

Guidelines of healthy habits for older people



HELP – Healthy Lifestyles for Elderly People
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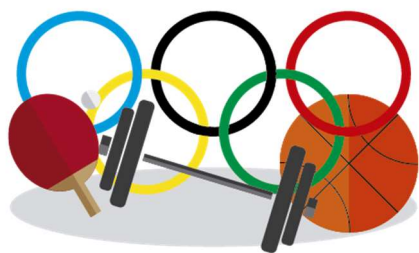
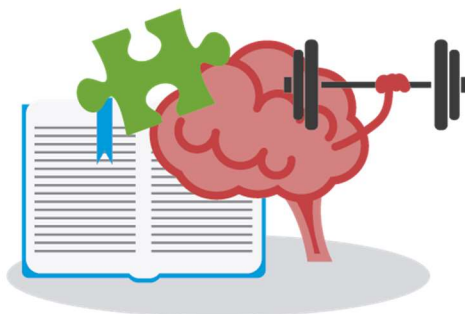


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Project overview

The general objective of the HELP project is to empower older people (65+) in Europe to adopt healthy lifestyles which include a healthy diet, physical activity, and social participation. Together with supporting older people on an individual level, HELP aims to develop the quality and cost-effectiveness of services for older people by promoting cooperation between service providers and recommendations on communal elderly services. It exists the necessity of promoting and raising the quality of life of the elderly people by guiding, counseling and training services through ensuring their active participation in the education.

HELP project is based on a European response to the progressive ageing of the population, a key challenge for future development policies linked with the improvement of the quality of life of elderly people. The aging process generates important changes in the lifestyle of the population and has significant repercussions in the volume and distribution of the social burden of the disease and in the quality of life. WHO (1994) estimates that one out of every nine persons is aged 60 years or older and the estimation by 2050 is that one in five persons will be in this age group.

The most important target group of the HELP project is older people who have unhealthy lifestyles. The main health risks of these people are unhealthy diet, lack of physical activity and lack of social participation. This target group is reached with the help of collaborating partners and other associations of older people and municipal and regional actors working with this age-group. The second target group is composed by current and future social and health care professionals, who are interested in getting knowledge and skills to prevent older people's health risks and to support their empowerment and self-management. Professionals are reached from collaborating partner organizations, from other associations working with older people and from partner educational institutes. The third target group is voluntary peer group mentors, who come from collaborating partner organizations or other associations of older people. They are retired older people who recognize potential risks related to unhealthy lifestyles and who have the desire and abilities to support other elderly people. The fourth target group is regional public, private and non-profit service producers, decision-makers and associations of older people.

All project partners in each country (Spain, Italy and France) will contact these target groups for developing collaboration in the framework of the project.

Introduction

The population in Europe is fully immersed in an ageing process. There are more and more people over the age of 65 and this situation poses a challenge for the societies and countries in which this is occurring.

In 2016, the number of people over 65 in Europe (consisting of 28 member states) accounted for 21.7% of the total number, whereas in 2001 this target group represented only 19% of the total population. Therefore, we can see there is an upward trend in the group of people over 65 years of age (*Eurostat, 2017*). This ageing process has remained constant throughout the 21st century and there is nothing to indicate a change in trend in the near future.

Consequently, it is important to know how to "age better" and stay healthy for as long as possible.

In this sense, we can ask ourselves what is ageing with quality of life. For healthy ageing and good quality of life, older people need to stay fit by means of physical and mental exercise and through good eating and rest. Likewise, in order to get the most out of everyone's individual skills, it is necessary to feel well both physically and mentally.

Ageing with quality of life means getting older should not involve a loss of individual skills; it is a process performed with satisfaction, during which personal aspirations can be fulfilled.

Hence, the five determining factors for successful ageing: cognition, physical exercise, healthy eating, socialisation and sleep and rest are all necessary for setting up a good balance between healthy ageing and life expectancy.

There is a strong link between the different factors. It is important to have a general, holistic outlook and bear in mind that a better quality of life can only be achieved by paying attention to all health-related aspects.

