

Is There Life After 50? - Part 2 - Nutrition

“The more you eat, the less flavor; the less you eat, the more flavor.” - Chinese Proverb

In this second part of our series on Life over 50 - Neglect we look at the issues dealing with Nutrition.

N - UTRITION

E - xercise

G - eneral Health

L - ongevity

E - nergy

C - onfidence

T - ime

Most of us have been there. We can remember that time in our lives when we could eat pretty much what we liked, when we liked without much consideration to the ‘quality’ of the food or the amount. Ah, one of the many joys of youth! Well, I suppose we knew back then that at some time our nutritional neglect would catch up with us. But what the heck we could get away with it.

Well, now that we find ourselves on the other end of that equation we have to face up to reality. Our waistline is definitely expanding and our get up and go got up and went. We’re certainly now taking more interest in the news we often hear associated with poor nutrition and health risks; heart disease, diabetes, cancer, osteoporosis and many more. What we need to realize though is that while age surely plays a roll in this we cannot use it as an excuse. This is completely reversible.

So what can we do and how do we go about it? Firstly we have to realize that with age our nutritional needs change. In fact in 1998 The American Dietetic Association released a ‘modified’ nutritional pyramid based on the unique needs of men and women 50 years and older. It has a narrower base indicating a reduced need for calories in our diets. It also has as it’s base water indicating the need for all of us to drink more fluid daily. Especially since, as we age, our sense of thirst diminishes. Veggies (3-5 servings pd) and Fruit (2-4 servings pd) are also emphasized to raise the amount of fiber in the diet. This aids in the sensation of fullness when trying to restrict calories. Reducing saturated fats, moving to complex carbohydrates from simple sugars and eliminating white grain products for whole grain will greatly reduce the risks factors mentioned earlier.

Additionally the problem of osteoporosis is addressed. According to Frances Largeman writing for Discovery Health, “Women start losing calcium from their bones at the ripe old age of 30.....yet 9 out of 10 women over 30 consume only half the recommended amount of calcium each day”. Typical needs for women 50 yrs old are 1200mgs per day along with Vitamin D (600IU’s) both to assist with calcium absorption and other

things such as reduction in inflammation and good immune function. Vitamin B12 needs increase to help with cognitive function and memory.

With respect to weight management so much is made of dieting these days. Hardly a week goes by without some new wonder diet that will answer your prayers. If the real goal, as we age, is to lower our weight and maintain it in a reasonable range then most diets will fail you. We have to deal with real food available every day, set realistic goals for weight loss and be prepared to make small, consistent changes over a long period. I know you, stuff you've likely heard before many times. The problem is that this kind of advise is not 'sexy' and exciting stuff to hear....and you don't lose 5lbs the first week! But it is the stuff that works. You need a plan, a strategy that assists you in making those changes. When we begin working with our clients our approach begins with homework that requires them to make 3 - 5 simple daily changes in their diet. These small changes can typically eliminate 300 - 500 calories per day and with addition of exercise we can slowly start to redress that imbalance that has been building for years.

Realistic goals. Small, consistent changes over a long period.