

Senior Living

GUIDE

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Changing Nutritional Needs

Eating right becomes even more important as we age



Diets should conform to our changing needs, with a specific focus on reducing inflammation, strengthening bones and lowering blood pressure.

The recommended daily balance of vegetables, fruits, proteins and whole grains builds a foundation for health. But even those who are trying hard can find hidden dangers, as with sodium. That's just one of the issues that we need to address when dealing with specific issues associated with getting older.

Here are three habits to incorporate into your regular diet in order to promote better senior health.

FOCUS ON OMEGA 3

Seniors are more prone to heart disease, arthritis and cancer, and the risks can be lowered by focusing on regular intake of Omega 3 fatty acids. They're usually associated with specific kinds of fish, but you can also find these inflammation-reducing nutrients in walnuts, flaxseed and canola oil. Physicians recommend that seniors eat foods rich in Omega

3 fatty acids at least twice each week. If you're struggling to meet that standard, consider purchasing a supplement — but check with your doctor first.

BOOST YOUR CALCIUM

Calcium becomes a critical need as we get older, as it helps with bone health and can lower blood pressure. Both are particularly important for seniors, but calcium is critical for those who are prone to falls. Women over the age of 50 and men over 70 should get at least 1,200 milligrams of calci-

um a day, according to the World Health Organization. That's about four cups of dairy milk, fortified nondairy products made from soy or almonds, and calcium-enriched orange juice. If those aren't palatable, you can also get the calcium you need from certain foods — including cheese, kale, yogurt, winter squash, sardines, almonds, tofu, collard and mustard greens.

WATCH SODIUM INTAKE

One of the most important things to do in the fight

against hypertension is lower your intake of sodium. Begin by sharply cutting back or preferably eliminating usage of table salt or salty seasonings. Many foods are already very high in sodium, including soups, processed foods and meals at many restaurants. Limit your intake of those items, and watch how you're doing by consulting product labels. Many canned vegetables, nuts, luncheon meat and even breads have a surprisingly high amount of sodium.

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Friendships Are Important

Studies show that there's never a more important time to keep up with these old connections.

But even the strongest relationships may have been somewhat reliant on proximity. Then you move away or stop regularly going to the office, and it may suddenly be hard to maintain the easy camaraderie that existed before.

The good news is that it's easier now to stay in touch with faraway friends through the modern technology of a cell phone.

BENEFITS OF FRIENDS

Research has repeatedly confirmed that healthy, close friendships are a major contributing factor in our overall health. That's especially true for seniors, who are more active when they are part of a circle of friends. Reaching out may be uncomfortable, in particular if it's been awhile. But try to remember how close you once were, when life brought you together on a more regular basis — and trust that you can be again, with a little help from technology. As you rebuild your friend-filled life, you'll find new energy and support.

TEXT AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Our phones allow us to share the little moments that make up an intimate friendship, either through texts or social media. If you don't have your old friend's phone number, try searching for them through the most popular apps. Connect there with a re-introductory message, then share your direct contact details. If both of you are active in posting thoughts, memories and photos, you'll be part of one another's daily lives again.

WIDENING YOUR CIRCLE

Social media also allows you to confirm new friendships by connecting with those who you meet along the way at social events, club meetings, church or the library. If you're new to an area after relocating, look for online groups based in your new neighborhood or town. Senior citizens centers will also sponsor events where a foundation for your new support group can be found. Keep an eye out for notices about sponsored parties, golf outings or shared boat trips, dances or volunteer opportunities.



How to Avoid Phone Scams

Seniors are a prime target in this fast-growing crime wave

Today's thieves can snatch your wallet without ever leaving the comfort of their own home. All they need is a telephone.

Once seniors answer, scam artists try to steal money from their unsuspecting targets by using telemarketing schemes or investment swindles. Others may lie about huge windfalls from the lottery or the will of a long-lost loved one.

Protect yourself by learning how to recognize these scams, and to react before they get their hands on valuable information that can turn your financial world upside down.

