

Older adults in Europe do not eat enough protein – the PROMISS project recommendations can help

The PROMISS (PREvention Of Malnutrition In Senior Subjects) project presented its results in a hybrid conference on 25 June 2021. With the European population growing older, the challenge is to age healthily and actively. However, in Europe, between 20-50% of all older adults living at home are malnourished or at risk of protein energy malnutrition.

Based on the outcomes of the European-funded research project PROMISS (PREvention Of Malnutrition In Senior Subjects), it was concluded that for optimal physical functioning, older adults should eat at least 1.0 gram protein/kg bodyweight/day. However, more than half of the older adults does not meet this requirement. Based on these and other results PROMISS developed optimized, sustainable and evidence-based dietary and physical activity recommendations to prevent malnutrition and support active and healthy ageing.

Recommendations

Based on scientific evidence, PROMISS recommends the following for older adults on:

Protein intake

- Consume more than 1.0 g protein per kg body weight per day as it benefits physical function;
- Consume at least 30 g of protein in one meal per day and, if possible, in two meals per day;
- Use protein-enriched food products to increase protein intake when appetite is poor or with a vegetarian diet;
- Increase protein intake gradually and use products with a high protein density, and especially high protein drinks, to avoid feelings of fullness and bloating.
- Older adults, their dietitians or health professionals should evaluate the protein intake with the Protein Screener at www.proteinscreener.nl.

A more sustainable diet

- Eat more plant-based protein such as legumes, cereals, nuts and seeds;
- It is not necessary to go completely vegan or vegetarian;
- Eat less animal based protein (such as beef, lamb, and processed meats) and choose chicken and pork – if meat is eaten;
- Fish should not be eaten more than once a week;
- If fish is eaten, eco-labels on certified fish products such as the blue Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) logo, and Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) logo should be considered.

Physical activity

- Be physically active for at least 30 minutes per day, as it benefits physical function and quality of life, and helps to prevent frailty and protein-energy malnutrition;
- The longer, the more frequent, and/or the more intensive older adults are physically active, the more their health will benefit;
- Engage in activities that strengthen the muscles and bones, for example resistance training;
- Sedentary behaviour should be reduced as much as possible, as this lowers the risk of functional decline and frailty.

About PROMISS

PROMISS (PRevention Of Malnutrition In Senior Subjects) is a multidisciplinary international consortium that performed research on the prevention of malnutrition in older people living at home. The project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, grant n° 678732.

More information about the project, [scientific publications](#), practical tools, and explanatory videos about protein can be found on the PROMISS website: www.promiss-vu.eu

Recommendations and supporting materials for different target audiences are also available:

- [Older adults \(available in multiple languages\)](#)
- [Health professionals \(available in English and German\)](#)
- [Dietitians and nutritionists \(available in English and Dutch\)](#)
- [Policy makers \(in English\)](#)
- [Food industry and SMEs \(in English\)](#)

For more information or questions about the project please contact the project office at promiss.po@vu.nl.