EATING WITHOUT UTENSILS

Good nutrition is key to healthy aging. However, many older adults live with a variety of conditions—including dementia, arthritis or tremors—that can impact their ability to feed themselves using utensils. If a loved one has trouble with utensils for any reason, you often can turn any food into finger food simply by cutting it into smaller pieces.

Check out these ideas for nutritious snacks and meal substitutes that can be eaten without utensils. Some seniors may prefer eating several small meals or nutritious snacks throughout the day instead of three big meals, so these ideas also work for them.

NUTRITIOUS HANDHELD AND FINGER FOODS FOR OLDER ADULTS

SMOOTHIES
Smoothies are a great way to increase fruit and vegetable consumption and prevent dehydration. Include a handful of spinach, your favorite frozen fruit, water or milk, and combine in a blender. Try serving the smoothie in a cup with handles and use a lid to prevent spills.

SANDWICHES, WRAPS AND TOAST
Small sandwiches, wraps and toast can be eaten with your hands. For example, try a spread of tuna, lime, cilantro and avocado on whole grain bread.

SOUP
Soup served in a cup with handles can help you eat more vegetables, and you can do it without a spoon. You can also try pureeing the soup in a blender so it can be more easily sipped.

BITE-SIZED FRUIT
Snack on some chunks of fruit like pineapple, bananas and strawberries.

CHEESE CUBES
Snack on cheese cubes or cheese sticks to add calcium and protein. Choose low-fat cheese when possible.

QUESADILLAS
Heat refried beans, your favorite vegetables and a little cheese on a whole grain tortilla.

FRUIT- OR VEGETABLE-BASED BREADS AND COOKIES
Let your loved one snack on some fruit- or vegetable-based breads and cookies for a sweet treat that also counts toward their daily fruit or vegetable consumption. Check out the recipe below from MANNA FoodBank.

The Easiest Cookies in the World

Ingredients
• 2 over-ripe bananas
• 1 cup quick oats
• ½ cup chocolate chips

Mash bananas in a bowl using a fork. The consistency should be gooey; try to get the lumps out.
Pour in oats and chocolate chips and mix well.
With moist hands, form 2-inch balls of mixture; place on greased cookie sheet about 1 inch apart. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 to 20 minutes or until golden brown. Let cool and enjoy! Try adding raisins, craisins or nuts for more nutrients per serving.