COMMON SCAMS

Fake telemarketing phone calls are the most common, and unfortunately the easiest to pull off. Seniors are more home bound than others, so they inevitably make more phone purchases than younger age groups. In fact, the rate is reportedly twice the national average. Eventually, seniors become comfortable with giving out sensitive details over the phone — and then they let their guard down.

Lottery or will-related scams are often associated with so-called “pigeon drops.” In this scam, the con artist says a large sum of money is waiting to be claimed, but a good-faith contribution has to be made in order to complete the transaction. Typically, they offer some split of the fake proceeds, but only if you will assist them. That's not how estates or lottery winnings are distributed. Beware of anyone offering an investment proposition that sounds too good to be true. It usually is.

RECOGNIZING AND REACTING

Being aware of how you'll typically be contacted in these situations is also critical. Bill collectors, the federal government, law enforcement and estate attorneys will not make initial contact with you by phone. There is always a verifiable paper trail involved, either by regular U.S. mail or a signed, certified document. You should hang up immediately, even if someone identifies themselves as an agent from the Internal Revenue Service of a sheriff's deputy. Fines are never required to be immediately paid over the phone.

Do not engage in a conversation, since you could be risking



persuasion. Report suspicious calls to the Federal Trade Commission, either at (877) FTC-HELP or through their website. They'll share this information with law-enforcement

agencies everywhere. Discuss these calls with your friends and family as well, so that they will be on guard against scammers.



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Is Renting Right for You?

You may find that you no longer need all of that space

The children have moved away, and your home office is never used anymore. Downsizing may be the best move.

But why get tied into another 30-year mortgage as you head into retirement? Renting a smaller space has its own benefits — both financial and social. Here's a look:

WHY NOT DECLUTTER?

Downsizing offers you an opportunity to take stock of the things you've collected over the years — and to get rid of extraneous items you really don't need. It might be the furniture from a spare bedroom you'll no longer have, or collectible items that have grown in worth. Sell them to turn a quick profit, or donate them to someone in need.

GROW YOUR NEST EGG

Even if there is a security deposit on your new rental, it won't approach the down payment needed for a new home.



You also won't have to pay real estate taxes anymore. At the same time, you can use proceeds from the sale of your former home to pay down any lingering debts. Use the extra funds, plus anything you make from selling those unneeded home items, to grow your nest egg. Having a bit of additional cash on hand can be very comforting as we age, whether you choose to direct it to monthly bills or that special indulgence you were waiting to enjoy.

COMMUNITY AND AMENITIES

Most rental properties come with a host of amenities bundled into the monthly costs, including pools, dog parks and gyms. They also will typically have common areas where people can gather to get to know one another, and may even host special events for you and your fellow renters. They're great opportunities to create an instant sense of community. You may also be able to find age-restricted properties where everyone is a senior, just like you.

LET GO OF MAINTENANCE

You've spent your whole life dealing with property upkeep and yard work. When you rent, repairs and maintenance become the landlord's responsibility. Give yourself a needed break from worries about loose shingles, mowing the lawn, or problems with the air conditioning. Someone else will pick up the tab, and you won't have to risk injury while climbing ladders or trimming trees.

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Finding a New Hobby

You've retired after a lifetime of work — now what?

Our golden years are certainly an opportunity to relax, but you might find yourself with a little too much extra time.

Going back to the endless bustle of a five-day work week isn't the answer. But neither is being bored silly. That's when finding a new hobby might be smart.

You can keep yourself engaged and entertained, make new friends and maybe help your community through meaningful volunteer hours that simply weren't possible before.

TRY NEW THINGS

As busy parents raising a family, building a career and trying to find time for one another, there probably wasn't much calendar space left for things like becoming artsy or trying a new recipe. Things are different into retirement, as time now allows you an opportunity to express yourself through painting, woodworking projects or sewing. You'll be sparking your imagination and keeping your mind sharp while creating one-of-a-kind objects



to enjoy or gift to others. Beer or wine making are growing trends, or consider old standbys like gardening or crochet.

JOIN A CLUB

Seek out local chapters of nationwide clubs, or ask around. You can create fast new friends among people with common goals. If established clubs like those aren't nearby, or don't exactly dovetail with your interests, consider starting one yourself. People in your friend and family group may have suggestions about unaddressed needs in your community. Aim toward those

goals then, once you've begun building a foundation base of members, begin work on a new project together.

