

Healthy Tips for Adult Meals

In CACFP Adult Day Care Programs

For some adult participants, the food they eat at the CACFP adult day care program will be the tastiest and healthiest food they will have all day. The senior population has their own special needs when supporting good health through nutrition.



Seniors need a variety of carbohydrates, protein and fats every day. Older adults need:

- Slightly more dietary protein than younger adults. This is because the body of the older adult uses protein from food less efficiently. Offer a variety of quality proteins from meat/meat alternates and milk products.
- Vitamins and minerals because aging alters needs. Offer a variety of foods cooked/prepared to insure adequate intake for nutritional health.
- Dietary fiber. Cook foods high in fiber, such as whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and legumes, may make the fiber easier to chew and digest. And take into consideration the textures of foods, especially if the participant wears dentures.
- Plenty of fluids. Seniors may need to drink fluids even if they do not feel thirsty. Encourage a cup of fluid between meals and a cup with meals. Frozen fruit bars, fruit slush or fruit smoothies also add fluids.

An Individual Plan of Care and Nutrition Assessment may be needed for the adult participant. The nutrition assessment will include a plan of care identifying individual goals and interventions.

Warning Signs of Poor Nutrition Using DETERMINE:

Disease
Eating poorly
Tooth loss
Economic hardship
Reduced social contact
Multiple medications
Involutionary weight loss/gain
Need of assistance in self-care
Elder years above age 80



Food and Nutrition Division
Child and Adult Care Food Program



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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Tips for Providing Meals to Adults

In CACFP Adult Day Care Programs

Read over these tips when planning, preparing and serving menus for adults.



Herbs & Spices:

As adults grow older, they may experience a diminished sense of smell and taste. Smell and taste are important for a healthy appetite and changes can result in a disinterest in food. A variety of other oral health conditions may also reduce appetite, such as dental problems and medication side effects.

Herbs and spices such as rosemary, basil, cumin and coriander are a fantastic way to enhance the smells and flavor of meals without adding sodium or calories. Garlic, chives and onions are also very fragrant and flavorful additions.

Click [Adding Herbs to Your Culinary Toolbox](#), for the flavor profiles of 11 common herbs, as well as tips for herb gardening, drying and storing.



Variety:

- Provide variety by offering less common vegetables like sweet potatoes, eggplant, butternut squash, pumpkin, mushrooms, bok choy, or acorn squash.
- Use a combination of fresh, frozen and canned produce to balance cost and variety.
- Limit juice to once daily since it is not nutrient dense—consider making smoothies, which can be easier to digest and are more nutritious. Try adding frozen spinach and blueberries to a yogurt smoothie.



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Substitution:

- Stay within the same color group when substituting vegetables and ensure that a variety of colors are served throughout the week. For example, substitute broccoli with another dark green vegetable such as Romaine lettuce, kale, mustard or turnip greens, or Brussels sprouts.
- Use low-cost beans or peas like lima beans, black beans, pinto beans, kidney beans, black-eye peas, navy beans, or sugar snap peas in different cooking methods such as chili, soup, baked beans, and different sauces to mix it up.
- Keep extra servings of vegetables in a frozen or canned capacity for unexpected menu substitutions.
- If substituting a whole grain-rich menu item replace it with other whole grain-rich grains like oats, whole corn, brown rice, whole wheat, millet, and quinoa.
- Citrus is in season during the winter. Try to substitute citrus fruit with another citrus fruit, so for orange wedges, serve grapefruit, pineapple, tangerine, tangelo, or mandarin orange. *(Please note: Grapefruit may have interactions with some medications.)*



Color & Presentation:

- Put dark purple and blue fruits on the menu such as blueberries, blackberries, purple plums, and purple grapes, which are beneficial for brain health.
- Feature brightly colored vegetables, such as carrots, spinach, sweet potatoes, yellow squash, tomatoes and red and orange bell peppers to add visual appeal to the plate.



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