Lifestyle habits



Nutrition



General information



A balanced nutrition affects frequently positively the state of health and the quality of life. This is significant in particular for elderly people because of the inevitable changes related to the age and the specific nutritional needs. By nature it does not exist food which is able to satisfy all our nutritional needs; therefore it is necessary to learn to combine the different types of nourishment to provide our body every day the correct amount of nutritional intake. Therefore exist protein based food that foster the cellular turnover (meet, fish, eggs, dairy products, legumes); high energy food (cereals, fats, oil); protective foods, whose primary function is to protect by illnesses (vegetables, fruits rich in vitamin C). At least it is recommended to consume them during the day one per group food.



The perfect healthy nutrition

Elderly people as adults need three mainly meals per day and two snacks:

Breakfast (15%) in the morning should be light, made by coffee, milk (better semi-skimmed) or tea; this is the most important meal to start the day in the best way. It should be well balanced and satiating. It is advisable to associate something to eat to the drink, such as three toasted bread slices and two spoons of jam or honey, or 50g of biscuits or 30g of cereals. Fresh fruit should be included for breakfast or juices with no sugar.

Snacks (5%) at mid-morning and mid-afternoon should be composed of fruit or yogurt (good flora stabilizer), juices with no added sugars and infusions, which contribute to the nutrients and water intake. You can also take extracted juices, using always fresh seasonal fruit. If you prefer, you can eat some crackers or some biscuits.

For **lunch** (40%) eat a dish of pasta or rice (50g) and light dressing, better with vegetables, and a portion of proteins, for instance fish (110g), tender meet (80g), 2 eggs or legumes. The cooking of food has to be as light as possible, avoiding fried food (occasionally), preferring on the contrary other types of food preparation such as steaming and baking. Whenever possible eat a portion of row vegetable (salad), in order to avoid the loss of nourishing elements during cooking. Fats like oil and butter are to be consumed in limited quantities. When necessary you can add a fruit.

Dinner (35%) must be light and highly digestible, for instance eat a vegetable soup, legumes soup or cereals, semolina soup, light meat (80g), light ham/cheese/eggs/fish (110g). Add a portion of vegetables and a fruit if you are still hungry. Infusions are excellent after meals.



Women: 1600/1900 kcal

Men: 1900/2250 kcal

Nutrients:

50-60% carbohydrates

15-20% proteins

25-30% fats

After 70 years old the nutritional intake decreases of 10%

It will be less demanding for a retired senior to follow a regular and balanced diet, being able of taking more care of his/her nutrition (for instance buying at the supermarket or cook his/her own meals) helps to feel busy and to be fit. Variety and fantasy are the ingredients of the best cookers but also the characteristics of a balanced and complete diet, in which all the nutrients in nature are combined according to the needs of the organism.

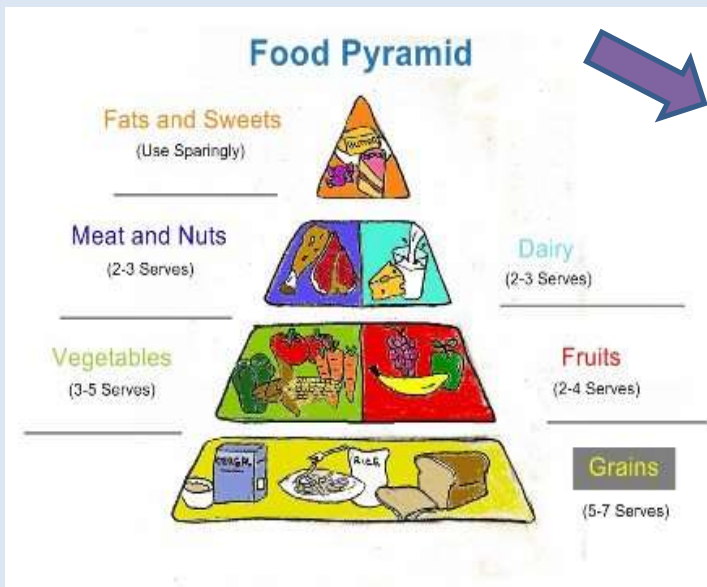
Complex **CARBOHYDRATES** such as bread, rice and pasta, nowadays at the base of the Mediterranean diet, should be included in every meal, (a portion is considered whole bread (50g) or 70-80g of pasta or rice). It is advisable that your diet is composed of complex carbohydrates instead of those considered simple (sweets, sugar, jam, juices with sugars); prefer and choose cereals especially whole (pasta, rice, biscuits, bread) and fruit. Keep in mind that fresh filled pasta like ravioli, lasagna etc. are rich in animal fats.

