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# Eat right for your stage in life

The [Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics](https://www.eatright.org/) recommends people adjust their eating habits to address the nutritional needs of their bodies during all stages of life. With March being National Nutrition Month®, it is a great time to focus on the changes a person’s body needs through various stages of life.

Janice Hermann, [Oklahoma State University Extension](https://extension.okstate.edu/) nutrition specialist, said what worked in a person’s 20s won’t necessarily work on their 50s.

“As you age and evolve, so do your health and nutritional needs. That’s why it’s so important to eat right for life,” Hermann said.

This year’s National Nutrition Month® theme is Personalize Your Plate and promotes creating nutritious meals to meet individuals’ cultural and personal food preferences. The Academy encourages everyone to make informed food choices and develop sound eating and physical activity habits they can follow all year.

Hermann said the new 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for American provides research-based advice to help people of all ages meet their dietary needs while limiting added sugars, sodium and saturated fat.

DGA guidelines for healthy eating include:

* Teens to 20s: Build bone density by eating and drinking calcium-rich foods and beverages such as fat-free or low-fat dairy milk or yogurt or calcium-fortified soy beverages. Some non-dairy options for calcium include fortified cereals, beans, some leafy greens and canned salmon with bones.
* 20s to 30s: Eat more dietary fiber, including whole grains, legumes, fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds in an effort to reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as obesity. Women of childbearing age should include sources of folate, such as beans, peas and leafy greens, as well as consume foods that are fortified with folic acid, such as breads, cereals and other grain products.
* 30s to 40s: At this age, continue with a wide variety of foods, especially fruits and vegetables, whole grains and beans, as well as peas and lentils. These foods contain essential vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and dietary fiber.
* 40s to 50s: Continue incorporating regular physical activity. This is important because the body is changing due to fluctuating hormones and slowing metabolism. In addition, fine tune your healthful eating habits. Limit foods and beverages with added sugars, salt and saturated fats.
* 60s and beyond: A variety of protein-rich foods are a must to maintain bone strength in this stage of life. Try to incorporate strength-building activities to help maintain muscle. Good sources of protein include seafood, lean cuts of meat, eggs, beans, tofu and nuts. Animal-based protein foods also provide vitamin B12, which can be a concern for older adults. Check with your healthcare provider about a vitamin B12 supplement.

National Nutrition Month® was initiated in 1973 as a week-long observance. It became a month-long observance in 1980 in response to the growing interest in nutrition.