

Eating Well and Staying Strong

A practical guide for older adults with
bleeding disorders

December 2025



Created by the **European Haemophilia Consortium** with **Associated Professor MD Birkan İlhan**, Geriatrician (Internal Diseases Department, Liv Hospital, Istanbul, Türkiye), and **Dr William McKeown**, Consultant Geriatrician and Stroke Physician (Lead for Undergraduate Ageing and Health at Queen's University Belfast, United Kingdom).

Your body has unique needs!

As we age, our bodies change — muscle mass decreases, bones become more fragile, and energy needs are lower. If you have a bleeding disorder, good nutrition can help you stay strong, reduce injury risks, and keep your independence.

Nutrition risks in older adults

- **Under-/malnutrition:** Not getting enough energy, protein or nutrients.
- **Dehydration:** Not drinking enough water. Note that older people are less sensitive to thirst.
- **Nutrient Deficiencies:** Especially vitamin D, calcium, protein, folic acid and vitamin B12.
- **Obesity:** Too much fat in the body. Too many calories, not enough nutrients.
- **Sarcopenia:** Loss of muscle strength, loss of muscle mass, loss of muscle function
- **Sarcopenic obesity:** Too much fat and too little muscle.

✓ **Tip:** Get regular check-ups and ask your healthcare provider about blood tests for nutrient levels.

Build strong bones and muscles

- **Vitamin D:** Found in oily fish, fortified dairy, and supplements. Helps absorb calcium.
- **Calcium:** From milk, cheese, yoghurt, fortified plant milks, green leafy vegetables, and supplements.
- **Protein:** From lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans, lentils, nuts, and dairy.
- **Iron:** From lean red meat (small portions), poultry (especially dark meat), fish (sardines, salmon, mackerel, tuna), and eggs. Plant sources (non-heme iron – absorption improves if taken with vitamin C) include lentils, chickpeas, beans, tofu, spinach and other dark leafy greens. Take a supplement if prescribed by your doctor.
- **Folic Acid (Vitamin B9):** From vegetables (such as spinach, kale, broccoli, brussels sprouts, asparagus, and beetroot), legumes (such as lentils, chickpeas, black-eyed peas or kidney beans), other: avocado, eggs, citrus fruits, berries, nuts and seeds. Take the supplement if prescribed by your doctor.
- **Fibre (both soluble and insoluble):** From oats and oat bran, barley, whole grains (whole-wheat bread, brown rice, whole-grain pasta), cauliflower, green beans, courgette, root vegetables (parsnip, turnip, carrots), sweet potatoes, apples, pears, citrus fruits, bananas, beans and lentils, nuts and seeds.

 **Aim:** Include a protein- and fibre-rich food at every meal.

✓ Choose a healthy diet pattern

The **Mediterranean diet** works well for healthy ageing:

- Eat plenty of fruit, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts.
- Use healthy fats like olive oil, nuts, seeds, oily fish.
- Limit processed foods, salt, sugar, and fried snacks.

✓ Stay hydrated

Older adults may not feel thirsty but still need fluids. Generally, **1500-2000mls per day is recommended**, and this includes all drinks as well as liquid foods such as soup:

- Sip water, tea, or other low-sugar drinks throughout the day.
- Soups and juicy fruits (like melon or oranges) also help.

✓ Maintain a healthy weight

- Eat **smaller portions** but make them nutrient-rich.
- Focus on **foods that are high in protein, fibre, vitamins and minerals**, not just calories.
- **Avoid** high-salt, high-sugar, and high-fat processed foods.

✓ Look after your teeth and mouth

- Brush at least **twice a day** with a **fluoride-containing toothpaste** and see a dentist regularly.
- Good oral health makes it **easier to chew** and enjoy flavours.
- **Remember, healthy gums do not bleed!**

✓ Stay social and supported

Eating with family, friends, or in community groups makes **meals more enjoyable** and can help you eat better. If you live alone, try **video calls** during meals or join **local lunch clubs**. Research shows loneliness can be as damaging to health as smoking!

✓ Avoid harmful habits

- **No smoking:** It harms your heart, bones, and gums.
- **Limit or skip alcohol:** Even small amounts can affect bone health, increase falls risk, malnutrition risk, and interact with medicines.

