

Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca. You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

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Staying healthy as we age

Seniors Week in Alberta takes place the first week of June.

While we celebrate all that older adults have done for our society, let's talk about how to stay strong and healthy as we age.

Adults can start to lose muscle as early as age 30, but the loss increases quickly after age 70. Protein is a nutrient that helps you to build muscle and keep the muscles you already have.

But many seniors do not get enough protein. Since your body can't store it, you need to eat protein at least three times a day, every day, to keep the muscle you have.

Often, adults tend to eat less protein at breakfast. Here are a few ways to increase your protein at breakfast:

- Have a glass of milk or fortified soy beverage with your meal.
- Add cheese or beans to toast.
- Mix one to two tablespoons of skim or whole milk powder or a scoop of protein powder into your cereal or yogurt.
- Make an omelette.

You can also try these tips:

- Add meat including wild game or poultry to pasta or vegetable dishes.
- Try a plant-based protein; for example, try chickpea falafel or tofu added to a stir-fry.
- Add canned beans or lentils to soups.
- Choose nuts, boiled eggs, Greek yogurt or cottage cheese as a snack.

Protein alone does not build muscle. Movement helps older adults stay strong, mentally fit and independent.

Here are some suggestions from the 24-Hour Canadian Movement Guidelines (csepguidelines.ca):

- Try to get 2.5 hours (150 minutes) of moderate (example, brisk walking) to vigorous (example, cross country skiing) intensity aerobic activity each week. You don't have to do it all at once. You can break up the time into smaller sessions of 10 minutes or more.
- Engage in muscle and bone-strengthening activities at least twice a week. These activities include climbing stairs, gardening and housework such as vacuuming or washing the floor.
- Include activities that challenge your balance, such as Tai Chi or Yoga
- Limit time sitting to eight hours or less. That includes less than three hours a day of screen time (in front of a TV, computer, tablet, or phone.)
- Get seven to eight hours of good-quality sleep each night.

If you would like more tips on staying strong and healthy as you age, search 'Staying Strong' at ahs.ca/NutritionWorkshops.