

# Finger Foods (Memory Care)

This menu is for 1 week meal plan, adapted for elderly residents in assisted living facilities while ensuring all foods are easy-to-hold, bite-sized (no larger than 2-3 cm pieces), utensil-free, and familiar to promote self-feeding, dignity, and engagement, especially for those with memory impairments (e.g., dementia).

This follows guidelines from sources like the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Alzheimer's Association, and memory care resources: prepare foods to be handheld, visually appealing, and textured for sensory stimulation, avoiding choking hazards by keeping items soft/moist where needed.

## **For elderly nutrition:**

- Keep portions balanced (~300-500 kcal breakfast, ~500-700 kcal lunch as main meal, ~200-400 kcal dinner/light) using portion control to support energy without overload.
- Prioritize nutrient-dense options: include lean proteins for muscle health, finger-friendly veggies/fruits for fiber/vitamins, and whole-grain bases where possible to aid digestion.
- Use low-sodium seasonings; enhance with dips like yogurt or low-fat sauce for flavor and moisture.
- Boost nutrition/calories if needed (e.g., add cheese sticks, nut butters, or olive oil drizzle) while monitoring for allergies—consult your doctor/dietitian.
- Season with herbs, spices, low-sodium bouillon, garlic, or lemon for flavor.

## **Preparation Tips**

- Cook foods first (e.g., bake/steam until tender), then cut into finger-sized sticks, bites, or quarters.
- Add moisture: low-sodium broth for savory dips, unsweetened yogurt for sweet.
- Avoid: Sharp utensils, messy sauces (use mugs for soups), hard/dry items, small seeds/nuts (unless ground).
- If too dry: Provide dips or moisten lightly; encourage handwashing stations for hygiene.
- Serve warm/room temp; small frequent meals if appetite is low.

## **Monday**

- Breakfast (moderate): Egg bites (baked, bite-sized) + toast sticks (whole-grain, soft) + fruit slices (e.g., banana or apple wedges). Beverages: Coffee/tea (black or with limited unsweetened milk), no juice.
- Lunch (main, largest): Chicken tenders (baked lean, finger-sized) + potato wedges (baked, soft) + veggie sticks (e.g., carrot or cucumber, dipped). (Boost volume with extra tenders/veggies for satiety.)
- Dinner (light): Sandwich quarters (soft bread with lean filling, cut small) + soup in mug (vegetable broth, sip-friendly). Beverages: Water, decaf.

## Tuesday

- Breakfast (moderate): Yogurt dip with fruit bites (plain Greek yogurt for dipping + soft banana/apple pieces) + toast sticks (whole-grain). Beverages: Coffee/tea, limited unsweetened milk (no juice).
- Lunch (main, largest): Turkey tenders (baked, finger-sized) + sweet potato wedges (baked soft) + zucchini sticks (steamed, dipped) + veggie soup in mug (broth-based). Dessert: Fruit gelatin bites (sugar-free, small).
- Dinner (light): Egg bites (soft, handheld) + broccoli florets (steamed tender, dipped). Beverages: Herbal tea, water.

## Wednesday

- Breakfast (moderate): Pancake bites (whole-grain mini, soft) + fruit wedges (mashed if needed). Beverages: Coffee/tea, limited unsweetened milk (no juice).
- Lunch (main, largest): Fish sticks (baked cod, finger-sized) + quinoa bites (formed soft) + cauliflower florets (steamed) + side salad bites (greens in small clusters, dipped).
- Dinner (light): Lean pork bites (baked tender) + pea pods (fresh/soft). Beverages: Limited milk, water.

## Thursday

- Breakfast (moderate): Cereal bars (high-fiber, low-sugar cut into sticks) + egg bites + pear wedges (soft). Beverages: Coffee/tea, limited juice (diluted or skip).
- Lunch (main, largest): Sandwich quarters (egg salad on soft bread, cut small) + fruit bites (soft) + side salad clusters (tender greens, dipped).
- Dinner (light): Pasta bites (well-cooked, finger-sized with marinara dip) + small meatball bites (ground meat). (Skip bread or use small toast sticks.) Beverages: Tea, water.

## Friday

- Breakfast (moderate): French toast sticks (whole-grain, soft) + berry bites (fresh/soft). Beverages: Coffee/tea, limited unsweetened milk (no juice).
- Lunch (main, largest): Beef bites (lean patty cut into tenders) + potato wedges (baked) + corn on cob sections (small, soft) + steamed veggie sticks (finger-sized).
- Dinner (light): Soup in mug (chicken-based) + toast sticks (soft). Beverages: Herbal tea, water.

## Saturday

- Breakfast (moderate): Omelet bites (with veggies, handheld) + toast sticks + fruit wedges. Beverages: Coffee/tea, limited unsweetened milk (no juice).
- Lunch (main, largest): Pizza bites (thin crust cut small, veggie-topped) + salad clusters + soup in mug (broth-based).
- Dinner (light): Ham bites (lean, finger-sized) + asparagus spears (steamed tender). Beverages: Limited milk, water.

## Sunday

- Breakfast (moderate): Waffle sticks (whole-grain, soft) + fruit bites + egg bites. Beverages: Coffee/tea, limited unsweetened milk (no juice).
  - Lunch (main, largest): Soup in mug (smooth) + sandwich quarters (soft bread with protein) + potato bites (baked small) + carrot sticks (soft).
  - Dinner (light): Roast beef bites (lean, tender) + veggie florets (e.g., broccoli/zucchini, steamed).
- Beverages: Tea, water.

This maintains the large lunch focus for better energy distribution while making. Everything is safe and engaging. If appetite/calories are low, enrich with yogurt dips or olive oil (light). Track intake and consult your healthcare team (occupational therapist, dietitian, doctor) for exact portion/sensory adjustments.