- Nutrition / Elderly

A DIETARY GUIDELINE FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

Daily Mirror (Sri Lanka) · 10 Jun 2026

As we age, although our body's energy (calorie) requirements decrease, the importance of vital nutrients needed to maintain bodily functions actually increases. Proper nutrition helps protect against illnesses, promotes faster recovery, and helps maintain mental clarity.



Decreased Metabolic Rate: Because the rate at which the body burns energy slows down, appetite can decrease.

Reduced Nutrient Absorption:with age, it becomes harder for the digestive system to absorb essential nutrients from food.

Diminished Sense of Thirst:older adults experience a reduced sensation of thirst, putting them at a much higher risk of dehydration.

Muscle Wasting (Sarcopenia): If adequate protein is not consumed, overall physical strength and balance can decline.

y Protein (For Tissue Repair)

Protein is essential for keeping muscles strong and supporting the immune system.
Sources:fish, eggs, pulses and legumes (such as chickpeas and green gram), lean meat, and dairy products.
y Calcium and Vitamin D (For Bone Health)
These are crucial for preventing bone fractures in the event of a fall.
Sources:milk, yogurt, small fish (with bones), and green leafy vegetables like spinach. y Fibre (For Easy Digestion)
Fiber helps prevent constipation and reduces the risk of heart disease.
Sources: Brown rice (unpolished rice), kurakkan, vegetables, fruits, and oats.
y Water (For Preventing Dehydration)
It is vital to drink enough water daily, even if you do not feel thirsty. This supports kidney function and aids in preventing constipation.
If food tastes bland, enhance the flavor of your meals naturally by using lime, ginger, garlic, or various spices...
At times, a decreased appetite or difficulties in eating may arise. Here is how to manage them:
If Food Tastes Bland:enhance the flavor of your meals naturally by using lime, ginger, garlic, or various spices.
If Chewing is Difficult:ensure vegetables and meats are wellcooked until soft, or prepare them in the form of nutritious soups.
If Appetite is Low: Instead of trying to eat a single large meal at once, consume smaller, more frequent meals throughout the day.
A Colorful Plate: Fill your plate with a vibrant variety of colorful fruits and vegetables to make meals more appealing. Medications and Diet:certain medications you take can alter your appetite. If you face this issue, discuss it with your doctor.
Key Message: The food you eat is just like your medicine. By making the right dietary choices, you can enjoy an active, healthy, and happy old age.