

Fifty Plus ... and “Well” Aged

With all that’s known today about healthy aging, there’s never been a healthier time to be a part of the “50+ generation.” Wellness past 50 depends, in part, on you and your everyday choices.

Physical Changes

When it comes to aging, everyone is different. However, risks for some health conditions go up with age. Additionally, a number of internal and external physical changes are more common as you get older.

- *Decreased muscle mass and strength* ... affecting stamina, ease of movement and the ability to lift heavy things.
- *Altered body composition* ... gradual replacement of muscle with body fat. Besides losing that youthful shape, more fat/less muscle increases the risk for diabetes, heart disease, some cancers and arthritis.
- *Bone loss* ... making bones less dense and more likely to break, especially among individuals who are not physically active.
- *Slower metabolism* ... slowing the rate at which the body uses energy (calories) and increasing risk for overweight or obesity.
- *Higher blood cholesterol/triglyceride levels and blood pressure* ... resulting in greater risk for heart disease and stroke.
- *Higher blood sugar levels* ... increasing risk for diabetes.
- *Changes in the body’s cooling system* ... causing a lower sense of thirst and greater chance for dehydration and heat-related difficulties.

The *good news* is that by eating smart, achieving a healthy weight and staying physically active, you can help delay and reduce risk of associated health problems.

Good Nutrition: As Important as Ever

Smart eating is about choosing a variety of nutrient-rich foods and beverages in the right amounts for your needs. That means plenty of fruits and vegetables, recommended amounts of low-fat or fat-free milk and dairy products, enough protein-rich foods [lean meat, poultry, fish, dry beans (legumes), nuts] and grain products, including at least 3 servings of whole-grain foods each day. It’s also important to drink recommended amounts of water. For specific amounts within the food groups and a food pattern that’s right for your calorie needs, check www.ChooseMyPlate.gov.



Quick & Easy Shrimp Primavera

After age 50 some nutrients need special attention.

- *Protein* ... Eating enough protein while staying within your calorie needs helps retain muscle mass. *Good sources:* lean meat and poultry; fish; dry beans (legumes) or nuts; eggs; fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt or cheese.

✓ Add small amounts of protein-rich foods to casseroles, soups and stews.

✓ Snack on low-fat yogurt, a small handful of nuts or a scoop of cottage cheese.

- *Fiber* ... Fiber helps keep an aging intestinal tract regular, promotes healthy weight and can help reduce diabetes and heart disease risks. *Good sources:* whole-grain foods, vegetables, fruit, dry beans (legumes) and nuts.

✓ Make your morning toast or cereal whole grain.

✓ Give soup a fiber boost by adding veggies, beans (legumes), whole-grain pasta, brown rice or whole-grain barley.

- *Calcium* ... Besides keeping bones strong, calcium helps with blood pressure control and may reduce risk for some cancers. *Good sources:* low-fat milk, yogurt and cheese; calcium-fortified juice and soymilk.

✓ Turn morning coffee into latte and afternoon tea into chai by adding warm low-fat milk or fortified soymilk.

✓ Make a low-fat dip with yogurt and herbs or spices for veggies, fruit or whole-grain crackers.

- *Vitamin D* ... Beyond promoting bone health, it is being studied for its possible role in helping lower some other health risks, too. *Good sources:* salmon and tuna; vitamin-D fortified milk, cheese, juice and soymilk (check the Nutrition Facts label for vitamin D amounts).

✓ Whirl a fruit smoothie, made with a vitamin D-fortified beverage.

✓ Feature salmon or tuna in one or two meals weekly.

- *Folate* ... Low dietary intake is linked to anemia and high homocysteine levels (a risk factor for heart disease), and potentially to age-related hearing loss. *Good sources:* leafy green vegetables, some fruits, legumes and folate-fortified grain foods.

