

Separate nutrition in advancing age: positive experience

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Abstract

The concept of separate nutrition and food combining is based on the known fact that the composition of digestive juices depends on the food consumed. Critics have noted that combinations of products proposed or rejected within the framework of this concept are not always scientifically founded. This preprint does not propose combinations, but the consumption of only one product at a time. There is nothing unusual about it: this is the kind of nutrition by some persons working from home. Simple meals are prepared according to a momentary preference. Only one product is often consumed. As experience shows, with such a diet, dyspepsia does not appear. Aged people have lower calorie requirements but similar or even elevated nutrient needs compared to younger adults. Importance of the diet quality increases at an old age. Nutrient-dense options with relatively smaller portion sizes are advisable. Examples of dishes, makeable at home or available at restaurants, are discussed and illustrated here.

Keywords: diet; separate nutrition; older adults

The concept of separate nutrition and food combining is based on the known fact that the composition of digestive juices depends on the food consumed (Shelton 1998). Critics have noted that combinations of products proposed or rejected within the framework of this concept are not always scientifically substantiated (Vasilevskaya 2017). This article does not propose combinations, but the consumption of only one product at a time. Reasonable exceptions are allowed: sauces and seasonings to stimulate appetite and peristalsis; vegetable oil can be added to various dishes to prevent constipation. Fiber-rich foods may be effective against constipation and overweight; however, tolerance should be checked individually. The food must be variegated; but interval between ingestions of different products are recommendable. There is nothing unusual about it: this is the kind of nutrition by some persons working from home. Eating is an afterthought to a busy schedule (Longe 2008). There is no time to prepare complex dishes. Simple meals are prepared according to a momentary preference. Only one product is often consumed. In aged individuals, diversity is additionally limited due to periodontal disease and missing teeth. Examples of dishes: various pureed soups from one type of vegetable, crushed in an electric mill (blender), with the addition of flour (zatyrukha or liquid mash); mashed vegetables (Longe 2008) or fruits (for example, 2-3 tangerines or a pear crushed in a blender); canned fish (herring and other fish on sale is sometimes not fresh), minced meat heated in a microwave or boiled (meatballs). Given the obscurity of the ingredients of the minced meat on

sale, it is advisable to prepare it by one's own hand or just to cut the meat into small pieces. This mode of nutrition stimulates the secretion of digestive juices that are optimal for the given product. As experience shows, with such a diet, dyspepsia does not appear.

Older individuals have lower calorie requirements but similar or even elevated nutrient needs compared to younger adults (Dietary Guidelines 2020). Importance of the diet quality increases at an old age. Nutrient-dense options with smaller portions are advisable. Systematic reviews (Andres et al. 2024; Palacios et al. 2024) could not draw conclusions about the relationship between frequency of meals and significant indicators such as the energy intake and alignment with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (2020). In particular, proteins are necessary for hematopoiesis, regeneration of mucous membranes, maintenance of immunity, etc. High-protein diets contribute to muscle accretion thus being efficient against sarcopenia and frailty (Argilés et al. 2016; Negm et al. 2019; Robinson et al. 2018). Wider variety of protein sources is preferable. A balanced diet that integrates variety of nutrients and foods can be effective in preventing dementia (Otsuka 2022) also if consumed separately. From early to late old age, it is necessary to avoid undernutrition. When cognitive functions decline, the intake may decrease (Otsuka 2022); therefore, the quantities of food should be given more attention. As far as reasonably possible, the intake of added sugar, saturated fats, sodium and alcohol should be limited.

One should eat when hunger is felt, not necessarily at a certain time of the day. For those working from home, the order of the day may be shifted, daytime being confused with nighttime. However, it is better to limit food intake at night, since the functioning of the digestive system is subject to biorhythms (Hoogerwerf 2009; Martchenko et al. 2020). In addition, at night there is an increased risk of falling asleep with a full stomach, which can have adverse consequences: eructation with aspiration of gastric contents. It is necessary to recognize a false sense of hunger and not to eat when one has stress or neurotic symptoms. Overeating can be observed in obsessive-compulsive disorder. Nervous bulimia is singled out as a separate condition. Biological signals (hunger) should not be confused with emotional ones. Food will not fix anxiety, loneliness, boredom, and anger (Tribole and Resch 2003).

As far as possible, the eating should not be combined with conversations and other activities. The author once choked at an international meeting and splashed his discussion partner. If not thirsty, it is advisable to separate food intake from soft drinks, so as not to dilute the gastric juice. On the contrary, some bitter and/or beer seem to improve appetite and digestion; it can be taken with an appropriate snack. Meat, fish dishes or fruits can be accompanied by a moderate amount of wine. Milk is recommended to be taken separately from other products. Of note, milk is effective against high acidity with stomach irritation, heartburn, and gastritis symptoms. For the

same purpose, baking soda can be added to milk; everyone develops their own doses experimentally. Finally, an adequately applied method of separate nutrition helps to reduce body weight.

Some busy pensioners, consciously or unconsciously, eat separately. They do not prepare breakfast, lunch and dinner, but consume just one product when they perceive the need. Here the concept of separate nutrition is partly overlapping with that of “Intuitive eating” (Tribble and Resch 2003). The central premise of the latter program is that the organism possesses “innate wisdom” that already knows what foods and eating habits are best for the individual at the moment. Intuitive eating steers away from rigid dietary recommendations. The intuitive diet is highly personalized as each individual has different needs and preferences at different times. Professional literature confirmed that intuitive eaters have lower obesity rates (Longe 2008).

The author stopped using catering services when he still went to work. Lunch at a canteen or restaurant (appetizer, first course, second course, dessert) is too voluminous for some aged persons and contains various ingredients poorly combining with each other or physiologically superfluous. After a dinner, irresistible sleep may ensue with belching and aspiration. The quantity and formula should be determined by the individual based on appetite, taking into account personal experience and medical considerations: somebody is apprehensive of constipation, another one will have a stomach ache from acidic foods; certain products may cause allergy. However, the principle of separate nutrition can be observed in canteens and restaurants; menu examples: varied fish dishes with beer; bitter and meat hors d'oeuvres (e.g. bacon or ham with a pickle) plus a cutlet; port wine and fruit or cake (Fig. 1-4). Alcohol suggestions are optional: it is preferably to consume less than more. The perceived need should serve as a guide.



Fig. 1. Refectory in the 3rd floor of the GUM (Upper Trading Rows) in Moscow has always fresh hors d'oeuvres and drinks of standard quality. It is not always the case in other places; more images are in (Jargin 2025).



Fig. 2a. Refectory in the 3rd floor of the GUM (Upper Trading Rows). Some dishes are compatible with the concept of separate nutrition.



Fig. 2b,c. Refectory in the 3rd floor of the GUM (Upper Trading Rows). Some dishes are compatible with the concept of separate nutrition.



Fig. 3. Fasting menu.



Fig. 4. Russian Easter bread (Kulich).

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