

GROWING OLDER WITH GRACE

by Linda Fiverson



In today's world people are living longer than ever before. Despite this, many still worry about becoming sick themselves or dealing with the loss of a loved one. This fear has been around for as long as time and is a common theme in literature and the arts. The lyrics of an old Beatles song reverberate this trepidation when a man asks his lover, "Will you still need me, will you still feed me, when I'm sixty-four?"

Let's think a moment about what we are feeding each other and ourselves because the food we eat makes a definite difference in our health and longevity. So does the amount of exercise we get. In order to age well we must take responsibility for how we nourish our bodies physically, emotionally and mentally.

If you celebrated marking the second century, chances are you already have signs that your metabolism is not what it used to be. For woman hormonal changes wreak chaos in our metabolisms. These chemical messengers direct the actions of target cells. Our complex communication network (the endocrine system) is intricately choreographed to control every biological process. When they fall out of balance, it is frustrating because it's more difficult to lose body fat despite the efforts you are making. For men, I believe the lack of activity and increase in rich foods result in a situation of "more intake-less output".

We are living in a time where food is always available and because there is so much access to it or we are eating in excess. There are too many people who are over-fed and yet, still under-nourished. I think the time has come to further educate ourselves about the food and exercise choices we do and do not make. There is a definite correlation between this and our health. Research has proven it...

One way to promote better health is to include a varied selection of nutrient-rich foods in our daily eating plan. Another is through regular physical activity. I highly recommend a combination of both. They will also reduce the risk of chronic disease and make you feel better in every aspect of living.

As a Nutritionist, I encourage my clients to select a variety of foods. When you diversify your food choices, you also give your body the benefit of different types and quantities of vitamins and nutrients. Believe it or not, many foods help ward off disease from occurring or slow the progression of ones that have already manifested themselves. It is also important to look at the size of your portions. Many times we finish everything on our plates when we could actually save some for another meal. Think about what it feels like to be full. It is a much more comfortable feeling when we are satisfied!

There are numerous chronic conditions that are age-related. These include heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and arthritis. The number one recommendation of health care providers is that people combine sound nutritional practices with activity. This holds true for the young and old alike!

Inflammation is actually the body's way to defend itself against harm. Waves of immune cells rush to the injured area causing heat, redness and swelling. This seems like a bad thing to us but it is actually the way it combats threatening pathogens. There are

exercises we can do to lower our levels of inflammation but there are foods that decrease our risk too.

Have you ever thought about how the way food can be medicinal? There are many wholesome natural ones (not vitamins) that may help this situation improve. Naturally, I don't promise any magic cures!

We know that saturated fats and trans-fatty acids, along with high-glycemic index-carbohydrates are the foods guilty of causing inflammation. Simply said, stay away from processed foods packaged in cellophane bags or boxes. This includes pasta as well as sweet and salty snacks. In addition, I highly recommend that you limit your intake of refined grains, breads and potatoes. Other poor choices are animal fats, cheese, fast foods and fatty deli meats since they increase LDL in the blood and cause chemical changes in the body.

Now for the good news – there are many foods we can select that are beneficial. The body converts foods high in monounsaturated and omega 3 fats into substances which decrease inflammation. Some examples are fatty fish, flaxseed and extra-virgin olive oil. Red wine, cocoa and turmeric are also reputed to fight age related illnesses.

Lean protein also helps prevent disease and slow already present health conditions. Selections like fish, turkey, chicken and bison are recommended as well as lean meats. Tofu, which is also known as soybean curd, is a vegetarian protein. It has long been a popular item in Japanese and Chinese restaurants. You can also find it in the supermarket both pre-packaged and fresh. Tofu is a good substitute in all recipes calling for protein. Egg whites fit into the protein category too. Whether you scramble, hard-boil or combine them with other ingredients, they are filling, low calorie and healthy.

Water is very important and I say all the time that the best scenario is to drink eight glasses each and every day! Water helps you stay hydrated and keeps your system going. Try to drink it as often as you can whether you are thirsty or not.

Physical activity is another component to being a healthy and active adult as I mentioned in the beginning. It is always advised that you get your physician's approval before starting a new exercise or routine. If you haven't exercised in a long time or feel achy and crampy, you are probably reluctant. There is something, however, that each of you can do in addition to what you are or aren't already doing. No matter how sedentary you may presently be, you will be surprised to learn that being physical can make you feel energized, more alert and higher-spirited!

There are many activities you can get involved in such as going to a gym or swimming laps. You can dance or simply take a walk. You can even just extend your arms or legs while seated... Little things add up to a lot later!

I hope you take my words and put them to action. They will help you live a more active and healthy life. As we all know, when we function better we feel better and when we feel better we function better!

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Eat more plant based foods
2. Eat fish, preferable fatty types like salmon, tuna, bass and snapper at least twice a week.
3. Use canola and olive oil as your primary fats. The "artificial" low fat spreads usually have food starch and other stabilizers that are just chemicals.
4. Alcohol: 1 glass a day for women, and 2 glasses for men. Yes, men are luckier!