



Rhode Island Department of Elderly Affairs  
John O. Pastore Center  
Hazard Building  
74 West Road  
Cranston, RI 02920

---

## **RHODE ISLAND SENIOR BEAT**

**BY:** Larry Grimaldi, Chief of Information & Public Relations  
462-0509 [lgrimaldi@dea.ri.gov](mailto:lgrimaldi@dea.ri.gov)  
**RELEASE:** Friday, February 11, 2011

### **HEALTHY NUTRITION PROMOTES A HEALTHY LIFE**

**CRANSTON** --- It's just common sense. A healthy diet is one of the easiest roads to wellness. A healthy diet can increase your energy level, help you to deal with chronic disease and put you on track for a fuller life.

For some seniors, certain factors can impact their desire to eat regularly and to eat the foods that are good for them. Loneliness or depression, death or divorce or other personal or social upheaval can take a serious toll on eating habits. Malnutrition can trigger other health problems including fatigue, anemia, a weakened immune system, heart problems or digestive and respiratory difficulties.

There are three basic reasons for planning a healthy diet and sticking to the plan. You will be stronger and can reduce risk factors for heart disease, cancer, strokes, high blood pressure, diabetes and a host of other life-threatening diseases. A good diet helps you to maintain mental sharpness. And you'll just feel better. Eating well can also help you to keep a positive outlook on life and enhance your emotional well-being.

Planning a good diet can start with knowing how many calories you need to consume each day. The National Institute on Aging notes that women over 50 who are not physically active need about 1,600 calories a day. For men in this category, the number is about 2,000. For moderately active women, a daily diet of 1,800 calories a day is suggested. For moderately active men, the number ranges between 2,200 to 2,400 calories a day. A very active woman needs about 2,000 calories a day and active men need between 2,400 to 2,800 calories a day.

**-more-**

## **RI Senior Beat-February 11, 2011: healthy diet-page 2**

Think about it. If you get off the couch and become more active, you get to consume more calories! If you need help in planning a healthy diet, ask your doctor to set up an appointment for you with a registered dietician. You can find helpful nutrition hints at the National Institute on Aging web site ([www.nia.nih.gov](http://www.nia.nih.gov)), the Administration on Aging ([www.aoa.gov](http://www.aoa.gov)) or AARP ([www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org)). You can find additional nutrition resources by going to “Google” and keying in “senior nutrition tips.”

If you are on a limited income and need to get the most out of your food budget, you should consider applying for the Senior Nutrition Assistance Program. SNAP can help you stretch your food dollars. Call THE POINT, Rhode Island’s Aging and Disability Resource Center, at 462-4444 to get information on applying for SNAP benefits. TTY users should call 462-4445.

NIA offers this information about the Senior Food Pyramid:

Focus on whole fruits rather than juices. Whole fruits have more fiber and vitamins. Try to get about one and a half to two servings a day.

Choose anti-oxidant-rich, dark, leafy greens such as kale, broccoli (just don’t tell former president George W. Bush) or spinach. Orange and yellow vegetables such as carrots, squash or yams are also good. Try to get about one and a half to two servings a day.

Include calcium from foods such as milk, yogurt or cheese. Non-dairy sources of calcium include tofu, almonds, kale and that old favorite again, broccoli. Try to get 1,200 mg. of calcium per day.

Be smart with your carbs and choose whole grain foods over those with processed white flour. Look for pasta, breads and cereals that list “whole grain” ingredients. You need about six to seven ounces of grains each day.

To determine how many grams of protein you need each day, simply divide your body weight by two. For example, a 150-pound person would need 75 grams of protein each day. Sources of protein include fish, beans, peas, nuts, eggs, milk and cheese.

It is also important to remember that water and vitamins B and D are important supplements to a good diet. Seniors should consume several glasses of water each day and drink water with their meals to aid in digestion.

**-more-**

### **RI Senior Beat-February 11, 2011: healthy diet-page 3**

Other tips for healthy eating include restricting your salt intake; eating good fats such as olive oil, salmon, walnuts and monounsaturated fats; increasing your fiber intake by eating raw fruits and vegetables, whole grains and beans; avoiding bad carbohydrates such as white flour, white rice or foods containing refined sugar; looking for hidden sugar in items such as canned soups, instant mashed potatoes, frozen dinners and-of course, those fast foods; cooking smart by preparing vegetables by steaming or sautéing in olive oil and putting the five colors on your plate.

Planning a nutritious meal is only half the battle. How you eat is just as important as what you eat. Avoid skipping meals. Eat a breakfast with high fibers such as whole grain cereals and breads, oatmeal, walnuts or honey. Eat lunch. Keep your energy high by eating lean proteins and more fiber and more vegetables. For dinner, try roasted vegetables, whole-wheat pastas, grilled salmon, grilled meat instead of fried meat and sweet potatoes instead of white potatoes.

After you've eaten healthy all day, you deserve a snack. Go ahead. Just make sure to choose foods that are good for you like eating almonds and raisins instead of chips, fruit instead of candy and cookies, or enjoying other snacks such as yogurt, apples, peanut butter or cottage cheese.

The formula is simple. Good eating habits lead to a healthier you.

**-30-**

The Department of Elderly Affairs was established as a cabinet-level position in 1977 under Rhode Island General Law 42-66-1. DEA is responsible for the development and implementation of a comprehensive system of programs and services for Rhode Islanders ages 60 and older and for adults with disabilities. DEA is also the state's single planning and service Area Agency on Aging under the provisions of the Older Americans Act of 1965.

