

Nutritional Information from Debbie C. Kern, Med, LDN, RD, Director, Pharmacy Technician Program, Associate Professor, Dietetic Technician Program at Delgado Community College.

<Q>Debbie, I have some questions regarding my mother-in-law who has AD and myself, as caregiver. First off, at 80 and as a moderately active woman, what are the basic requirements she needs to maintain her health? What are the best ways to ensure she gets these? Can we do this without a daily vitamin supplement? What foods are best for this, and is there a method of preparing the food that is better than the others? ie., frying vs. grilling?

Debbie Kern: With age, it becomes more important that diets contain enough calcium, fiber, iron, protein, and vitamins A, C, D and Folacin. Eating a variety of foods is the best way to get the full spectrum of nutrients. However, variety is often lacking in the diet of seniors so try some of the following:

Tips include: --eat breakfast foods for lunch or lunch foods for dinner. Breakfast foods especially whole grain cereals like multi-grain Chex are fortified with all of the needed nutrients --Use color as a guide for variety in a meal. A good meal should provide three distinct colors on the plate --Increase variety of texture in meals. Add whole grain breads (look for 100% or whole in the name), whole grain cereals and cooked legumes (beans of all types) --Use the food guide pyramid (should be found in the newsletter or go to the USDA web site for a copy As far as does your mother-in-law needs a daily supplement , that need varies wit

Debbie Kern: Frying or grilling?? The nutritionist says grilling is best most of the time. However, frying techniques vary. If you are deep-fat frying an item in a couple of inches of oil then NO but if you are sautéing in a "good oil" such as olive oil , then it is OK. Remember sautéing is lightly coating the pan with oil or oil spray and preparing the food under fast/high heat. Adding broth or stocks to the sautéing will take the place of the fat and add a little extra moisture and flavor. Getting back to grilling-- Gas is better than charcoal grilling and it is best not to CHAR the foods. If the food is fatty and flames up a lot during grilling, place the food on alum foil on the grill. just pierce a few

<Q>Second, I'd like to know what foods you recommend for caregivers to sustain us through stressful times so we're not always reaching for a chocolate or caffeine fix?

Debbie Kern: During stress we all look for our comfort foods and chocolate is one of the top items. Sometimes we can substitute items such as frozen fruit juice bars or non-fat frozen yogurt. But if you have to have the chocolate, consider the amount you need to calm you--could you get by with just a small amount/one or two bites--then try having on hand snack size chocolates available. If you are tempted to eat all of them, put the remaining items in the freezer. If that is too much of a temptation, then try adding cocoa

powder to milk beverages or use some chocolate flavored no-cal mints. Brushing your teeth when the urge to indulge is high will help delay your eating bout. Caffeine is a cardiac stimulant a

<Q>Third, are there any assistance programs caregivers can tap in to for meals or help in making these meals?

Debbie Kern: Contact the Jefferson Parish Council on Aging and your local senior centers for help with locating the agencies which provide these meals. (sometimes the waiting list is long) Food for Families provides commodity foods for needy individuals

<Q>Another question, many times, people living with AD crave sweets. How much should we indulge them? Do you have any suggestions where we can meet their sweet tooth without rotting it, or without using up what appetite they have on empty calories?

Debbie Kern: I love smoothies! Just blend together some fresh or frozen fruit, juices, non-fat vanilla or plain yogurt and a little ice if your fruit is fresh. Not only is this a tasty sweet, it is easy to eat/drink and can add a lot of fiber and calcium. Add a little non-fat powdered milk will increase the protein level (1/3 cup adds 8 grams of protein)