

HERKIMER COUNTY OFFICE FOR THE AGING

NUTRITION NEWS

WRITTEN BY: SHANNON DAVIS, RD, CDN
LAYOUT BY: REGINA PIZZO

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Happy New Year!

Another year has come and gone! Have you looked back at your New Year's Resolutions from last year to see how successful you were? Now is the time for another fresh start! Keeping your goals reasonable and realistic can help ensure a successful, happy, and healthier 2026!

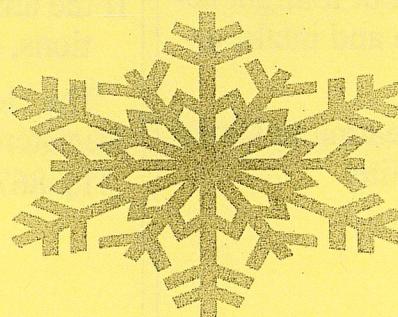
When setting goals, remember that no change is too small, especially if it is a lasting change. Another important consideration when setting goals is to make sure they are measurable. Instead of just saying,

"I'm going to get healthier this year," make your resolution specific enough that you can determine if you were successful. For instance, you can say "I'm going to exercise three times a week this year," and then you will be able to monitor your progress.

Changing eating habits is at the top of the list of resolutions for many of us. Again, make your goals reasonable enough that you can stick to them. You can always make a secondary resolution if you are successful with the first. Instead of swearing off desserts for a resolution, make a commitment to limit-

ing your treats to a couple of times a week initially. Satisfying that sweet tooth might make your goals much easier to adhere to.

Lastly, think about healthy additions instead of focusing on foods to limit. Make a resolution to add more whole grains daily. Or adding a glass of skim milk every day or even every other day to add some vitamins, calcium, and protein. Try increasing your intake of fruits and vegetables to add vitamins, minerals, and fiber. You might see a gradual weigh loss as well if the bulk of your intake comes from fruits and vegetables. And you may also be decreasing your risk of developing a multitude of different chronic conditions, including different types of cancer.



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Single Leg Balance Exercise

Hold on to the chair back with both hands.

-Lift one leg off the ground, slowly.

-Maintain your balance while standing on one leg for 5 seconds.

-Return to the starting position and repeat 5 times. Try to increase the time spent standing on one leg.

-Perform on opposite leg.

As you may expect, our nutritional needs are constantly changing through the span of our life. As we enter the elderly years, some of these changes become more pronounced. Physiologically, our appetites tend to decline as we age. This may be related to a less heightened sense of smell. Much of our appetite comes from the olfactory sense. This phenomenon is also linked to a decline in our sense of taste.

While some of us fight the battle of weight gain, others struggle to consume adequate calories as they age. Here are some general tips for increasing intake:

- * Eat regularly; small frequent meals may be best.
- * Try new foods, new seasonings, and new ways of preparing food. Don't rely on convenient/processed foods if possible.
- * Eat in a well lit or sunny area; try to use foods with different flavors, colors, shapes, textures, or smells.
- * Arrange things so food preparation and clean up are easier.
- * Eat with friends, relatives, or at a meal site when possible
- * Share cooking responsibilities with a neighbor.
- * Use community resources for help in shopping and other daily care needs.

*Stay physically active if possible; not only might it improve your mood but it might actually increase your appetite and intake as well.

- * Try to take a walk before eating to stimulate your appetite.

*When necessary, chop, grind, or blend hard-to-chew foods. Softer protein rich foods can be substituted for meat when dental limitations normal food intake. Prepare soups, stews, cooked whole-grain cereals, and casseroles.

- * If your eating movements are limited, cut the food ahead of time, use utensils with deep sides or handles, and obtain more specialized utensils if needed.

While it's true that as we age, we may need fewer calories to maintain a normal body weight, it is also true that as we age our absorption of certain key nutrients becomes less efficient. Another pronounced change seen in the elderly is a diminished sense of thirst. While our fluid requirements generally stay about the same, an additional effort may need to be made to meet that need. It can be especially difficult for caregivers to assess a loved one's nutritional status. Here are a few basic questions you can ask that may provide an indication of needing to seek outside help in regards to nutrition.

- Has there been an unintentional weight loss or gain?
- Has the appetite changed significantly?
- Is there difficulty chewing or swallowing?
- Does the person eat fewer than 2 meals per day
- Is the person drinking enough fluids?
- Have bowel habits changed?

If the answer is yes to 3 or more of these questions, consider consulting with a dietitian.

The Herkimer County Office for the Aging Registered Dietician can be reached by calling 315-867-1124 and nutrition counseling is **FREE!**

Portion control can be a key factor in maintaining a healthy weight. Instead of trying to eliminate certain foods or groups of foods, cutting down on our portions and eating a moderate, varied diet can help you be successful in meeting your goals. But what exactly constitutes a portion?

