

Golden Topics

Presented by the experts at Wexner Heritage Village



March is National Nutrition Month

Nutrition and Longevity

March is the month set aside to focus on nutrition. For older adults, nutrition might be the closest thing to a “Fountain of Youth” there is. From vitamins to anti-oxidants to herbal remedies, scientists who study nutrition and aging have found no diet, no supplement, no magic elixir that *stops* aging. But several links between nutrition and the *quality* of life and health *as we age* have been discovered.

California researchers studying approximately 7000 adults found that some of the participants were “young” for their ages while others were “old” for their ages. Focusing on the health habits of the study group the scientists discovered six factors that play a role in physiological age, and three of those factors were related to nutrition: *moderation in alcohol consumption, regularity of meals, and weight control.* (The other factors were *not smoking, getting enough sleep, and regular exercise*). The subjects who followed these practices were found to be in better health, even if they were older in chronological age, than the subjects who failed to follow them. Remarkably, those who

Quick Facts

Nutrition research has found some specific ways to avoid a few common ailments of aging:

- According to Tufts University research, “Obese women are two and a half times more likely to get a certain type of cataract than healthy-weight women.” Since over half of those who are over 75 have some vision impairment due to cataracts, it could mean that dropping that extra weight might delay or prevent cataracts in your retirement years.
- For men, research has shown that a high intake of tomato products can help reduce the risk for developing prostate cancer. Tomatoes are high in an antioxidant called *lycopene*, and there are eighteen different types of *lycopene* known to exist in prostate tissue. Higher rates of prostate cancer are also associated with higher intakes of dietary fat, specifically saturated fat, as well as vitamin D deficiency.

adopted the six health habits had a health status similar to people *30 years younger* who followed none at all. The findings reveal that although people can’t change the date they were born, they can have a potential impact on the length and quality of their lives.

So what’s the secret? How can we effectively “eat our way” to healthy aging? The answer is simple. Your mother and your grandmother knew it. Remember when they told you to “eat your vegetables” (here come the antioxidants) or “go outside and play” (there’s the

exercise) or “go to sleep” (adequate rest)? And also, “not too much now” (that is the moderation). They advocated long ago a policy of eating right, regular activity, rest, and moderation. Age gracefully? Well, you are what you eat. Now there’s an original thought!

Contributing to this article: Harry Wozniak, Wexner Heritage Village’s dietetic technician registered (DTR). Active in practice for six years, he earned his degree in dietetic technology and nutrition from an accredited school of the American Dietetic Association.



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