✓ Keep moving

Pair your healthy diet with **regular physical activity**: walking, stretching, light resistance exercises, and swimming (if safe); **always check with your healthcare team before starting new exercises.**



Quick Daily Checklist

- ✓ Eat 5 portions (400 g) of fruit and vegetables.
- ✓ Include protein in every meal.*
- ✓ Include 1,200 mg of calcium daily to strengthen your bones.*
- ✓ Drink at least 6–8 cups of fluid.
- ✓ Limit salt to 5 g/day (about 1 tsp).
- ✓ Avoid sugar and processed snacks.
- ✓ Do some form of gentle activity.

***Where can you find protein and calcium?**

The recommended daily consumption of protein is around 1-1,2 g/kg.

Discuss with your healthcare professional how much protein you need! In some cases, requirements may increase to 2 g/kg.

Protein can be found in:

- 1 large egg (≈ 50 g): 6–7 g protein
- A palm-sized piece of chicken /turkey breast (about 100–120 g) → 30–35 g protein
- A deck-of-cards-sized portion lean beef or lamb → ≈100 g → 26–30 g protein
- 1 fillet salmon, cooked (120–150 g) → 25–33 g protein
- Greek yoghurt (150 g): 12–15 g protein
- Regular yoghurt (150 g): 5–6 g protein
- Cooked chickpeas (150 g / ~1 cup): 14–15 g protein
- Almonds (30 g): 6 g protein
- Quinoa (1 cup cooked): 8 g protein

Calcium can be found in:

- 150 g of yoghurt (≈ 1 cup) provides 200–250 mg of calcium.
- 30 g of cheese (≈ a matchbox-sized piece) provides 200–300 mg, depending on the type (cheddar, gouda, emmental, etc.).
- 200 ml of milk (≈ 1 glass) provides 240–260 mg.
- 200 ml fortified plant milk (soy, almond, oat) contains 240–300 mg.
- Calcium-fortified breakfast cereals provide 100–200 mg per serving.
- Fortified fruit juices may add 200–250 mg per 200 ml.
- Cooked broccoli (100 g): ~45 mg
- Almonds (30 g): ~70 mg

Remember:

Good nutrition and an **active lifestyle** can help you maintain strength, protect your bones, and enjoy life to the fullest — at any age.

Dr Birkan Ilhan: *“Rather than simply adding years to life, the goal should be to add life to your years. To achieve this, it is essential to avoid both malnutrition and obesity, and to maintain regular physical activity.”*

Dr William McKeown: *“Like everyone, we need to learn to have a healthy relationship with food. We need to learn to love what is good and how to avoid what is damaging. We need to find the diet that works for us as individuals, and as part of an active lifestyle, with good community and support, our diet can ensure we age with independence intact.”*

[**EHC Café Talk on Diet and Bone Health for ageing people with bleeding disorders HERE.**](#)

[**EHC Ageing Focus Area on the EHC Community Website HERE.**](#)

[**WHO on Healthy Diet HERE.**](#)

Reach out to the EHC at [**education@ehc.eu**](mailto:education@ehc.eu) to get in contact with the team.

★ 7-day menu for older adults

Please talk to your doctor about your dietary needs! The menu below is a generalised example of a healthy menu for aged individuals.

Note that some older adults experience **difficulty swallowing (dysphagia)**, especially after illnesses such as stroke, or in conditions like Parkinson's disease or dementia. A speech and language therapist can assess swallowing and recommend safe food and drink texture. This may involve cutting food into smaller pieces, using soft or puréed textures, or thickening liquids if advised.

If you notice coughing during meals, repeated chest infections, unexplained weight loss, or any difficulty swallowing, you should contact your doctor or a speech and language therapist. Many adults with swallowing difficulties can continue to enjoy the foods they love with the right modifications and support!

✓ Daily meals include:

- **Breakfast:** oats, yoghurt, eggs, fruit, fortified milk
- **Lunch:** bean soups, lentil salads, whole grains, vegetables
- **Dinner:** salmon, trout, poultry, tofu dishes, leafy vegetables
- **Snacks:** fruit, nuts, yoghurt, seeds



✓ DAY 1



Breakfast:

- Oatmeal made with fortified milk, topped with berries and ground flaxseed
- Green tea



Lunch:

