

Eat your age

How should your diet change as you age? Exercise and nutrition scientist **Kathleen Alleaume** gives a decade-by-decade breakdown of the best foods to guarantee you look and feel your best at every age

YOUR 20s

Your 20s can be a disorganised whirlwind of working hard and playing

even harder. Between staying late at work when you're building your career and regular big nights out with friends, there isn't a lot of time to prepare healthy and balanced meals.

Your motto

Have a back-up plan

When it comes to healthy eating, the key is to plan ahead and be prepared. Make it a habit to do a weekly shop and stock up on nutritious ingredients you can prepare quickly, such as whole-wheat pasta, instant brown rice, fresh fruit and pre-cut vegetables (frozen or canned varieties are just as good).

Enjoy these ingredients with speedy protein additions, such as eggs, canned fish or legumes. Where possible, cook in bulk so your homemade convenience meals can be pulled from the freezer and reheated in no time.

Key nutrients

Calcium

Now is the time to squeeze in extra calcium for strong bones to prevent osteoporosis (brittle bones) in the future. Aim for

three serves of calcium-rich foods a day. Dairy foods like milk, cheese and yoghurt provide the richest sources of calcium. Other good sources include fish (for example, salmon and sardines), tofu, seeds and nuts. Try these ideas:

- Add a dollop of yoghurt to your breakfast cereal.
- Whip up a fruit smoothie.
- Add some low-fat feta to dark-green leafy salads.
- Snack on raw nuts.
- Sprinkle seeds on salads.

Iron

Eat too little iron and you'll suffer fatigue and a weakened immune system. Red meat, chicken and fish are the best sources of iron, as well as also being a good source of protein and zinc.

Smaller amounts of iron can be found in green leafy vegetables and legumes, but they should be consumed with foods rich in vitamin C (such as tomato, broccoli or capsicum) to increase the amount of iron the body can absorb. Try these ideas:

- Chopped strawberries, berries and kiwifruit added to breakfast cereal.
- Vegetables or a salad with meals.
- Fruit for dessert.
- A small glass of orange juice with meals.



YOUR 30s

Between establishing your career, running after kids and managing

your social calendar, every day is frantic and can leave you feeling totally sapped of energy – not to mention the metabolism that once allowed you to burn through late night French fries is slowing down. Here's how to turn back the biological clock.

Your motto

Go low carbs, not no carbs

One mistake often made by women in this age group is skimping on carbs, believing

it to be the best way to stop the waistline spread. Instead of ditching carbs altogether, concentrate on low-GI carbs, which contain slow-releasing energy and are high in fibre.

Fibre keeps you fuller for longer, decreasing the temptation to snack on the kids' leftovers. Include two slices of wholegrain toast, one cup of cooked pasta, brown rice, noodles, rolled oats or two pieces of fruit per day.

Key nutrients

Folate

For women in their child-bearing years, folate (or folic acid) is extremely important.

A lack of folate in the diet can cause neural-tube defects in babies. Great sources of folate include leafy greens such as spinach, broccoli, asparagus and citrus fruits.

Iodine

For pregnant or breastfeeding women, an iodine deficiency could increase the risk of miscarriage, still birth and premature birth. Just three serves of low-fat dairy products per day and two to three serves of seafood a week can supply mothers with the iodine needed to keep themselves, their children or their unborn baby healthy.



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YOUR 40s

A woman's body goes through significant changes as it approaches

menopause: oestrogen production slows dramatically, muscle mass decreases as fat deposits increase and metabolism slows down even further.

Your motto

Speed up your metabolism

At this time of life many women take good health for granted, yet after the age of 40 your metabolic rate (the speed at which the body burns calories) begins to drop. Combine this with a lack of exercise and it's no wonder the middle age spread affects so many people. Eat a diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids, found in fish, good quality olive oil and green leafy vegetables. Other great metabolism boosters include spicy foods, citrus fruits and green tea.

Key nutrients

Fibre

Aim to eat a high fibre diet to maintain digestive health and keep you full on fewer calories. Fill up on three servings of whole

grains (brown rice, oats, rye, and corn) daily and eat at least two pieces of fresh fruit and five cups of vegies every day.

Soybeans

Soybeans are thought to be of some health benefit to menopausal women. They contain hormone-like substances called phytoestrogens ('phyto' means plant) known to mimic the action of the hormone oestrogen.

The health benefits of soy for menopausal women could include fewer hot flushes, protection from coronary heart disease and lowered risk of osteoporosis. There are several tasty varieties of soy products that can make a great addition to any meal. Try these ideas:

- Calcium-fortified soy milk
- Tofu
- Soy nuts
- Edamame
- Tempeh
- Miso
- Soy patties, cheese and yoghurt
- Soy breakfast cereal.

*Kathleen Alleaume is an accredited exercise physiologist and nutritionist and founder of The Right Balance www.therightbalance.com.au **



Healthy ageing with antioxidants

What's all the hype?

Free radicals are the equivalent of rogue agents in your body that cause damage when they react with important cells. Once formed, these highly reactive radicals can start a chain reaction – like dominoes – that leads to poor cell function or even cell death, which can lead to ageing. To prevent free radical damage, the body has a defence system

of antioxidants, which ward off free radicals to minimise the impact of ageing.

As you age, you become more susceptible to the long-term effects of oxidative stress (an imbalance between the production and detoxification of free radicals in our bodies). Thankfully, consuming certain foods and beverages may reverse age-related changes, such as oily fish and richly coloured fruit and vegetables.

Even better, you can also

find antioxidants in the foods you love – wine, chocolate and even beef – which can be enjoyed in moderation.

Common antioxidants as easy as A, C, E

Vitamin A: For vibrant and healthy looking skin. Good sources include milk, cheese, yellow-orange fruits and vegetables, particularly spinach and broccoli.

Vitamin C: To boost your immune function. Good sources

include citrus fruits, broccoli, tomatoes and berries.

Vitamin E: To prevent heart disease. Good sources include green leafy vegetables, wholegrains (rye, brown rice, oats, barley) and eggs.

Other antioxidants

Selenium: Found in Brazil nuts, red meat, fish, eggs and dairy products.

Lycopene: Found in tomatoes, papaya, pink grapefruit and blood oranges.