Nutrition Tips for Healthy Aging

Today, experts in the fields of fitness, nutrition and gerontology agree that as our bodies change with the passage of time, so too should our nutritional intake. Dietary changes are very important in countering the effects of aging and maintaining our health and fitness.

Recently, Colorado State University published a useful fact sheet “Nutrition and Aging” that recommends the following key steps to maintain your health as you age:

- **Decrease your fat intake** – Reducing the overall fat content in your diet may be the easiest way to cut calories and reduce weight. Lower fat intake is often also necessary because of chronic disease.
- **Reduce your calories** – A challenge for older adults is to meet the same nutrient needs as when they were younger, yet consume fewer calories. Choosing nutrient-dense foods – foods high in nutrients in relation to their calories – will help reduce calories.
- **Balance carbohydrates and fiber** – About 60 percent of calories should come from carbohydrates, with emphasis on complex carbohydrates. Such a regimen also enhances important dietary fiber intake for intestinal health.
- **Drink plenty of water** – Stay hydrated! Of all the nutrients, water is the most important, serving many essential functions. Staying properly hydrated is very important.
- **Eat a variety of foods** – People of all ages need more than 40 nutrients to stay healthy. With age, it becomes more important that diets contain enough calcium, fiber, iron, protein and the vitamins A, B12, C, D and Folic Acid. Older adults should reduce calories, select nutrient-dense foods and have smaller portions of foods that are high in fat, sugar and sodium. Because no one food or pill provides all of the nutrients, it is important to eat a variety of foods to get the full spectrum of nutrients.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010, from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) also provides useful information on dietary plans that can prevent serious illness, such as heart disease and stroke, and keep you in top form – physically and mentally.

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