

HEALTHY EATING TIPS



Healthy eating is essential for healthy aging. According to USDA guidelines, older adults benefit from foods that provide power packed nutrients like vitamins B6 and B12, fiber, and calcium, without adding a lot of extra calories. Fresh plant foods can also help with hydration. Food choices vary according to culture and traditions, but fruits and vegetables should make up half your plate, or 50% of a healthy diet. Plant rich diets filled with fruits, vegetables, and legumes can help reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke, lower blood pressure, not to mention help people

manage healthy weights and stave off diet related chronic illnesses like diabetes.

Need a little inspiration to eat your greens? Check out these stories of two older adults whose plant-filled diets have powered their healthy aging.

In 2003, Carl, 72, a musician, began prioritizing fruits and vegetables and eliminating ultra-processed foods and added sugars after a diabetes scare. He was playing the drums at a performance when he fainted. The

alarming episode sent him to the hospital for a battery of tests, which revealed that his blood sugar was alarmingly high. Carl, who loves fresh fruits and vegetables, immediately changed his diet. Twenty-one years later, Carl remains healthy and active, managing his diabetes with a daily pill. He has no other chronic illnesses and suggests experimenting with unfamiliar vegetables by preparing them with your favorite seasonings. Carl also urges older adults to avoid plant-based ultra-processed foods, which can negatively impact health.

While health concerns prompted Carl to change his diet, Viola, 73, was inspired by a holistic health practitioner to go vegan 25 years ago. In 1999, she enrolled in a healthy eating program after hearing the practitioner praise plant-based diets. She immediately noticed that her digestion improved and her energy levels increased. Viola loves to cook and studied plant-based cuisine to master meatless dishes. She's now known for her delectable kale chips, which are sold in select local grocery

stores throughout the five boroughs. Later, Viola added fish back into her diet to in order to meet her daily protein goals. She credits her mostly plant diet for the stamina to keep working fulltime while running a successful business. She has also managed to avoid the chronic diseases that plague many of her friends and family, like arthritis, diabetes, and heart disease. Viola encourages people to eat more of the plant-based foods they already enjoy, especially proteins such as lentils, beans, and tofu.

Every summer, NYC Aging helps make it easier for older New Yorkers like Carl and Viola to get their daily allowance of fruits and vegetables through the annual Farmer's Market Nutrition Program (FMNP). This year, over 350 older adult centers, NORCs, and community-based non-profits will serve as distribution sites for the FMNP coupon booklets, valued at \$25. Each booklet contains five \$5 coupons for income-sensitive older adults to purchase locally grown fruits and vegetables at participating farmers markets, farm

stands, and mobile markets. Find a participating distribution site and learn if you are eligible by visiting nyc.gov/aging or calling Aging Connect at 212-AGING-NYC (212244-6469).

Once you've gotten your fruits and veggies, head to NYC Aging's Cooking Demo Library for culinary inspiration in five different languages. Adopting a healthier lifestyle may seem challenging, but it's doable with resources and a little creativity. NYC Aging is committed to supporting your healthy aging journey every step of the way. Bon Appetit!



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