



# Nutrition for Older Adults: Digestion, Food Intolerance and Nutrition

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## Digestion Problems and Food Tolerances

Good nutrition can help keep the body healthy. However, many factors including changes in digestion and food tolerances can get in the way of good nutrition.

Many people find they have changes in digestion with age. Digestive secretions may decrease with age. Tolerance of some foods, such as fat and dairy foods, may decrease with age.

## Decreased Stomach Acid

Stomach acid may decrease with age. This can affect digestion and cause feelings of indigestion.

Eating smaller more frequent meals may be helpful if lower stomach acid causes feelings of indigestion.

## Atrophic Gastritis

This is a condition that affects almost a third of older adults.

## Symptoms include:

- Inflamed stomach.
- Bacterial overgrowth.
- Low stomach acid.
- Low intrinsic factor.

This condition can hurt nutrient digestion and nutrient absorption, most notably vitamin B12, but also calcium.

Vitamin B12 may be absorbed better from dietary supplements than food.

## Fat Intolerance

Some people do not handle foods high in fat as well with age. Fat intolerance can cause stomach pain and diarrhea.

## Tips for Fat Intolerance

Decrease the amount of fat added to foods. Choose low-fat foods and use low-fat cooking methods to lower fat intake.

# Lactose Intolerance

Some people do not handle milk and milk products as well with age.

Lactose intolerance can also cause stomach pain, bloating and diarrhea.

## Tips for Lactose Intolerance

Some people can handle smaller amounts of milk or milk products.

Some people can handle fermented milk products such as buttermilk, yogurt and cheese.

Milk or milk products may be handled better when taken with a meal.

The enzyme that breaks lactose down so it can be absorbed is lactase. Milk and milk products where the enzyme lactase has been added may be easier for people to handle.

## Sources

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