Potatoes are not to be considered among vegetables and they can replace bread or pasta.

FATS are considered fundamental for many necessary functions of our organism, but saturated fats, included in food of animal origin and often in many industrial products, when consumed in big quantities, can cause damages to the organism; prefer those unsaturated fats, you can find in olive oil, fish, dried fruit, that if properly consumed, can have many positive effects. Limit the use of animal fats such as butter, lard which have a high percentage of cholesterol, a risk factor for arteriosclerosis.

The primary source of noble **PROTEIN** can be found in food of animal origin, such as meat, fish, dairy products, eggs and cured meats. Cured cheeses and cured meats provide also a good amount of fats and sodium and for this reason their consumption is to be limited; fish on the contrary is rich in good fats. Another source of proteins derives from the plant kingdom, the legumes that do not contain cholesterol. In order to be equivalent to the other food protein products, they need to be eaten with cereals.

To avoid an excessive consumption of proteins, it is important not to combine two or more courses of this type in a single meal. In case you decide to eat them in each meal, reduce the portion and double the frequency.



Food consumption according to the Food Pyramid

Keep moderate portions

- 🍴 **Meat** 2-3 times a week (chicken, turkey, calf, light beef 80g)
- 🍴 **Fish** 2-3 times a week (sole, snapper, codfish, sea bream and salmon (even if fatter 110g)
- 🍴 **Legumes** 2-4 times a week (chickpeas, peas, broad beans, lentils, beans 30g of dry weight and 120g of fresh product)
- 🍴 **Cooked meat** once a week (bresaola, boiled ham or row ham without fat)
- 🍴 **Light cheeses** once a week
- 🍴 **2 mid eggs** once a week

Most common mistakes



- ✓ Eat cheese
- ✓ Eat red meat
- ✓ Eat too much sweets
- ✓ Eat industrial or junk food
- ✓ Drink alcohol



Our tips

Practical advice to adopt during the daily life to avoid malnutrition and health problems due to bad habits:

- **Drink frequently**, even if you are not thirsty (usually elderly people do not feel their thirst and this can cause dehydration). It is recommended at least 1,5lt (8 glasses per day). Drink vegetable or fruit juices which contribute to the intake of vitamins, or infuses. Vegetable are a significant source of liquids, made up mostly of water.
- **Limit the consumption of beer and wine** of no more than 2 glasses per day and avoid super alcoholic beverages (are considered alcoholic all those beverages whose alcohol content is between 1,5 and 21%, hard drinks those with more of 22%) The effects of alcohol are rapid and can reduce the capacity of perception, reactivity, attention, visual disorders, affecting also the intake of medicines. If you are in good shape it is advisable up to 30g of alcohol for men and 20g for women per day, within these limits there are no physical damages or dependence.

1 glass of wine = 12 grams of alcohol
1 can of beer = 12 grams of alcohol
1 small glass of hard drink = 12 grams of alcohol
1 bottle of 3/4 of wine = 72 grams of alcohol
1 wicker of wine bottle of 2lt at 12° = 200 grams of alcohol

- **Reduce the calories introduced**, (do not exceed in the consumption even when a nutrient is particularly indicated in the daily nutritional diet)
- **Regularity and lightness** are the watchwords
- **Never skip meals!** It could damage the organism: prefer instead a light meal to keep active the digestive system
- **Vary frequently your diet**, to avoid monotony and to assure the correct nutritional intake
- **Chew slowly and quietly**
- **Make the time for meals a quality time**, set the table even if you are alone, the way the table looks is important for a good nutrition

Healthy mind



General information

Maintaining a healthy mind in older people is essential to perform daily tasks in a normal way. Actions such as being productive at work –for those who remain active–, doing the shopping, checking the mail or looking after the family finances are essential for the autonomy of older people and require a healthy and nimble cognitive status. In this sense, cognition takes on a central role when empowering older people and making them feel useful and independent as far as possible.



Having a healthy mind means:

- Agility in speaking and reading.
- Improvement interaction with the environment.
- Ease at picking up new knowledge.
- Good capacity for memory retention.
- Reduced likelihood of suffering depression and anxiety.
- Enhanced capacity for meeting people.



