

Elderly Nutrition



Older adults are vulnerable to malnutrition which is associated with an increased risk of morbidity and mortality. There were 703 million older persons aged 65 or over in 2019. According to World Population Prospects 2019, 1 in 6 people in the world will be over the age of 65 by 2050, compared to 1 in 11 in 2019. The global number of older persons is projected to more than double, reaching over 1.5 billion persons in 2050. First time in our history, persons aged 65 or above outnumbered children under five years of age globally in 2018 (United Nations, 2019).

Eating right is always important, no matter our age. Unfortunately, older adults tend to develop constipation due to poor diet and appetite, lack of adequate fluids in the diet, or lack of exercise and poor bowel habits. Thus, they are encouraged to increase their fibre intake for good digestive health. Inulin and Oligofructose (FOS) are among the best choices of dietary fibres that promote healthy gut. They are plant-based and support overall healthy

intestinal environment which contributes to improved stool frequency. The US FDA (Food and Drug Administration) has identified Inulin and Oligofructose (FOS) as a “dietary fibre”, confirming they are beneficial dietary ingredients that can help improve the nutritional quality and bridge the fibre gap (FDA, 2018).

Protein is another key modulator for seniors to maintain their health and mobility function. Aging adults tend to lose muscle mass and this chronic muscle loss is associated with a greatly increased risk of disability which is known as sarcopenia (Lochlainn et al., 2018). Studies indicate that inclusion of protein is crucial to stimulate muscle protein synthesis and maintain muscle mass and function in elderly. Both quantity and quality of protein intake are critical for optimal health in sarcopenic individuals (Naseeb and Volpe, 2017). Whey protein is a complete, high quality protein with a rich amino acid. It is also a fast-digesting protein that is easily absorbed by human body (Gangurde et al., 2011). We can get protein source from both animal and plant based products including fish, poultry, eggs, tofu, grains, beans, nuts, legumes, soy and rice.

On top of that, senior citizens need sufficient vitamins and minerals to stay healthy and active. Supplementation of Calcium and Vitamin D helps in reducing bone resorption, increasing bone density, decreasing fractures and decreasing the risk of falling in older adults. Studies showed that low calcium intake was significantly related with low bone mineral density (Kim et al., 2014). Vitamin D on the other hand is essential for maintenance of bone and skeleton health as it facilitates intestinal calcium absorption and thereby provides calcium which is necessary for bone mineralization (Carmeliet et al., 2015). It is also ideal for older adults to include other required vitamins and minerals such as antioxidant vitamins (Vitamin C and E), B vitamins, potassium, magnesium and the list goes on to get sufficient nutrient intakes.

Over 30% of our total body protein is collagen, making it the most abundant protein for the human body. Intake of collagen peptides is proven beneficial for pain reduction in elderly men and women suffering from functional joint discomfort (Oesser et al., 2016).

Intake of collagen peptides also helps increasing the bone mineral density in postmenopausal women. This collagen supplementation showed a favourable shift in bone markers, indicating increased bone formation and reduced bone degradation (Koniq et al., 2018). It is demonstrated that collagen supplementation contributes to a statistically significantly higher skin elasticity level in elderly women (Proksch et al., 2014). If you want to age healthy and gracefully consider adding some collagen to your diet.

In a nutshell, nutrition is one of the major contributors for successful healthy aging. Good nutrition supports health and independent living by reducing the risk of chronic disease and slowing disease progression. Hence, older adults should practice a balanced and diversified diet with moderate exercise in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle and remain well-nourished.

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