



Top Nutrition Tips for the Elderly

- ✓ Hydration
- ✓ Fall Prevention
- ✓ Iron Deficiency

Hydrate Before It's Too Late

“Sometimes too much to drink is barely enough” – Mark Twain

The elderly are at a greater risk of dehydration than most other people. It can result in heat stroke or heat exhaustion.

Elderly people lose some of the sensation of thirst, so may not drink enough water to avoid becoming dehydrated. Another issue that adds to the risk is the inconvenience and embarrassment caused by incontinence and the need for frequent urination.

It only takes small changes in overall fluid levels to destabilise the system and bring about the symptoms of dehydration.

Good food and drink choices to maintain hydrated:

Most beverages such as juice, milk, soda, coffee and tea are good choices for maintaining hydration. Foods, such as most fruits and vegetables, also contribute to the daily fluid requirement, although not as much as liquids. Dry foods such as nuts, breads and cereals have very low water content.



Iron Out the Facts

Iron Deficiency

Iron is a critical mineral in the body. It helps transport oxygen to cells and tissues, supports metabolism and is used to make neurotransmitters that aid in concentration.

There are two forms of iron in food: **heme** and **non-heme** iron.

Heme iron is easily absorbed and is found in all animal foods such as: meat, poultry and fish. Iron in plant foods such as legumes and green vegetables is called **non-heme** iron and is less efficiently absorbed. The elderly are at risk of iron deficiency due to poor iron absorption.

Tips to reduce iron deficiency:

1. Fill meal plates with meat and vegetables and to enhance iron absorption, eat these foods in conjunction with food or drink that are high Vitamin C.
2. Don't drink tea and coffee at meal times because they bind with iron and reduce absorption.
3. Vegetarians should eat double the amount of plant sources of iron than a meat eater.

A Balancing Act

Fall Prevention

Falls are one of the most serious preventable injuries affecting residents of aged care facilities. Elderly people with poorer nutrition have a greater likelihood of falling and if they do fall, they are likely to sustain more severe injuries and take longer to recover.

Nutritional deficiencies have been found to impact significantly on factors such as gait, balance and mobility, which can all affect a resident's tendency to fall and result in fractures. Reducing the risk of falls is therefore important and preventable.

Prevention recommendations include providing residents with a well balanced diet, in particular, enough calcium through food such as: milk, yoghurt, cheese, fish, shellfish, broccoli, soybeans, tofu and almonds. Vitamin D can be found in supplements and made naturally through getting outdoors in the sun.

Balance is critical to living a long and fruitful life. A focus on diet and exercise, as well as making appropriate lifestyle changes can help the elderly stay upright and healthy.

