

Appendix A

Meal Planning Guide for the Older Californians Nutrition Program Restaurant Option

Welcome! Thank you for partnering with us to provide meals for older adults.

Providing nutritious meals is a fundamental goal of the Older Californians Nutrition Program (OCNP). Meals that are nutritionally adequate help to promote health, reduce the risk of chronic disease, and meet the nutrient needs of older adults.

A healthy menu for older adults includes items from each food group:

- **Protein foods**, including poultry, seafood, lean meats, eggs, and legumes
- **Vegetables**, including dark green, red/orange, legumes, and starchy
- **Fruits**, including fresh, canned, frozen, and dried
- **Grains**, with at least half from whole grains
- **Dairy and soy alternatives**, including fat-free or 1% milk, yogurt, cheese, and fortified soy beverages

A healthy menu for older adults limits the following:

- **Sodium** including salt used in cooking, high sodium canned foods, and processed foods
- **Added sugars** including sugar-sweetened beverages and high sugar desserts
- **Saturated fat** including high fat meats, full-fat dairy products, and butter



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Menu Guidelines

Utilize your current menu and work with the Registered Dietitian (RD) to ensure meals are nutritionally adequate.

Nutritional Content

- The program RD will work with you to ensure that meals follow the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and provide one-third of the Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs) for calories and key nutrients such as protein, fiber, calcium, vitamin A, and vitamin C.
- Strive to limit sodium in meals to less than 760 mg per meal, on average. Note that meals should not exceed 1000 mg of sodium.

Menu Guidance

- The RD will analyze each menu in advance to ensure nutritional adequacy.
- If a menu is missing any item from a food group, additional items (e.g., milk, fruit) should be offered to create a complete meal. See the Sample Meal Pattern on page 3 for more information on food groups.
- If substitutions are needed, utilize a pre-approved list of substitutes provided by the RD, or request RD approval.
- The restaurant may offer a single menu each day or have multiple menu offerings for maximum choice for participants.
- Menus should be available and easy to read for older adults.

All items from the approved menu must be offered, however, participants can decline to receive any items and substitutions do not need to be offered.

Participants can choose to purchase additional items that are not a part of the pre-approved planned menu. Dessert items, coffee, tea, and other beverages would be paid individually if an older adult chooses an item outside of the approved menu.

Appendix A

Sample Meal Pattern

The chart serves as a guide to plan and serve well-balanced meals that meet the needs of older adults. Included are the suggested number and size of servings from each food group and recommendations for nutritious food options.

Food Group	Servings	Examples
Proteins Choose from a variety of lean animal and plant-based proteins. Meats should be from fresh, frozen, or canned sources.	2 oz or equivalent per meal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 oz meat, poultry, seafood - 2 eggs - ½ cup cooked beans, lentils - ½ cup tofu 	Lean protein sources: Chicken, turkey, shrimp, fish, tofu, beans, legumes* <i>Tip: Avoid processed meats such as deli meats</i>
Vegetables High in nutrients and fiber. Choose from a variety of vegetables within the five subgroups: <i>Dark green; Red and orange; Beans, peas, and lentils; Starchy; and other vegetables.</i>	1-2 servings per meal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ½ cup fresh, cooked, frozen, or canned vegetable - 1 cup leafy raw salad greens (lettuce, spinach, etc.) - 1 small potato - ½ cup sweet potato, yam, corn kernels, squash, peas - ½ cup 100% vegetable juice 	Dark Green: broccoli, spinach, kale, romaine, collard greens Red and Orange: tomatoes, red peppers, carrots Beans, Peas, Lentils: legumes*, chickpeas, edamame Starchy: potatoes, yams, corn, green peas Other: iceberg lettuce, green beans, cabbage, mushrooms
Fruits Rich in important nutrients and fiber. Choose whole fruits and 100% fruit juice.	1 serving per meal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 medium whole fruit - ½ cup fresh, cooked, frozen, or canned fruit - ½ cup 100% fruit juice - ¼ cup dried fruit 	Whole fruits: bananas, apples, oranges, grapes, melons, berries <i>Tip: Include whole fruit whenever possible, as they are higher in fiber.</i>
Grains Good source of fiber and B vitamins. Choose whole grains.	1-2 servings per meal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 slice bread, dinner roll - ½ English muffin, bun, pita - ½ cup cereal, pasta, rice - 1 oz whole wheat crackers 	Whole grains: whole wheat bread, quinoa, brown rice <i>Tip: Limit refined grain products. Refined grains used as ingredients should be enriched.</i>
Dairy and Soy Alternative Provides protein and calcium. Choose fat-free or low-fat (1%) products.	1 serving per meal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 cup (8 oz) milk or soy milk - 1 cup low-fat yogurt - 1 ½ oz cheese 	Dairy and Soy Alternatives: milk, soy milk, yogurt, cheeses <i>Note: Sour cream and cream cheese are not included due to low calcium content</i>

*Legumes can either be considered a vegetable or a protein but are counted in one group only.