐

If you answered 'Yes'

Living alone, depression, some health conditions and some medications can reduce your appetite. Your doctor may be able to help if there is an underlying reason for the loss of appetite – like a medical condition or a medication issue. Ask your doctor if a dietitian could be helpful for you.

I have experienced unplanned weight loss

Yes ☐ No ☐

If you answered 'Yes'

If you experience sudden or unplanned weight loss, you may need a nutritional assessment. Make an appointment with your doctor to investigate any potential medical reasons for a referral to a dietitian.

Do you have difficulties preparing meals?

I find it difficult to shop for food

Yes ☐ No ☐

If you answered 'Yes'

It can be difficult to buy food if you can't get to the shops. This may be due to a number of reasons, such as not being very mobile, the public transport system isn't adequate, the shops are limited, or you have a low income. To see if you are eligible for assistance with shopping and to find out what services can help you contact your local council or My Aged Care and Carer Gateway (details available on page 38).

I find it difficult to prepare food

Yes ☐ No ☐

If you answered 'Yes'

There are many factors that can make preparing food difficult. These include living alone, cooking for one, being recently bereaved and never having had to cook before, and having trouble with daily activities.

You can overcome some of these issues by talking to a dietitian about simple recipe ideas or by looking at options, such as frozen meals or Meals on Wheels. Contact My Aged Care and Carer Gateway to discuss options available in your local area (details available on page 38).

Tips for healthy eating each day

Eating a range of nutritious foods is as important as staying active. As you get older, you have to get smarter about eating better. Dietary requirements could change as your need for energy may decrease, while your need for nutrients, such as proteins, vitamins and minerals, may stay the same or even increase.

Take time to eat a wide variety of nutritious foods including:

Fruits and Vegetables

- › Eat two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables, including different colours to give your body a wide range of valuable nutrients including magnesium, potassium, vitamin C and folate
 - › one serve of fruit is one medium piece of fruit, two small pieces of fruit or one cup of chopped or canned fruit
 - › one serve of vegetable is ½ cup cooked vegetables or one cup of salad.

Calcium

- › Ensure you get enough calcium, eat 2.5–4 serves of milk, yoghurt, cheese daily. These foods are rich sources of calcium, vitamin A, D and B12
 - › one serve is 250ml of milk, 40g cheese, 200g of yoghurt or 100g of tinned salmon or sardines
 - › if you are unable to eat dairy products and/or fish, discuss alternative sources of calcium with your doctor or dietitian.
- › Consider supplementing your calcium and vitamin D intake in consultation with a health professional.

Fluids

- › Remember to drink eight glasses (8 x 250ml) of fluid each day unless your fluid intake is restricted because of medical advice. Water is best and you can flavour it with fresh mint or lemon.
- › Drinking alcohol increases the risk of falls and injuries, as well as some chronic conditions. Therefore a low alcohol intake is recommended. The Australian Alcohol Guidelines recommend that older people consult with their health professional about the most appropriate level of drinking for their health. For more information on the guidelines for low-risk alcohol consumption, visit www.alcohol.gov.au.

Other tips

- › Try to boost your fibre by choosing wholegrain cereals.
- › Sharing meal times with family and friends may help to improve your appetite.

Who can help?

- › Doctor
- › Nutritionist
- › Dietitian
- › Speech pathologist
- › Dentist
- › Home and Community Care
- › Nutrition Society of Australia
- › Dietitians Australia
- › Speech Pathology Australia
- › Australian Dental Association Queensland

For further information about services in your local area, contact My Aged Care and Carer Gateway or Dietitians Australia (contact details available on page 38 and on page 40).

I plan to take action by...

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