

# Smart Choices

## Nutrition News for Seniors

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### Determine Your Nutritional Health

Have you ever thought . . .

- I have trouble chewing.
- Food just doesn't taste the same anymore.
- I can't get out to go shopping.
- It's too much trouble to cook for one person.
- I'm just not that hungry.

These are some of the common reasons older people may not eat healthy meals. Often this puts them at nutritional risk. There are some warning signs of poor nutritional health that can suggest risk. You can use the word "determine" to remind you of the warning signs.

**Disease:** Any disease, illness or chronic condition which causes you to change the way you eat, or makes it hard for you to eat, may put your nutritional health at risk.

**Eating Poorly:** Eating too little or eating too much can lead to poor health. Not eating a variety of foods can also cause poor nutritional health.

**Tooth Loss/Mouth Pain:** A healthy mouth, teeth and gums are important. Missing, loose or rotten teeth can make it hard to eat. Dentures which don't fit well or cause mouth sores can be a problem also.

**Economic Hardship:** Having less money to spend on food can make it difficult to get the foods you need to stay healthy.

**Reduced Social Contact:** Many older adults live alone. Being with people daily has positive effects on well-being and eating habits.

**Multiple Medicines:** Growing older may change the way your body responds to drugs. The more medicines you take, the greater the chance for side effects such as increased or decreased appetite, change in taste, constipation, weakness, diarrhea, nausea, etc.

**Involuntary Weight Loss/Gain:** Losing or gaining a lot of weight when you are not trying to do so is an important warning sign. Being overweight or underweight increases your chance of poor health.

**Needs Assistance in Self Care:** Many older adults have trouble walking, shopping, buying and cooking food.

**Elder Years Above Age 80:** As age increases so does risk of frailty and health problems.

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**Snack like a super hero. Power up with fruit and yogurt.**

## White Chili

1 medium onion, chopped  
 2 teaspoons garlic powder  
 1/2 teaspoon pepper  
 2 teaspoons ground cumin  
 1 (4 ounce) can diced green chilies  
 3 (15.5 ounce) cans white beans  
 2 cups cooked, diced chicken  
 4 ounces reduced-fat Monterey  
 Jack cheese, shredded

Sauté onions with garlic powder in a large nonstick saucepan sprayed with cooking spray. Add the pepper, cumin, chilies, beans and chicken. Stir; simmer 10 minutes. Serve hot topped with cheese.

8 Servings—Each serving has 377 calories, 11 g fat, 40 g carbohydrates, 13 g fiber, 554 mg sodium  
 Recipe from Northharvest Bean Growers Association



## Use This Checklist to Determine Your Nutritional Health:

| Read the statements below. Circle the number in the yes column for those that apply to you. For each yes answer, score the number in the box. | YES |
|---|-----|
| I have an illness or condition that made me change the kind and/or amount of food I eat.  | 2   |
| I eat fewer than 2 meals per day.   | 3   |
| I eat few fruits or vegetables or milk products.  | 2   |
| I have 3 or more drinks of beer, liquor or wine almost every day.   | 2   |
| I have tooth or mouth problems that make it hard for me to eat.   | 2   |
| I don't always have enough money to buy the food I need.  | 4   |
| I eat alone most of the time.   | 1   |
| I take 3 or more different prescribed or over-the-counter drugs a day.  | 1   |
| Without wanting to, I have lost or gained 10 pounds in the last 6 months.   | 2   |
| I am not always physically able to shop, cook and/or feed myself.   | 2   |
| <b>Total</b>  |     |

### Total Your Nutritional Score. If it's . . .

- 0—2** Good! Recheck your nutritional score in 6 months.
- 3—5** You are at moderate nutritional risk. See what can be done to improve your eating habits and lifestyle. Your office on aging, senior nutrition program, senior citizens center or health department can help. Recheck your nutritional score in 3 months.
- 6 or more** You are at high nutritional risk. Bring this checklist the next time you see your doctor, dietitian or other qualified health or social service professional. Talk with them about any problems you may have. Ask for help to improve your nutritional health.



### What's the Purpose of SNAP?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP is about helping people with limited incomes improve their nutrition for better health and disease prevention. The program is available to all eligible persons.

Food Stamp coupons have been replaced by an electronic SNAP card that looks and works just like a typical debit or credit card used by any grocery shopper. No one but you and the grocery check-out clerk will know you are using SNAP. This program can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more contact 1-888-LA HELPU or visit [www.dss.state.la.us](http://www.dss.state.la.us).



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