



## DEPARTMENT OF **PUBLIC HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES**

### August 2025 Nutrition Article **National Wellness Month**

Wellness is typically regarded as a comprehensive approach to health and overall well-being. Words like “health” and “wellness” are often used interchangeably. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as a “state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of diseases or infirmity.”

To explain better, the National Wellness Institute defines wellness as “an active process through which people become aware of, and make choices toward, a more successful existence.”

National Wellness Month is observed every August, with the goal of promoting self-care and healthy lifestyle habits. All individuals are encouraged to prioritize their mental, physical, and emotional well-being by adopting small, sustainable habits. It’s especially important for older adults to practice self-care and maintain and promote long-term health.

#### **Eat a Balanced Diet**

A balanced diet is crucial for older adults as it supports energy, vitality, and overall wellness. It helps maintain muscle mass, supports immune system function, and enhances cognitive abilities.

In short, older Americans benefit greatly from a balanced diet because food serves as medicine, increasing our physical and psychological well-being by supplying the body and brain with the necessary nutrients to promote and maintain health.

Older adults often face challenges, including decreased appetite and changes in their metabolism. By setting small and sustainable intentions to establish a routine of eating balanced foods, older adults can mitigate the risks associated with aging. Focusing specifically on the cleanest and most wholesome foods – minimally processed and free from synthetic ingredients, additives, and flavorings – provides the maximum benefit. Focusing specifically on fruits, vegetables, quality sources of protein, and whole grains (see recipe below), older adults can easily maintain their energy, support vitality, and promote overall wellness while enjoying the taste of real food. Visit [dietaryguidelines.gov](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov) to learn more about healthy eating for older adults.

#### **Monitor and Manage Chronic Conditions**

Most older adults deal with health challenges. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports the prevalence of chronic conditions among older adults is significant, with nearly 90% of those over the age of 65 reporting at least one chronic condition.

A chronic condition is a condition or disease that lasts for one year or more and requires ongoing medical attention or significantly limits daily activities. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) reports the top three chronic conditions affecting older adults are high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and arthritis.

Monitoring and managing chronic conditions play a crucial role in supporting happy, healthy aging. Promoting wellness in this area involves taking intentional steps, such as engaging with pharmacists to better understand and manage medications, scheduling annual visits with a primary care provider, and securing appropriate referrals to coordinated health care professionals – including physical therapists, dietitians, and social workers – who can assist in accessing resources for effective management.

## Stay Hydrated

Hydration is a fundamental aspect of wellness that is required by every single biological process in our body and also influences energy, mood, cognitive function, and physical health. It's essential for maintaining every cell, organ, and bodily function. Hydration is crucial for older adults as it helps prevent serious health complications associated with dehydration, which is more common in older adults due to aging and increased use of medications.

## Stay Active

Staying active as you age is crucial for maintaining physical, emotional, and cognitive wellness. Regular physical activity — regardless of duration or intensity — helps manage chronic conditions, reduce health risks, improve mood, and enhance mobility and strength. Therapeutic and enjoyable activities become even more rewarding with improved physical fitness. Engaging in a variety of activities suited to individual ability not only makes exercise more enjoyable but also helps reduce the risk of injury. Find out more about what's possible at [ncoa.org/article/exercise-programs-that-promote-senior-fitness](https://ncoa.org/article/exercise-programs-that-promote-senior-fitness)

## Stay Connected

Staying connected is crucial for maintaining wellness as we age. Social connections offer emotional support, which is essential for maintaining good mental health. The CDC emphasizes how important social connections are as they help to protect against serious illness and disease, with research showing older adults who have strong social connections live longer than those without. Continue to seek out social connections with friends, family, and community organizations, such as local senior centers and AARP.

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## RECIPE OF THE MONTH

### Homemade Granola

Store-bought granola can be more like a dessert with too much added sugar and not enough nutrition. Here's an easy way to incorporate whole grains, add a bit of crunch, and achieve the perfect amount of sweetness.

#### INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups of old-fashioned oats
- 2 cups of your choice of nuts
- ½ tsp of cinnamon
- Pinch of salt
- ½ cup honey or pure maple syrup
- ¼ cup olive oil
- ½ tsp vanilla

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Pre-heat oven to 300°F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Combine oats, nuts, cinnamon, and salt in a large bowl.
3. In a small saucepan, warm honey or maple syrup and olive oil over low heat.
4. Stir until well combined.
5. Remove from heat, and stir in vanilla.
6. Pour over oat mixture, and mix well.
7. Spread evenly on parchment paper, and bake for 15-20 minutes.