It is not surprising that many Americans are overestimating what they think the "recommended" serving of food is. This is partially due to the fact that many more meals are now consumed outside of the home compared to the number of meals eaten outside the home even 20 years ago.

It is also important to know how many portions of certain food groups are recommended each day. This can lead to some confusion. For example, a serving of a starch or carbohydrate is generally considered to be about 1/2 cup. (ex: 1/2 cup of rice, pasta, or cooked cereal). But the average healthy adult can eat between 6-11 servings of grains daily. Therefore, while a serving size may only be 1/2 cup, you can easily have 2-3 servings at a meal.

Here is a guideline for appropriate serving sizes:

- ◆ 1.5 ounce serving of cheese (about the size of four stacked dice)
- ◆ Fruit, cooked rice or pasta, and cooked vegetables should all have the same serving size: 1/2 cup, which is about the size of a tennis ball cut in half
- ◆ Cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish should be between 2 and 3 ounces which is about the size of the palm of your hand
- ◆ Cooked cereal also consists of a 1/2 cup serving. A serving of cold, ready to eat cereal should be about 3/4 cup.
- ◆ One cup of raw leafy vegetables (about the size of a tennis ball) is considered a serving.

- ◆ One slice of bread is considered a serving, while 1/2 of an English muffin or bagel is serving.

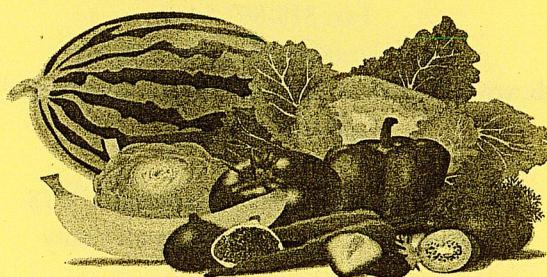
Remember, it is acceptable to have more than one serving of any food group at a meal; for an example, a sandwich on 2 pieces of bread at lunch is not considered excessive. The key is to remember to count both slices of bread as a serving.

So how many servings of each group are "allowed?" for a healthy adult on a 2000 calorie diet, the following number of servings are recommended:

- 6-11 servings of breads, cereals, grains, pastas, rice, etc
 - 3-5 servings of vegetables
 - 2-4 servings of fruit
- 2-3 servings each of milk/cheese/yogurt
- 2-3 servings of meat, poultry, or fish

A good sensible plan is most clearly depicted by the food guide pyramid or the newer "my plate" diagrams. It shows balance and moderation which are the keys to any successful meal plan. For more information, look at www.choosemyplate.gov.

Now is a great time to start experimenting with new, healthier meal options as well. Get together with a friend to try cooking a new recipe together. You can even share the cleanup! There's a recipe on page 4 to get one you started!



As we roll into 2026 be on the lookout for more exciting programming from this office including: TMobile Technology Classes, Tai Chi Classes and Falls and Fire Prevention Presentations.

If you would like to sign up to receive notifications regarding Herkimer County Office for the Aging Programming, please contact the office at 315-867-1371.



HEAP

Emergency HEAP opens up on
January 5th, 2026

If you are income eligible, have less than a quarter tank of fuel or a disconnect notice you may be eligible for additional assistance

**Please call the HEAP Office
at 315-867-1195**

HERKIMER COUNTY OFFICE FOR THE AGING

109 Mary St., Herkimer, NY 13350

Phone: 315-867-1121

Fax: 315-867-1448

Email: hcofa@herkimercounty.org

Web: www.herkimercounty.org; then 'departments' then 'Office for the Aging'

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Greek Chicken Pasta

1 (16 ounce) package linguine pasta

1/2 cup chopped red onion

1 tbs. olive oil

2 cloves garlic, crushed

1 pound skinless, boneless chicken breast—cut into bite sized pieces

1 (14 ounce) can marinated artichoke hearts, drained and chopped

1 large tomato, chopped

1/2 cup crumbled feta cheese

3 tbs. chopped fresh parsley

2 tbs. lemon juice

2 tsp dried oregano

Salt and pepper to taste

2 lemons, wedged, for garnish

Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to boil. Cook pasta for 8-10 minutes; drain.

Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium high heat. Add onion and garlic; saute until fragrant, about 2 minutes. Stir in the chicken and cook, stirring occasionally, until chicken is no longer pink in the center and the juices run clear; about 5 to 6 minutes.

Reduce heat to medium low; add artichoke hearts, tomato, feta cheese, parsley, lemon juice, oregano, and cooked pasta. Cook and stir until heated through, about 2-3 minutes. Remove from heat, season with salt and pepper and garnish with lemon wedges.