- Lentil and spinach soup
- Whole-grain bread with olive oil



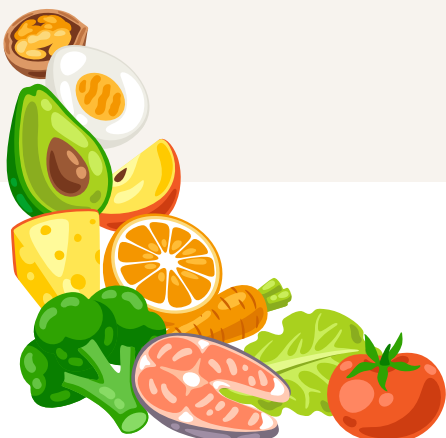
Snack:

- Orange slices and a handful of nuts



Dinner:

- Baked salmon
- Steamed broccoli and carrots
- Small portion of brown rice



✓ DAY 2



Breakfast:

- Greek yoghurt with sliced banana, oats and seeds
- Herbal tea



Lunch:

- Chickpea and avocado salad with cherry tomatoes, cucumber, parsley, olive oil



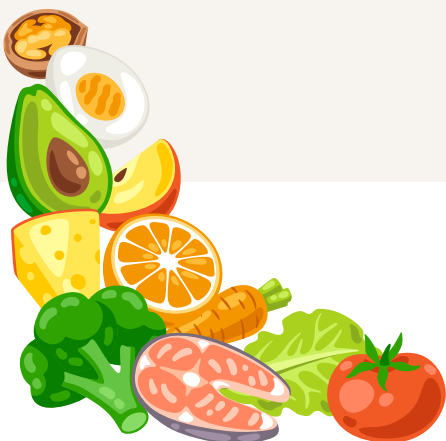
Snack:

- Apple with a tablespoon of nut butter



Dinner:

- Roast chicken thigh
- Sweet potato mash
- Green beans



✓ DAY 3



Breakfast:

- Whole-grain toast with scrambled eggs and spinach
- Citrus fruit



Lunch:

- Barley and vegetable bowl: barley, beetroot, courgette, chickpeas, olive oil



Snack:

- Pear with a few almonds



Dinner:

- Grilled sardines or mackerel
- Mixed salad: kale, carrots, lemon dressing
- Whole-grain couscous



✓ DAY 4



Breakfast:

- Fortified plant milk smoothie: banana, berries, oats, chia
- Whole-grain toast



Lunch:

- Bean and vegetable stew (kidney beans, carrots, spinach, tomatoes)
- Brown rice



Snack:

- Yoghurt or fortified plant yoghurt



Dinner:

- Lean beef stew (small portion) with root vegetables (parsnip, turnip)
- Steamed cauliflower



✓ DAY 5



Breakfast:

- Porridge with oat bran, raisins, flaxseed
- Glass of fortified milk



Lunch:

- Tuna salad: tuna, beans, tomatoes, olive oil, lemon
- Whole-grain crackers



Snack:

- Kiwi or citrus fruit



Dinner:

- Tofu stir-fry with broccoli, carrots and spinach
- Whole-grain noodles



✓ DAY 6



Breakfast:

- Whole-grain muesli with fortified milk
- Fresh berries



Lunch:

- Mediterranean vegetable soup (courgette, carrots, tomatoes, barley)
- Side of hummus with whole-grain pita



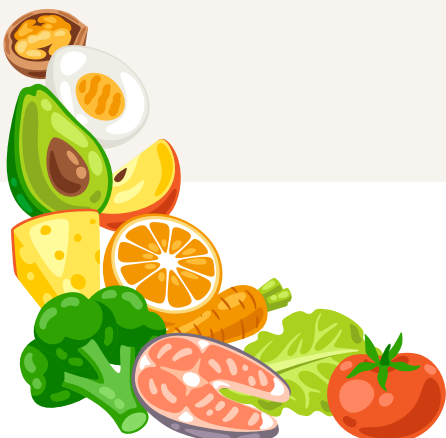
Snack:

- Handful of mixed seeds



Dinner:

- Baked trout or salmon
- Roasted sweet potatoes
- Mixed leafy greens with olive oil



✓ DAY 7



Breakfast:

- Omelette with kale, mushrooms and tomatoes
- Slice whole-grain bread



Lunch:

- Lentil and beetroot salad with citrus dressing
- Side of fruit (orange or mandarin)



Snack:

- Nuts and Greek yoghurt with honey



Dinner:

- Turkey or chicken stew with beans and vegetables
- Brown rice or barley

