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| *Content type* | **Publications** | |
| *Date* | 10 November 2010 | |
| *Title* | **Older people and functional foods: The importance of diet in supporting older people’s health** | |
| *Excerpt* | Functional foods can play a role in supporting older people’s health says ILC-UK report. | |
| *Body copy* | Functional foods could play an important role in supporting older people’s health says a report published this week by the International Longevity Centre-UK. Functional foods are not however a silver bullet; they complement rather than replace a healthy diet.  The report “Older people and functional foods: The importance of diet in supporting older people’s health; what role for functional foods?” reviews current dietary recommendations for older people, looks at consumer behaviour towards functional foods, and asks whether functional foods have a role to play in older people’s diets.  The report, made possible by Danone and prepared by Rebecca Taylor, Senior Researcher at ILC-UK, shows that the common health concerns of older people, such as cardiovascular disease, bone health and gastrointestinal functioning are the main areas targeted by the most common functional foods, namely cholesterol lowering products, probiotics, and calcium and vitamin D enriched products. It is not surprising therefore, that an older person who perceives themselves as needing the health benefit provided by a functional food, is more likely to consume it.  The report finds the scientific evidence for the cholesterol lowering ability of plant stanol/sterol containing products to be highly robust and argues that there is a case for introducing such products into the diets of older people in order to help reduce their risk of cardiovascular disease.  The report finds that the UK’s current recommended intakes for vitamin D and calcium for older people now appear to be out of step with current nutritional science, which suggests higher levels of both nutrients are needed. The report also highlights the fact that current dietary guidelines treat older people as a homogenous group when in fact the health and nutritional needs of a 55 year old can be quite different to those of an 85 year old.  Many older people are susceptible to gastrointestinal problems, some of which can be serious, and many of which impact quality of life. Probiotic functional foods show significant promise in this area and solid scientific evidence already exists for some complaints, for example antibiotic associated diarrhoea.  In total, ILC-UK makes 11 recommendations on older people and functional foods including recommendations for action and future research. | |
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