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Food Guide for your 50's+

Michigan State University

Cooperative Extension Service

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January 1975

2 pages

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FOOD GUIDE for your 50's+

Extension Bulletin E-900 — Family Living Series

BY ANITA DEAN, Extension Specialist in Food Science and Human Nutrition

IF YOU'RE PUSHING 50 and feeling good, you may not be worried about your health. Then, on TV, an attractive, young-looking couple tell how they take care of themselves, eat right and exercise. She might pass for her own teenage daughter. He oggles her possessively. It's a big sales pitch. And how do you respond? Amused? Dismayed? Demoralized? Disgusted? Pretend not to care?

Whatever your response, the TV commercial points up some major problems people face in their "middle years." More than ever, they need to eat right for their age. Typically, most Americans overeat and underexercise; they consume two to three times as much protein, for example, as they need for good health. (Don't mention too many calories!) Habits of a lifetime are not easily changed.

It doesn't help any when you are on a fixed income and have to pay higher costs of food, housing, services and medical-hospital care, or if you face a forced early retirement. And you know all too well that the accent is on youth today, adding insult to the normal injury of anxiety over approaching "old age."

There are many sources of help waiting to serve you: food faddists, promoters of food supplements, vitamins, "health foods" and health clubs. There are also professional dietitians, nutritionists and competent physicians.

What You Need to Know—*for health, fitness and a bright future*

1. *What kinds of foods and how much you need for your health and normal weight.*
 - Have regular medical checkups.
 - If you don't feel well, see your doctor right away, insist on proper diagnosis and treatment, and follow his instructions. If he prescribes a special diet, be sure you understand it or ask for referral to a qualified hospital dietitian or nutritionist.
 - If it's hard to control weight, look into group and/or behavioral control methods.
 - Know the U.S. RDA's (Recommended Daily Allowance) for calories and nutrients and the percentages you need (See page 2).
2. *How to buy satisfying, healthful foods which you can afford.*
 - Become a comparison shopper. Plan and buy according to your needs and resources, using unit costs, specials, coupons, open dating, and — if you qualify — take advantage of food stamps and other food programs (Title 7 Feeding Programs, Meals on Wheels, etc.)
 - Read nutritional labels; compare nutrient costs.
3. *How to prepare and serve attractive, nourishing, satisfying meals without more calories than you need.*
4. *How to handle food safely from the time you buy it until you eat it.*
5. *How to increase your daily physical activities and develop new interests and friendships.*
 - Consider a daily walk or bicycling or tricycling, swimming, or games such as badminton, tennis, croquet or shuffleboard, etc.
6. *What services and facilities are available in your community and what can you do to improve or expand these:*
 - Medicaid — Social Security (checks may now be deposited directly in your bank account) — transportation (free or at reduced fares) — "Meals on Wheels" — Title 7 Elderly Feeding Programs (for good meals and sociability) — other needed personal services: shopping, telephone, etc. — fire and police protection — special group tours (reduced prices for drugs, restaurant meals, theatres) — free checking account — special tax rebates, etc.

Cooperative Extension Service, Michigan State University

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Nutritional Food Labels— *new tool to better food buying*

Many food products today have nutrition information printed on their labels. They show serving size and calories, protein, carbohydrates and fat per serving. Also, you'll see the percentage of the "U.S. Rec-

ommended Daily Allowance" (U.S. RDA) for protein and seven major vitamins and minerals (see below). Use these labels to help select a good diet.

U.S. RDA— *guide to better nutrition*

There are two terms (and their abbreviations) you should know that will help you understand nutritional labeling. They are very similar: the "U.S. Recommended Daily Allowance" (U.S. RDA) and the "Recommended Dietary Allowance" (simply RDA). The U.S. RDA's are what you see on food labels. They are based on the RDA's, which are based on nutritional and medical research. RDA's are set by the Food and Nutrition Board of the National Research Council, an impartial, government-sponsored agency. The RDA's are considered adequate for nearly *all healthy persons* and generous for most persons. The highest RDA is used as the standard for the U.S. RDA for most nutrients.

Nutritionists point out that most older persons in good health do not need 100 percent of the U.S. RDA for every nutrient. This is an important point to know when using U.S. RDA's, as printed on labels, to guide your food purchases.

The table below shows the different percentages of the U.S. RDA's for different sex-age groups. For example, the recommended amount of iron for a woman of 60 years is only 60 percent of the U.S. RDA for iron.

Using the U.S. RDA's, you can plan daily meals around food that provides 60 percent, rather than 100 percent of the U.S. RDA for iron (or 80 percent for calcium, or 75 percent for Vitamin C, etc.).

Allowances for Calories (energy) and Percentages of the U.S. Recommended Daily Allowances (U.S. RDA) for eight basic nutrients.

	Calories	Protein	Vitamin A	Vitamin C	Thiamin	Riboflavin	Niacin	Calcium	Iron
<i>Male:</i>									
23-50 years of age	2,700	90	100	75	95	95	45	80	60
51+ years of age	2,400	90	100	75	80	90	35	80	60
<i>Female:</i>									
23-50 years of age	2,000	75	80	75	70	75	30	80	100
51+ years of age	1,800	75	80	75	70	65	25	80	60

DAILY FOOD GUIDE

Changes with Age

Food Group	Child	Preteen Teen	Adult	Aging Adult
Milk or milk products* — (cups)	3-4	4 or more	1-2	1-2
Meat, fish, poultry, eggs — (servings) or dry beans, dry peas, lentils, nuts, peanuts, peanut butter, or cheese as alternates**	1-2	3 or more	1 large	1 large
Fruits and vegetables — (servings) Including potatoes, green and yellow vegetables, and a vitamin C rich food such as citrus fruit or tomatoes	3	5	4	3
Enriched or whole grain bread, flour, or cereal — (servings)	3	4 or more	3-4	2-3

For calcium:

*1-ounce Cheddar type cheese	= 1/2 cup milk
1/2 cup yogurt	= 1/2 cup milk
1/2 cup cottage cheese	= 1/3 cup milk
1/2 cup ice cream or ice milk	= 1/2 cup milk

**In place of 1/2 serving of meat, you can use 1/2 cup of dry beans or peas, 1 ounce of cheese, 1 egg, or 2 tablespoons of peanut butter.