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# healthwise

a PERS Health Insurance Program newsletter | Winter 2023



PERS  
HEALTH  
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# Caregiver Resources

## The Impact of Caregivers

### Who is a caregiver?

A caregiver is anyone who provides care or help to a family member, friend, or neighbor who is sick or has a disability<sup>1,2</sup>. In the United States, nearly 1 in 5 adults are caregivers and most caregivers are women<sup>2,3</sup>. While some caregivers are paid professionals, many caregivers are informal or family caregivers who take care of friends or family. Caregivers may do many things to help those they care for, such as assisting with daily tasks like bathing or eating, arranging medical care and activities, or making health and financial decisions<sup>4</sup>.

### Caregiver Stress

Caregiving can be incredibly rewarding. It can help someone feel closer to their loved one or feel like they are making a difference in their life. But caregiving can also involve many stressors and when you're caring for a loved one, it may be hard to balance taking care of yourself too. If stress from caregiving is too great, it can take a toll on your relationships, health, and may eventually lead to burnout. Caregiver burnout is a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion and affects both you and the person you are caring for<sup>4</sup>.

### Identify Stress

It is important to be able to identify signs and symptoms of caregiver stress and burnout so you can take action to reduce them. Some common signs of caregiver stress include:

- Anxiety, depression, and irritability.
- Feeling run down or having much less energy than you once had.
- Neglecting your own needs or responsibilities, either because you're too busy or don't care anymore.

- Having trouble relaxing, even when help is available.
- New or worsening health problems or catching every cold that goes around.
- Your life revolves around caregiving but may give you little satisfaction.
- Feeling helpless or hopeless<sup>3,4</sup>.

### Ways to Take Care of Yourself as a Caregiver

Caregiving will never be stress-free, but there are ways you can take care of yourself to promote better balance in your life and avoid the symptoms of caregiver burnout. Some ways to do this are:

- **Finding caregiving resources in your community to help you.** There may be many resources in your area you don't know about, like transportation, daytime assistance, or respite care. See the resources included below to find more information about available services.
- **Asking for and accepting help.** Spread the responsibility of certain tasks to other family members or friends and say 'yes' when someone offers assistance.
- **Taking care of your mental health.** Find ways to manage stress and get support from others to help you cope with the emotional stress of caregiving, such as through friends or a caregiver support group.
- **Giving yourself a break.** Take care of yourself through doing activities you like, maintaining personal relationships, and giving yourself permission to rest<sup>3,4</sup>.

It's important to remember that taking care of yourself also helps you take better care of your loved ones.

## Caregiver Support and Resources

### Family Caregiver Alliance

Family Caregiver Alliance seeks to improve the quality of life for caregivers through education, services, research, and advocacy. Through its National Center on Caregiving, this organization offers information on current social, public policy, and caregiving issues and aids in the development of public and private programs for caregivers.

Visit online: [caregiver.org](https://www.caregiver.org)

Call: 415-434-3388 or 800-445-8106

### Eldercare Locator

A public service of the U.S. Administration on Aging connecting you to services for older adults and their families.

Visit online: [eldercare.acl.gov](https://www.eldercare.acl.gov)

Call: 800-677-1116

### FindHelp.org

Search and connect to social care and support systems. Find financial assistance, food pantries, medical care, and other free or reduced-cost help.

Visit online: [findhelp.org](https://www.findhelp.org)

### 2-1-1

211 is the most comprehensive source of information about local resources and services in the country. 211 connects you to thousands of caring, local experts that are available to help, 24/7.

Visit online: [211.org](https://www.211.org)

Call: Simply dial 2-1-1

## VA Caregiver Support Program

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Caregiver Support Program (CSP) offers clinical services to caregivers of eligible and covered Veterans enrolled in the VA health care system. The program's mission is to promote the health and well-being of family caregivers who care for our Nation's Veterans, through education, resources, support, and services.

Visit online: [caregiver.va.gov](https://www.caregiver.va.gov)

Call: 855-260-3274

### Caring.org

Family caregivers tend to the health and well-being of their aging parents, spouses, and other loved ones, often while juggling careers, children and other obligations. Below are some key resources to help you better navigate caregiving.

