Eating Healthy As We Age

Your body changes as you age, but those changes don’t have to lead to health problems or limit your independence, energy or enthusiasm for the activities you enjoy. By making healthy lifestyle choices, you can prevent certain health problems and keep chronic conditions from getting worse.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans stress the importance of fruit and vegetable consumption as part of a healthy diet, along with whole grains and fat-free or low-fat milk products.

Diets relatively high in fruit and vegetables are associated with lower risks of many chronic diseases. Older Americans (those 60 and older) are one of the fastest growing segments of the population and are at a higher risk than younger individuals for some chronic diseases.

Nutrition is one of the major determinants of successful aging, defined as the ability to maintain three key behaviors: low risk of disease and disease-related disability, high mental and physical function and active engagement in life. Food is not only critical to your physiological well-being but also contributes to your social, cultural and psychological quality of life. Research has shown that behaviors such as eating a healthful diet and being physically active are more influential than genetic factors in helping you avoid the deterioration associated with aging.

Your nutritional needs are pretty much the same at 40, 50, 60 and beyond as they were when you were younger, but with minor variations.

Taste and Appetite

It is not uncommon to feel less hungry when you get older. Sometimes your medications can affect your appetite and you don’t feel as hungry. If this occurs, try eating smaller, more frequent meals throughout the day. If you find it difficult to eat an entire meal in one sitting, eat what you can and put the rest in the refrigerator for a snack later. If you have a problem maintaining weight, consider meal replacement formulas.
Have you noticed that some foods don’t taste as good as they once did to you? You are not alone! Our senses of taste and smell decrease as we age. Trying new seasonings, such as herbs and spices, new foods and new recipes may help you enjoy your food more.

Research has shown that retirement home residents given flavor-enhanced foods eat more foods. So go ahead and experiment with those herbs and spices.

**Stress Management for Grandparents:**

**Time Management Ideas**

Time management does not mean being busy all the time. It means using your time the way you want to use it. Time management is really using self-management. Learning to manage time means learning to determine what is important to you and balancing it within the many different roles you have each day.

1. Group your activities. Do like tasks, consolidate errands and appointments.
2. Get a good start. Plan the night before.
3. Develop routines.
4. Avoid congestion. Crowds, lines and busy peak times rob you of your time. Plan ahead to void them.
5. Take advantage of your mood and energy level. Know when you are at your best.
7. Use your phone whenever you can.

**TIPS On Reading With Your Grandchildren**

Read to and with your grandchildren for 30 minutes every day. It is very important to read out loud to children before they start school. Help your grandchildren to read with you. Ask them to find letters and words on the page and talk with them about the story.

- **Talk with infants and young children before they learn to read.** Talk with your grandchildren all day long, using short, simple sentences. Talking with them even before they can speak will help them later when they learn to read and write.
- **Help your grandchildren to read on their own.** Reading at home helps children do better in school. Have lots of children’s books in your home and visit the library every week. Help your grandchildren get their own library cards and let them pick out their own books.
- **If your grandchild has a developmental delay, he or she may find reading frustrating. Have books on tape in your home.** Borrow or buy a tape player that is easy to work. If you cannot find recordings of your grandchild's favorite books, you or a family member could make recordings of them for the child to listen to while looking at the books.
- **Help your grandchild to see that reading is important.** Suggest reading as a free-time activity. Make sure children have time in their day to read.
- **Set up a reading area in your home.** Keep books that interest your grandchildren in places where they can easily reach them. As they become better readers, make sure you add harder books to your collection.
• **Give your grandchildren writing materials.** Children want to learn how to write and to practice writing. Help them learn by having paper, pencils, pens or crayons for them in your home. Help your grandchildren write if they ask you. If the child has a special learning or physical need, regular pens and pencils may not be the best choice. Ask your pediatrician or people who work with your grandchild at school or at the child care center to suggest other writing materials the child can use.

• **Read and write with your grandchildren in their native language.** Practicing their first language will help your children learn to read and write English.

• **Talk with your grandchildren as you do daily activities together.** When you take your grandchildren places talk with them about what you are doing and ask them questions. If your grandchild cannot hear, use whatever form of communication the child usually uses.

• **Ask your grandchildren to describe events in their lives.** Talking about their experiences makes children think about them. Giving detailed descriptions and telling complete stories also helps children learn about how stories are written and what the stories they read mean.

• **Restrict the amount and kind of TV your grandchildren watch.** Watch educational TV programs with the children that teach letter sounds and words or give information about nature and science.

• **Keep track of your grandchildren’s progress in school.** Visit your grandchildren’s classrooms to learn how they are doing in school and how you can help them become better students. Ask about the school’s reading program and where your grandchildren need help.

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**Myths of Food Safety**

**Myth #1 – Foodborne illness comes from something I ate at a restaurant.**

**Fact:** Foodborne illness can happen wherever food is prepared or served. Foodborne disease outbreaks have been linked to food that has been mishandled in restaurants, home kitchens, picnics, barbecues, cafeterias and church kitchens. Learn how to handle food safely and be willing to make changes in what you do to help prevent foodborne illness.

**Myth #2 – Foodborne illness is no “big deal.” If I get it, I’ll get over it in a day.**

**Fact:** Foodborne illness can produce a wide range of symptoms, depending on the particular pathogen causing the illness and on the general state of health of the individual infected. Symptoms are often flulike and include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramps and fatigue. Often, foodborne illness is not life-threatening, and symptoms will subside within one to three days. Sometimes, symptoms can be serious and can include bloody diarrhea, fever, blurred vision, confusion, chest pain, jaundice (yellowing of skin and eyes), seizures, paralysis and death.

**Myth #3 – You can’t catch foodborne illness from another person.**

**Fact:** People can spread foodborne illness caused by some pathogens, such as Hepatitis A, a serious form of foodborne illness that affects the liver. Hepatitis A, like some other pathogens, is shed from the body of an infected person through the stool. This pathogen is then spread by a type of transmission known as “fecal-oral transmission.” In this case, the pathogen is spread by putting something in the mouth that has been contaminated with the stool of a person infected with Hepatitis A. This usually involves unclean hands, which is why proper handwashing is critical to controlling the spread of Hepatitis A, as well as other forms of foodborne illness.

Sincerely,

Trudy G. McManus
County Extension Agent – Family and Consumer Science