The perfect healthy mind

Good mental health is achieved through continuous training. Performing creative activities such as reading, writing, drawing, etc; help the mind to remain active, reducing neuronal loss. There are many benefits regarding a healthy mind: an improvement in the mood, a better understanding of the world surrounding us, greater socialization, increased self-esteem, maintenance of independence, among many others. There are only benefits of training your mind!

If you still remain active, having a job or working as a volunteer, congratulations! Doing this, you are helping your mind to be healthy.

Most common mistakes



Watching too much TV is a common mistake, not only within older people. Television is a good way to keep you entertained but, too much time in front of the screen correspond to a state of reverie, similar to hypnosis, where logical operations, understanding, creativity and association are stopped. In the long term, the main consequence of this is that the attention span deteriorates. So, make sure that you do not spend hours and hours in front of the TV.

Another mistake that you should avoid is to always **live the same routine**. Try to find new activities that allow you to live new experiences. A good option is to sign up for theater, computer or pottery courses. In this way, by having an active life, your brain also remains active. If you are working during the week, consider if you have enough time to do some courses, maybe is better focus on your job.



Our tips

- Carrying out **physical activity** helps also your mind!
- How often do you visit your relatives or friends? Maintain an **active social life**, it keeps your brain active and, what is even better, your relatives or friends will be so happy to see you more often!
- Think in **positive**! Cognitive issues are related to sadness or depression.
- Have you considered starting **writing**? Artistic activities help towards keeping the brain stimulated.
- Everyone should have a **hobby**! Pastimes as gardening, reading, painting, music or other hobbies are a good way to maintain brain activity.
- If you are still active, do not let your job undermine your **positive attitude**.
- Your brain needs also a **healthy diet**.
- And, please, **try not to stress too much**.

Physical activity



General information

Physical activity is any body movement that works your muscles and requires more energy than resting. Walking, running, dancing, swimming, yoga and gardening are a few examples of physical activity. To stay healthy, adults should try to be active daily and aim to achieve at least 150 minutes of physical activity over a week through a variety of activities. Particularly, older adults need to do two types of physical activity each week: aerobic and muscle-strengthening activity.

Several activities are adapted to older people as hiking and biking, Nordic walking, swimming, soft gymnastics, body language, relaxation, yoga, aqua-gym, Pilates etc. As highlighted below, some of them are mixing cognitive and physical simulations.



Perfect way to approach physical activity



Seniors must take some precautions before restarting a physical activity:

- The training must be **progressive**
- **Regularity** is important to achieve significant objectives and avoid making a mistake that could harm the body
- Choose a group whose **level** is quite the same for collective activities
- **Avoid competitions and violent efforts**
- Choose the **right equipment**: buying adapted shoes and clothes
- Be careful with **hypothermia** (lower body temperature) and dehydration

Most common mistakes



- ✓ Skip the warm up, cool down or stretches
- ✓ Use incorrect form
- ✓ Forget to drink during the exercise



Our tips

- **Walk or cycle** instead of using a car
- Perform **stretching exercises** to improve the posture
- Perform exercises that support weight to improve **agility, strength and balance**
- Perform a **programmed activity**: walks, jogging on soft surfaces, dancing, etc.
- Take advantage of **domestic activities** such as physical activity: walking up stairs, brushing up, gardening, cleaning windows, etc.
- Choose a physical activity that produces **well-being and pleasure** and do exercise **at least three times a week**.
- **Know your own limits**; keep to a suitable pace of exercise in accordance with your capacities to avoid reaching a point of fatigue owing to the exercise.
- **See a doctor** before starting out on any exercise routines.
- And don't

What about active people?

- ✓ Do sport the morning before going to work
- ✓ Or do it during the week-end or after work
- ✓ During work hours, think of getting up and stretching your legs from time to time
- ✓ Go to work by walking or cycling

Social life



General information



According to experts, senior adults who are active and socially involved often extend their lives and their enjoyment of life by years. Thus, socialization in older people is necessary for social integration, to increase the feeling of usefulness and belonging to the social context they move in. This will increase their subjective perception of health.



However, for many older adults, the loss of friends and relationships over time may conduct to isolation or loneliness – a situation that can seriously affect their physical and emotional wellbeing. This is why, it is important to stay active and open for keeping a healthy social life.

