



Nutrition Tips for the Masters Athletes (Age 65+)

by Jen DeWall RDN, CSSD, LD. Board-Certified Sports Dietitian



Jen works with ICyF to provide expert advice on sports nutrition and healthy eating to the students and families of Indianola. As a board-certified sports dietitian, Jen owns a private practice that focuses on helping athletes stay on the cutting edge with superior nutrition to enhance performance with safety and efficacy.

It is common to classify someone according to chronological age. However, this can be very different than what experts call a “functional” age. There are a growing number of adults 65 and older that have taken care of themselves and can outperform adults half their age on aerobic, strength and flexibility tests. If you are an active masters athlete, congratulations. If you’re reading this in hopes of getting started on your journey, then congratulations to you too. It’s NEVER too late to start moving your body and eating more healthfully. When an adult is 65 and older and active, there are special considerations to consider when it comes to nutrition.

A Quick Note on Activity

The National Institute of Health recommends adults aged 18-64 do 150-300 minutes of moderate intensity of aerobic activity OR 75-150 minutes of vigorous activity. (1) Strength and flexibility should also be incorporated. For those above 65 years of age, multicomponent physical activity with aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities according to their fitness level are recommended. (1)

Moderate-Intensity Activities
Brisk walking
Recreational swimming
Tennis (doubles)
Yoga
General yard work
Water aerobics

Vigorous-Intensity Activities
Jogging or running
Swimming laps
Tennis (singles)
Vigorous dancing
Heavy yard work such as digging.
Hiking uphill
Rope jumping
Kickboxing

*The current guidelines state that "bouts" of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity promote health benefits regardless of the duration and, therefore, can count towards meeting the key guideline goals. This contrasts with the previous recommendations where the exercise duration at a moderate-to-vigorous intensity count. (Needed at least 10 minutes to count.) (1)

National Guidelines for Physical Activity



Nutrition Tips

As our bodies age, there are certain macronutrition, micronutrition and hydration standards that should be more closely monitored.

Macronutrients (carbohydrates, protein and fat)

In general, older adults have slower resting metabolic rates and a decrease in muscle mass. This leads to a decrease in overall calorie needs. Out of all the macronutrients, it is most critical you are getting optimal daily protein. Fats and carbohydrates calories may be decreased while protein needs may be higher than younger adults. This is due to a higher need of protein to stimulate muscle protein synthesis.

Recommendations are at 1.2 grams/kg body weight. For example, a 165-pound masters athlete should consume 90 grams of protein per day. Evidence shows that dividing your protein throughout the day is optimal. Getting 30 grams of protein per meal or 15-20 grams per meal with snacks is best.

Common protein rich foods	Approximate grams of protein per serving
Meat, 3 ounces	25
Seafood, 3 ounces	20
Protein powders (servings vary)	20
Greek yogurt, 6 ounces	18
Beans, ½ cup (not including green beans)	8
Nuts, 1 ounce	7
Seeds, 1 ounce	6
Egg, large	6
String cheese, 1 piece	6
Quinoa, ½ cup	4

Source: Today's Dietitian Learning Library

Micronutrient Needs that may be Increased

Due to a decrease in nutrient absorption and increased needs, the following vitamins and a mineral may need to be closely monitored for optimal health. Before starting any supplement, it is critical that you talk to your healthcare provider so appropriate vitamin levels can be monitored and medication interactions can be assessed.

Vitamin/Mineral	Daily Recommendation
Vitamin D	1,500-2,000 IU. supplementation needed, can't get enough from food
Vitamin B-6	1.5 mg for women 51+ and 1.7mg for men 51+ Seafood, meat, banana, potatoes, fortified cereals

Information contained in this document is not intended for medical advice.



Vitamin B-12	2.4 micrograms Fortified cereals, eggs, milk, fish, red meat. Supplementation typically required and intake can be much higher.
Vitamin C	2,000 mg* Diet rich in fruits and vegetables, especially citrus
Vitamin E	1,000mg* Diet rich in plant oils, seeds, nuts.
Calcium	1200 mg for women 51+ and men 71+ Example: 300 mg in one 8-ounce glass of milk. Partial or full supplementation may be needed. 500mg max per meal. May need to divide your dose for optimal absorption.

* = Tolerable Upper Intake Level. Has been shown to be beneficial to combat free radical production from exercise.

Hydration

Hydration can be more of a concern because in general older adults have decreased thirst sensation, changes in sweat glands, decreased body water and medications that can cause diuresis. It is recommended that masters athletes drink enough fluids so that their urine is light colored to clear (certain medications and supplements may alter natural color.) This can equate to 90-125 ounces of water daily. Women and smaller individuals will be on the lower end of this range. Heavier adults and men, the higher end. Water is typically all that is warranted unless you are consistently exercising for more than 60 minutes. Please seek the guidance of a board-certified sports dietitian for personalized recommendations.

NOTE: Information provided is for educational purposes only. Please consult your medical health care provider before beginning any nutritional or activity program. Nutrition at 65+ years of age takes special consideration, especially with those that are active. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Jen DeWall RDN, CSSD, LD to schedule a complimentary 15-minute sports nutrition coaching call.

Email: jdewall@nutritioninmotion.info

Call/text: 515.343.7241

nutritioninmotion.info

References

1. National Library of Medicine. National Guidelines for Physical Activity. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK585062/27/072023>.