Visit online: [caring.com/caregivers](https://www.caring.com/caregivers)

Call: 800-973-1540

### References:

1. National Institutes of Health. (2020, May 26). *Caregiver Health*. MedlinePlus. [bit.ly/48V7njX](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34544444/)
2. Dept of Health and Human Services Office on Women's Health. (2023, Jan 6). *Caregiver stress*. Office of Women's Health. [bit.ly/3PYVYHa](https://www.womenshealth.gov/health-topics/caregiver-stress)
3. US Department of Health and Human Services Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (2022, Dec 7). *Get Support if You're a Caregiver*. Health.gov. [bit.ly/3tsX8D9](https://www.health.gov/our-initiatives/get-support-if-youre-a-caregiver)
4. Smith, M. (2022, Dec 5). *Caregiver Stress and Burnout*. Helpguide.org. [bit.ly/3Q3ExFx](https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/caregiver-stress-and-burnout.htm)

Courtesy of Moda Health

# Nutrition and You: A Roadmap for Health

“*What should I eat?*” The question arises with remarkable regularity. But how often do we take time to really consider our answers? If we’re not careful, food choices can be made through sheer habit, with no real thought for the consequences.

As we age, our nutritional needs change. It’s likely that the diet that sustained us in our twenties isn’t the best one for today.

What are some things for older adults to consider, foodwise?

## Find your balance

There is general agreement that a healthy diet is one that includes a variety of food types, including whole grains, fruits and vegetables, nuts, seeds, and legumes.

When discussing balance, it helps to break down food into its constituents.

**Macronutrients** are the body’s largest building blocks. These are proteins, fats,

and carbohydrates (simple and complex), and your body requires all three.

**Micronutrients** include vitamins and minerals, and are vital to healthy development, disease prevention, and well-being. Except for vitamin D, these aren’t produced by your body, which means they need to be part of your diet.

**Water** is crucial. Don’t overlook your body’s need for hydration—and aim to get more of it as pure H<sub>2</sub>O, rather than in sweet sodas or sports drinks.

**Fiber**, found in bran, vegetables, and other sources, is important for keeping your digestion regular. It helps you avoid constipation and lowers some health risks.

## Protein: You may need more

Muscle mass and strength tend to decrease with age, so it’s important for seniors to consume enough protein. Where to get it?

Per Harvard’s Chan School of Public Health:

Some proteins found in food are “complete,” meaning they contain all twenty-plus types of amino acids needed to make new protein in the body. Others are incomplete, lacking one or more of the nine essential amino acids, which our bodies can’t make from scratch or from other amino acids. Animal-based foods (meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and dairy foods) tend to be good sources of complete protein, while plant-based foods (fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts, and seeds) often lack one or more essential amino acid.

If you don’t eat animal-based foods, consuming a variety of protein-containing plant foods can help you get the amino acids needed to make new protein. You may also choose complete plant proteins such as chia seeds or quinoa.

And there’s the option of protein powders, derived from sources including egg, whey, soybeans, and peas.

## As always...ask your doctor

Many older adults are at risk for nutrient deficiencies, such as vitamin B12, vitamin D, and calcium. Your doctor will be able to diagnose and test for such deficiencies.

You should pay attention to any changes in your appetite or digestion and report them to your doctor, as these can be signs of underlying health issues.

Do you need a special diet—one designed to deal with a heart condition, diabetes, or digestive issues? Here again, it’s best to consult your primary physician.

## Get “foodsmart”

Your body is unique, and so is your diet. Figuring out what works for you may take some time. Fortunately, a wealth of resources are here to lend a hand:

1. The **National Institute on Aging** website ([NIA.NIH.gov](https://www.nia.nih.gov)) features articles, videos, and tip sheets on topics such as portion control, meal planning, and special diets.

2. **USDA MyPlate for Older Adults** ([MyPlate.gov/Life-Stages/Older-Adults](https://www.myplate.gov/life-stages/older-adults)). Developed by the U.S Department of Agriculture to provide guidance on healthy eating for seniors. You’ll find sample menus, recipes, and tips for meal planning.
3. Many **senior centers and community organizations** offer nutrition classes, cooking classes, and other resources on healthy eating. These resources may be available in-person or online.
4. **Registered dietitians** are nutrition experts who can provide personalized guidance on managing nutrition. Many offer services specifically for seniors, including meal planning, grocery shopping assistance, and nutrition counseling.

Remember: You have choices when it comes to food. With effort, you can gain the knowledge and tools you need to discover your ideal diet.

Sources:

Heart.org. *Suggested Servings from Each Food Group* [bit.ly/48R93uV](https://bit.ly/48R93uV)

Harvard School of Public Health. *The Nutrition Source. What should I eat? Protein.* [bit.ly/3RY48Ck](https://bit.ly/3RY48Ck)

Courtesy of PacificSource



## Premium change reminder

If you have your PHIP premium automatically deducted each month, either by pension deduct or Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT), your premium will change beginning January 1.

