

Nutrition and Aging

RESEARCH CONFIRMS THAT GOOD NUTRITION, EXERCISE AND A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE ARE KEYS TO LONGEVITY. IN ADDITION, THEY AID IN THE PREVENTION OF CHRONIC CONDITIONS SUCH AS OSTEOPOROSIS, DIABETES AND HEART DISEASE, WHICH MAKES IT ALL THE MORE IMPORTANT THAT SENIORS EAT BALANCED AND NUTRITIOUS DIETS.

We're all familiar with the food guidance system – MyPyramid – that the USDA suggests we follow in order to consume a healthy diet. But, did you know that Tufts University (<http://nutrition.tufts.edu>) has a corresponding pyramid that is tailored to the needs of seniors? Just as the USDA's pyramid was revised in 2005, researchers at Tufts have updated their Food Guide Pyramid for Older Adults. It emphasizes foods high in nutrients, the importance of staying hydrated and the need for regular physical activity.

Let's take a look at the revised Tufts pyramid. The flag at the top of the pyramid suggests that seniors may need certain supplemental nutrients such as calcium, vitamin D, and vitamin B-12. (While this is represented in the flag, professionals continue to stress that the majority of these nutrients should come from the food consumed rather than through supplements.)

Going to the pyramid itself, the orange section emphasizes whole, enriched and fortified grains and cereals such as brown rice and whole-wheat bread, suggesting a diet high in fiber. The green section stresses the importance of eating brightly colored vegetables such as carrots and broccoli. The red section illustrates deep-colored fruits such as berries and melons. The yellow section represents liquid vegetable oils, soft spreads low in saturated and trans fats, sugar and salt. The blue box emphasizes low and non-fat dairy products such as yogurt. And lastly, the purple box suggests eating dry beans, nuts, fish, poultry, lean meat and eggs.

In studying the Tufts pyramid, you'll see that in addition to fresh vegetables and fruit, illustrations of packaged varieties are included. The reasoning here is that many seniors find frozen or canned vegetables and fruit more cost-effective and easier to prepare. Also taken into consideration is the fact that seniors should strive to drink at least eight glasses of water per day as a way to limit the risks of dehydration, which can often cause dizziness, weakness and the feeling of nausea. Such side effects could conceivably increase one's risk of falling.

Some of the exercises that the modified pyramid suggests for seniors include swimming, walking, household chores and yard work. According to *Working with Seniors: Health, Financial, and Social Issues* (Society of Certified Senior

Advisors), "Exercise improves cardiovascular fitness, reduces susceptibility to heart attacks and strokes, enhances carbohydrate metabolism, delays age-related deterioration of some muscles and bones, and improves brain function."

Please note that the information provided above is basic information regarding studies performed. Individuals should speak to their primary-care physician regarding diets that should be followed, as well as exercise to be performed.

Cooking Options

Many seniors find it exhausting and time-consuming to go to the grocery store, prepare meals and clean up afterward. What follows are a few alternative options that caregivers might want to explore for parents who continue to live in their homes and might find meal plans to be beneficial.