BECOME A VOLUNTEER

If you've always believed in certain causes but weren't able schedule time to get involved, now's the time to volunteer. These efforts are also great way to meet new friends, while also creating a sense of civic pride and enriching your community through services provided to schools, rights groups, health care or other nonprofits.

SAVING MEMORIES

As we get older, we naturally become more interested in documenting and saving memories for future generations. Consider writing projects or scrapbooking as a way to turn your stories into lasting creative ideas. These hand-crafted stories and inventively collected images will become a treasure trove of family history, fun vacations, personal milestones and favorite moments. If you find yourself particularly interested in writing, let your imagination run wild through novels, poetry or short stories.

Adopting a New Pet

Furry friends can provide needed physical, emotional and mental health benefits

like to walk, for instance, and any kind of pet will require regular trips out to the pet store or local veterinarian's office. Even playing with your cat inside is its own kind of exercise.

ENJOYING THEIR COMPANIONSHIP

Animals are the very best kind of roommates, because they love us unconditionally. Studies have consistently shown that having a pet will significantly reduce loneliness and symptoms of depression. This form of unwavering companionship has even been shown to reduce stress and lower blood pressure for some pet parents.

LIVING IN THE PRESENT

Many of us tend to spend a lot of time thinking about the past or worrying about the future, while pets tend to live in the here and now. Their needs, wants and happiness are occurring in real time, and this encourages those around them to live in the present. Similarly, becoming such a central figure in another living creature's life automati-



cally leads to a shared existence. As you feed, pet or walk them, a sense of being valued and useful inevitably follows. In time, many find that these regular routines aid in reducing anxiety and lead to better sleep patterns.

BEING MORE CONNECTED

Do your research before committing to any pet, since they all have unique needs

that you may not be able to address. Those who are less active, for instance, may not want a large-breed dog. Younger pets of any variety require more attention, too. But whichever you choose, you'll likely see an increase in socialization. Animals are ice-breakers, whether you're out and about on a walk or when friends come over to visit.

GETTING OUT THERE

People who are 65 and older should get at least 150 minutes of moderate activity on a weekly basis, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Pets will often help encourage a more active lifestyle. Dogs

Winter Safety for Seniors

Winter's snow, ice and cold conditions can present many challenges

That doesn't mean you have to become a shut in, a situation that could be particularly distressing during the holidays.

Instead, prepare for the frigid months by guarding against the dangers that lurk all around. Sometimes just increasing your awareness of is enough to help sidestep the most common safety issues for seniors.

Ultimately, no one can really winter-proof their lives. It's still going to be a frosty adventure at times. But here are some ways to limit your risk.

DRESS FOR THE WEATHER

Hypothermia becomes a serious concern as we plunge into the winter months. If your core body temperature gets too low, you risk serious health issues, including death. Buy sturdy outerwear that will block the cold, as well as gloves and other needed items like hats, warm boots and



scarves. At the same time, however, trips inside department stores, the post office or a friend's home may lead to overheating if they have the thermostat turned up too high. (Early fall and late spring days may also see significant warm-

ing in the afternoons.) Combat these issues by dressing in layers, which allow you to remove some outerwear in order to remain comfortable in changing conditions.

AVOIDING ICE

This may be easier said than done, but it should be your annual winter goal to avoid ice. Slips and falls on sidewalks and driveways are one the leading causes of injury for seniors during these months. If you are unable to avoid making your way across a treacherous path, invest in footwear that provides better traction. Shoes or boots with worn soles can encourage falls. Those who use a cane should make sure they have sturdy rubber tips.

SEASONAL ISSUES

Many people are subject to seasonal mood issues, as the days get shorter and temperatures fall. Seniors are particularly vulnerable, however, because they may stay inside more in the interest of winter safety. You can lessen the impact of seasonal affective disorders by planning errands or visits during daylight hours when it's warmer. Consider asking a friend or family member to come along if you're still worried about falls. Even something as simple as scheduling a rotation of daily calls with loved ones can go a long way toward lightening your mood.

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