For more information regarding your 2024 premiums, visit [pershealth.com](https://pershealth.com).

## Age-Related Weight Gain

How is it that two people of the same age, gender, and height can eat the same foods and be equally active, but one gains weight while the other loses it?

One piece of the puzzle is metabolism. How well your body burns energy to keep up basic functions like heartbeat, breathing, and thinking is called your [basal metabolic rate](#). We often just call it “metabolism.”

Can you change your metabolism? Yes. Whether you're born with a fast, average, or slow metabolism, there are things you can do to speed yours up or slow it down. That means you can tweak your metabolism to help manage your weight.

### The age-metabolism-body fat equation

As you age, your metabolism naturally slows down. This is one of several reasons why most people gain weight as they get older. And any extra body fat you gain slows your metabolism further.

But here's the good news—your metabolism and weight are not out of your control. You can boost your metabolism by following some basic tips.

Taking steps to raise your metabolism helps you to:

- Burn extra food calories before they get stored as body fat.
- Burn off extra body fat that you already have.

### What to do

When you eat more calories than your body burns in a day, they're stored mainly in your fat cells as body fat. So, if your goal is to lose weight, you need to eat fewer calories, burn more of the calories you eat, or even better, do both.

You can think of this in terms of boosting your metabolism. To boost your metabolism and help manage your weight:

- **Be more active.** When you exercise, your metabolism speeds up. For a few hours afterward, it stays slightly higher. And over time, regular exercise builds muscle. The more muscle you have, the more of a boost your resting metabolism gets. And remember that any added physical activity makes a difference in your health.
- **Eat smart.** That means eating less fat and eating more fiber and complex carbohydrates (carbs)—which you get from fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- **Eat lean meats and low-fat dairy products.** And drink water instead of sugary drinks. For each snack or meal, include a little fat and some protein along with carbs. Also limit alcohol and sugar, which have lots of calories but offer no nutrition.
- **Track and plan your meals and snacks.**
- **Plan what you'll eat** and eat on a regular schedule. It helps you avoid overeating or making poor food choices when you're hungry.
- **Keep track of how you eat.** Write down everything you eat and drink. Count up the calories you've eaten at each meal and snack. Then use this data to decide if your portions are the right size. Check to see if you are eating a variety of foods. You might find that making a few small changes will help you eat healthy.
- **Eat a little before you get active.** If you can, have a snack before you go out for that vigorous walk. It gives you energy so you can enjoy the activity.

*Courtesy of Kaiser Permanente*

## Balsamic-Parmesan Cauliflower Steaks

These balsamic-Parmesan cauliflower steaks make the perfect vegetarian dinner. Dried oregano and fresh thyme and rosemary flavor the cauliflower. Balsamic vinegar paired with Parmesan cheese adds a nice sweet and savory balance to the dish.

### Ingredients

- 2 medium heads cauliflower
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon grated garlic
- ½ teaspoon ground pepper
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- ¾ cup finely grated Parmesan cheese

### Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Line two large, rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper. Remove and discard outer leaves of cauliflower heads, trim stems. Place the cauliflower heads, stem-side down, on a cutting board; slice lengthwise into ¾-inch-thick slices. Arrange the slices in an even layer on the prepared baking sheets. (Some florets will come off as you slice, reserve for another use)
2. Stir oil, thyme, rosemary, oregano, garlic, and pepper together in a small bowl. Brush the tops of the cauliflower slices evenly with the oil mixture. Sprinkle evenly with salt. Bake until the cauliflower starts to brown, about 15 minutes. Drizzle evenly with vinegar and sprinkle with Parmesan. Continue baking until the cauliflower is golden brown and tender, about 10 minutes. Serve immediately.

### Nutritional information (per serving)

**Serving size: about 2 steaks**

**Number of servings: 6**

|                    |       |
|--------------------|-------|
| Calories           | 179   |
| Total Fat          | 12g   |
| Saturated Fat      | 3g    |
| Cholesterol        | 9mg   |
| Sodium             | 338mg |
| Total Carbohydrate | 13g   |
| Dietary Fiber      | 4g    |
| Sugars             | 5g    |
| Protein            | 7g    |

Source:

[Balsamic-Parmesan Cauliflower Steaks \(eatingwell.com\)](#)

*Courtesy of Kaiser Permanente*



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