These are the key benefits associated with socialization for older adults:

- **A sense of purpose and feelings of belonging** – senior people are able to make new friends and strengthen existing relationships when they are engaged in activities with others who enjoy similar interests.
- **Increased self-esteem and confidence** – Joining a group of people with the same interests makes life more fun. Volunteering, working or looking forward to activities you enjoy can provide a reason to get up and go with a smile. Feeling helpful and needed often makes a huge difference in anyone's life, regardless of their age.
- **Improved physical and mental health** – Spending time positively engaged with others is life-affirming and raises self-confidence. Keeping up with current news and trends does as well. Anything that boosts self-esteem and self-confidence can contribute to a positive mental outlook, which in turn encourages the release of "good" hormones".



Perfect social life

- Having friends and family
- Staying in touch with relatives by phone, emails, and by face-to-face meetings
- Being a member of a group of activities and sharing experiences and interests
- Participating in group outings
- Participating in the associative structure (volunteering)

Most common mistakes



- ✓ Staying at home
- ✓ Fear of new technologies and everything related to new communication tools
- ✓ Lack of confidence



Our tips

- **Staying healthy** for not interfering the social life
- **Going regularly for a walk**, going to cinema or other theatre, taking a coffee with relatives
- Choosing people having the **same interests** or leisure activities as you do
- Having a **positive state of mind**
- Participating in **local organised activities**



What about active people?

Generally active people have acquaintances thanks to their work or their activities and the communication is needed for accomplishing their work.

- ✓ **Having a break** for talking about other topics with colleagues
- ✓ **Taking some time** after work for going with friends or family to restaurants or shows

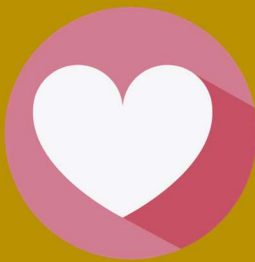
Rest and sleep



General information

Sleep is vital to maintain a favorable state of health. We spend a third of our lives sleeping. Sleep is necessary for the body to rest and recover energy.

Restful sleep is important as it helps cope with the activities of a new day and produces a more positive and energetic mood. Without enough quality sleep, you will become more irritable and ill-tempered more easily!



Perfect rest and sleep

Perfect sleep consists on sleeping **between 6 and 8 hours a day**. But this does not mean that if you sleep less or more of that time you have sleep problems. If after nights you feel energetic and consider that you had a restorative sleep, don't worry if you sleep more or less than the recommended ours.

Everybody has different needs, what is proposed here is an indicative; sleep needs vary depending on the people.

Most common mistakes



- ✓ Watching TV or using the PC until late night. **Screens at night** do not allow you to feel sleepy. Why don't you try to read a book or listening relaxing music instead of watching TV?
- ✓ **Having big and late dinners.** Sleep with a full stomach can reduce the quality of the sleep, making you feel heavy and uncomfortable.
- ✓ Going to bed every day at a different time. **Irregular sleep times** don't let your body having a routine.



Our tips for ageing better

- **Performing regular exercise** enhances sleeping habits. People who don't do any physical activity usually sleep either more than 9 hours or less than 5 hours, what is outside of the recommended frame: between 6 and 8 hours.
- Try to keep your room **between 15 and 20 degrees** centigrade.
- **Do not use your phone, computer or watch TV before going to sleep**, using them alters the feeling of sleep.
- **Avoid any stimulating drinks** as coffee or alcohol, these drinks stimulate you and will not let you sleep.
- Try to have a **light and early dinner**, that way you will go to bed feeling light.
- When going to bed, **try to leave bad thoughts and worries behind**. It can be hard but it's worth it!
- Having a routine really helps you to have a proper sleep, **try to go to bed always at the same time**.

Conclusion

During their research, partners involved in the HELP project identified five determining factors linked with people's lifestyles (nutrition, healthy mind, physical activity, social life, rest and sleep) that could change significantly seniors' healthy state. It is necessary to emphasize that all these factors are interdependent and affect each other in everyone's daily life.

Through the guidelines listed above, the first objective was to inform the general public for keeping healthy lifestyle for as long as possible and for enjoying life in the best conditions. The second one was to advise the readers on how they can improve or augment their daily actions that lead to healthy living.

Finally, any behavior that benefits physical, mental or emotional health is a healthy habit. Health and wellbeing could be modified and enhanced throughout life and it is never too late to make good resolutions.



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