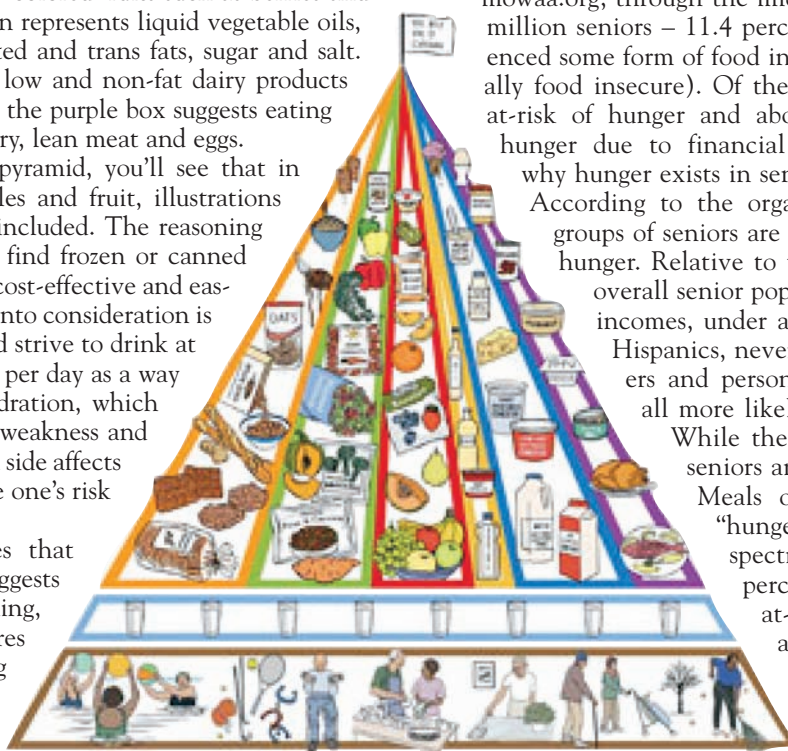
Meals on Wheels

While cooking issues are often given as a reason why seniors don't eat nutritious, balanced meals, the problem goes much deeper than that and extends to income and lifestyle. According to the Meals on Wheels website, www.mowaa.org, through the mid-point of this decade, five million seniors – 11.4 percent of all seniors – experienced some form of food insecurity (i.e., were marginally food insecure). Of these, about 2.5 million were at-risk of hunger and about 750,000 suffered from hunger due to financial constraints. The reasons why hunger exists in senior populations are varied.

According to the organization's website, "Some groups of seniors are more likely to be at-risk of hunger. Relative to their representation in the overall senior population, those with limited incomes, under age 70, African-Americans, Hispanics, never-married individuals, renters and persons living in the South are all more likely to be at-risk of hunger."

While the aforementioned groups of seniors are at greater-risk of hunger, Meals on Wheels contends that "hunger cuts across the income spectrum. For example, over 50 percent of all seniors who are at-risk of hunger have incomes above the poverty line. Likewise, it is present in all demographic groups.

For example, over two-thirds of seniors at-risk of hunger are white."



Modified MyPyramid for Seniors

Meals on Wheels is a non-profit organization with numerous locations throughout Lancaster County. Volunteers prepare, pack and deliver well-balanced prepared meals to men and women who are elderly, homebound, disabled or frail on a Monday-through-Friday basis. There are no age or income qualifications that one must meet in order to receive this service. A hot meal typically consists of a main dish, side dish, vegetable, dessert and beverage. Special diets (diabetic, cardiac, soft diets, etc.) can be accommodated. The cost of this service is dependent upon the number of meals provided and whether or not that individual is on a special diet.

If you are interested in receiving meals or volunteering at a local Meals on Wheels site, please contact your nearby location. Additional information may be found on the organization's website.

Meals on Wheels in Lancaster County

Ephrata	(717) 733-4846
Hempfield	(717) 393-1301
Lancaster	(717) 392-4842
Lititz	(717) 626-2500
Millersville	(717) 872-2415
New Holland	(717) 354-9150
Paradise	(717) 687-9209
Solanco	(717) 786-3426

Angel Food Ministries

Angel Food Ministries is a nationwide, non-profit ministry that has several locations throughout Lancaster County. It too offers individuals a num-

ber of options including the Regular Box, the Senior/Convenience Box, the Allergen-Free Box, Assorted Meat Box, Mom's Easter Sunday Dinner Box, Fresh Fruit and Veggie Box, and more.

The Regular Box offers balanced nutrition, a variety of food and plenty of it. It differs from Meals on Wheels, as a number of items are packaged and it is then up to the individual to prepare the food. This option costs \$30 per month.

The second option, Senior/Convenience Box, provides 10 nutritionally balanced, fully cooked meals per month. Each month's menu is different than the previous month. Each meal included in the Senior/Convenience Box has been developed with the dietary needs of senior citizens in mind and contains three ounces of protein, a starch and two vegetables or fruit. This plan costs \$28 per month.

Clients must place their orders by a certain date each month (varies by location) and provide payment at the time of the order. The order must also be picked up on a certain date. Inquire with your local Angel Food Ministries for details.

Angel Food Ministries in Lancaster County

Columbia	(717) 684-8452
Gap	(717) 442-2300
Lancaster	(717) 393-1561
Lititz	(717) 626-0774
Mount Joy	(717) 653-1202
New Holland	(717) 355-7800
Quarryville	(717) 786-3708

Other Options

Most senior centers in Lancaster County will provide at least one meal per day of operation. Call Lancaster County Office of Aging at (717) 299-7979 for more information regarding local senior centers and their hours.

Schwan's Home Delivery has a wide array of meal options at affordable prices and will deliver directly to your home. Schwan's offers meals you can prepare in the oven, stovetop, microwave or grill, plus offers a number of other options. Some of its products include, but are not limited to: beef, pork, chicken, seafood, side dishes, vegetables, fruit, bread, pizza, ice cream and much more. For more information, call 1-888-724-9267 or visit www.schwans.com. ❖



Jessica A. Pavelko, a lifelong Lancaster resident and senior consulting specialist, launched Pavelko Senior Consulting Services, LLC (PSCS) in 2006. The business takes a unique personal and professional interest in seniors and their

families by assisting them in making certain all of the resources are being utilized that best meet an individual's needs. PSCS acts as an advocate and navigator for seniors, and helps them and their family members make wise decisions regarding the care that they desire and deserve. For more information, contact PSCS at 717-517-8871, e-mail at info@pavelko.org or visit www.pavelko.org.