

Healthy U: by Lindsey by Lindsey Gillette

Senior Health Diet and Nutrition

You’ve made it. You are past “Mid-life.” Near the “Golden Years.” You have survived wars, presidents, and parenting. It may seem like things are about to calm down now or like you have everything under control. But, all of a sudden, there it is: CHANGE. You begin to feel it everywhere. Your energy shifts. Even your favorite comfort foods seem less than comfortable. Despite your greatest efforts or strongest denials, your body is transforming once again.

Every year after the age of 40, your metabolism has been slowing down. You may have experienced weight gain. Foods begin to taste and smell different. You may be living with a chronic disease or illness with various medications. But the one thing that probably hasn’t changed: your diet.

Food preferences in humans are shaped very early, some say as early as in the womb. Circumstances in early life such as offering rewards or punishment for eating certain foods, social status, or religious practices solidify preferences. It is likely that the same foods you enjoyed when you were young are still the same foods that you gravitate to in your older years. But, are those the foods that will nourish your aging body?

It is important as your body shifts to allow your diet to shift too. For example, your caloric needs tend to decrease. The average, moderately active woman at age 40 needs around 2,000 calories per day, but as she ages past 51, her caloric needs drop to 1,800. Some nutrients should be increased. In the same age and activ-

ity range, men and women should increase their calcium intake from 1,000 to 1,200 milligrams per day. B6 vitamins should be increased as well.

Generally, you should be increasing your consumption of whole foods, fruits and vegetables. You should be limiting your intake of processed foods, empty calories, and fats, especially animal fats. This is the time where everything you eat should count towards balancing your nutrition. You can find all of the latest information on your dietary needs and how to read and understand food labels at www.dietaryguidelines.gov.

It is important to talk with your doctor about specific needs, especially if you are living with certain conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes, or allergies. With the new healthcare system, it is possible that your insurance is offering free classes and programs on senior health and diet. There may be classes or professionals around your community who can help you make changes as well.

In the meantime, what can you do now to shake things up with your diet?

Record your current dietary intake in a food journal. Compare your notes with your nutritional needs and find where you are indulging and where you are deprived. If your vegetable intake consists only of marinara or fried potatoes, it is time to try something new. Notice if most of your food comes out of a box. Can you replace some of it with fresh ingredients? Note your grain consumption. If you are just eating bread and cereal, you should incorporate whole grains like rice, quinoa, and couscous.

Note too, how much water you are consuming. Drinking more water is suggested in warmer weather, higher physical activity, and to balance out dehydrating caffeine and alcohol.

Take a look at your grocery shopping habits. Shopping more often means that you are eating more nutrient dense, fresh food. My favorite game: shop only around the outside aisles of the grocery store. Generally, this is where you will find produce, meat, dairy, and bulk sections. Try to avoid any packaged food with more than 3-5 ingredients.

Try something new. Challenge yourself to make a new recipe or buy a seasonal vegetable that you have never eaten (roasted Parsnips, anyone?). Lucky for us in the Valley, we have seasonal farmers markets overflowing with local, super fresh foods, a well-stocked grocery store, and an organic farm store. Each of these places are abundant with farmers who love to chat about the best ways to prepare food and friendly produce employees who can give you tips about the best tasting seasonal food. If you are Internet savvy, you might find “a healthy recipe a day” email service for inspiration, or if you are not into the tech world, you can explore the library and trade favorites with friends.

Perhaps you are adjusting to cooking for just yourself, or just the two of you. Most recipes are designed for a family of four or more. To keep your diet from becoming redundant, over-eating, or wasting food, you can cut the recipe in half or trade meals with a friend. Sometimes, you can freeze leftovers for up to a few months, which makes for an easy dinner later. You can buy smaller portions of food in the bulk section

or at the meat counter. Use versatile items that can transform many ways. For example, a bag of spinach could be used in a salad, scrambled with eggs, blended into a smoothie (I like mine with banana or pineapple), and sautéed over a whole grain. Carrots can be a great snack with hummus, juiced, roasted with dinner, and cooked into soup.

Make food a hobby. Plan time for cooking and preparing food into your day. Read books or watch movies about food. Explore the food of different cultures. There are many regional diets that are linked to better health and longevity. You could grow your own garden for the freshest food available during the season and preserve or can the extras for the winter.

Think simple. Have you ever looked at the ingredients on a frozen dinner? There are usually over 25 ingredients, half of which you cannot pronounce. Those ingredients are probably responsible for extending the shelf life of food, but unfortunately they will probably not extend your life. These invented additives are not necessary to your diet, and your body has to work harder to eliminate them. What would you do with that extra energy? Ask yourself when you are choosing food, “is this a food full of essential nutrients or empty in value?”

Raising your awareness, interest, and curiosity is step one to incorporating dietary shifts. There are many authors and authorities on the subject of food and diet, but you are ultimately responsible for making your own choices. As your diet begins to shift notice how you feel. Your energy levels, digestion, and whole body will thank you.

The contents of the units listed below will be sold at live auction 10:00 A.M. on March 22, 2014 at Bargain Mini Storage at 175 Finch Road in Kerby, OR. Units are sold as a “complete unit,” and the buyer will be responsible for removing the entire contents of the unit within 48 hours. There will be a \$50 cleaning deposit, per unit, held until the unit is vacated and lock returned. For more information, call 541-592-3355.

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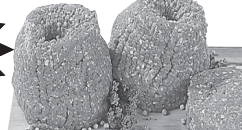
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