



Older People

Specialist Group

The BDA Older People Specialist Group is making a pledge to:

- help keep older people nutritionally 'well'
- highlight the need to identify and act for older people who are nutritionally 'vulnerable'
- champion an evidence based (NICE CG32¹ and QS24²), 'food first' approach to treating malnutrition in addition to or instead of prescribed nutritional supplements. We will:

Promote the need for a varied daily diet consisting of:

- Mealtimes as a positive experience that acknowledge the health benefits and pleasure of food
- Three to four meals with additional between meal snacks as appropriate
- At each meal:
 - Foods rich in starchy carbohydrate and fibre
 - Food rich in high quality protein
 - Fruits and vegetables
 - Foods containing calcium and vitamin D (to support bone health)
- All adults should consider taking 10ug Vitamin D supplement during autumn and winter months. If access to safe sunlight exposure is limited, consider daily 10ug Vitamin D supplement all year round
- Guidance for daily diet requirements comes from the 'Eatwell Guide'^{3*}.

**Notes: *The Eatwell Guide may not apply to those with special dietary requirements. Any special dietary requirements should be discussed with Dietitian or other healthcare professional
*For those needing to maintain or gain weight, the amount or proportion of different foods needed may differ from the 'Eatwell Guide'. *At end of life focus is usually on providing food and fluid for comfort and pleasure, rather than for nutritional adequacy.*

Promote good levels of hydration by highlighting:

- The need for at least six to eight mugs/glasses (200ml) of fluid throughout the day, every day
- That this may mean drinking more fluid than some older people are used to
- That all fluids, except alcohol, count towards our fluid intake, not just water
- That some foods can also add to our fluid intake

Promote a healthy weight by increasing awareness that:

- Healthy weight for older people may be higher than healthy weight for younger adults (a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 24 – 31 kg/m² can be considered healthy in people aged 70 years and over)⁴
- Losing weight is not a normal part of ageing, and eating the right amount of food to maintain a healthy weight may mean eating less for some and eating more for others
- Treating malnutrition using additional nutrient rich foods (a 'food first' approach) can be effective and can reduce inappropriate requests for prescribed nutritional supplements

Promote the importance of continued exercise/activity to:

- Maintain or improve muscle mass
- Improve appetite

Promote making each contact count conversations:

- To maintain good health and wellbeing for older people by using seven key questions which can help to identify key areas where support may be needed:
 - Are you able to go out to shop for food or to access food when you need it?
 - Are you able to prepare / access 3 – 4 meals per day?
 - Are you able to prepare / access 2 - 3 between meal snacks per day?
 - Are you able to prepare / access at least 6 - 8 hot or cold drinks per day?
 - Do you need help with eating / drinking?
 - Do you have any problems with your mouth, teeth or dentures which might stop you from eating?
 - Are you thin or have you lost weight without trying to?



Further reading and resources⁵

[Friends of the Elderly Guide to good nutrition and hydration in older age](#)

[BDA Food Fact Sheet Healthy Eating](#)

[BDA Food Fact Sheet Vitamin D](#)

[BDA Food Fact Sheet Malnutrition](#)

[Nutrition Diet Resource Eating Well with Dementia](#)

[BDA Food Fact Sheet Fluid \(water & drinks\)](#)

[BDA OPSG Losing weight is not part of aging](#)

[Dairy UK Bring it Back resources](#)

Many thanks to Older People Matter – Food Group for permission to adapt from Leeds City Council Food Consensus Leaflet⁶

References

- NICE Quality standard for nutrition support in adults. Quality standard 24 (2012). Available from <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs24>
- NICE Nutrition support for adults: oral nutrition support, enteral tube feeding and parenteral nutrition Clinical guideline 32. (2006) Available from <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg32>
- Public Health England Eatwell Guide Available from: www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide
- Winter, J. et al. BMI and all-cause mortality in older adults: a meta-analysis. *Am J Clin Nutr.* 2014 Apr;99(4):875-90. Available from: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24452240
- British Dietetic Association Food Fact Sheets available from: <https://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/home>
- Leeds City Council. Food Consensus Leaflet. Available from: www.leeds.gov.uk/docs/Leeds-Food-Consensus-Leaflet.PDF