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BOOMERS & BEYOND

Healthy eating options for seniors

"Let food be thy medicine" is a quote attributed to Hippocrates, the ancient scholar considered to be the father of modern medicine. The saying relates to the notion that what people put in their bodies can heal and/or prevent certain conditions.

For seniors with medicine cabinets full of over-the-counter and prescription medications, the idea of relying predominantly on food to promote optimal health may be tempting, and various foods can be particularly useful to the 50-and-over demographic.

According to the World Health Organization, poor diet is a major contributor to many of the diseases that affect older people. Poor diet has been connected to the development of diabetes, and degenerative diseases such as osteoporosis also may be linked to the foods ones eat. The National Council for Aging Care says micronutrient deficiency is often a problem among the aging due to factors like lack of variety in diet and reduced food intake. Eating a variety of foods can provide all of the nutrients people need to stay healthy as they get older. Certain foods may be particularly helpful.

- **Brain-friendly foods:** Foods such as avocado, leafy vegetables, sunflower seeds, blueberries, and salmon are good sources of vitamin E, antioxidants, omega-3 fatty acids, and other nutrients that may help ward off dementias like Alzheimer's disease, advises Sonas Home Health Care.

- **Anti-inflammatory foods:** Foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids may help prevent inflammation that can cause cancer and rheumatoid arthritis. Aging.com says foods that are high in omega-3 fatty acids, like salmon, should be consumed at least twice per week.

- **Fruits and vegetables:** Fresh, canned or frozen produce tend to be high in micronutrients, including a variety of important vitamins that are essential for all components of health. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics advises eating dark green vegetables, such as leafy greens or broccoli, and orange vegetables, such as carrots and sweet potatoes.

- **Energy-boosters:** Choose whole grains that can provide sustained energy by way of healthy carbohydrates over processed grains.

- **Bone-friendly foods:** Calci-

um-rich foods, such as milk, yogurt and cheese, can prevent calcium from being leached from the bones, which contributes to conditions like osteoporosis.

- **Digestive system-friendly foods:** The digestive system slows down as the body ages, as the walls of the gastrointestinal tract thicken and digestive contractions that push waste along may slow down and become fewer. Foods rich in fiber can promote proper digestion by moving food through the digestive tract more easily. High-fiber foods also may help naturally reduce blood cholesterol levels.

- **High-iron foods:** Without enough iron in the body, a person may feel tired and lethargic from a reduced production of hemoglobin, which carries oxygen in the blood from the lungs to the rest of the body. A lack of oxygen in body tissues from anemia can be serious, says the National Council for Aging Care. Tofu, spinach, lentils, pumpkin seeds, and fortified breads and cereals are high in iron.

Smart food choices can help seniors live long and healthy lives.

Will Life Ever be Normal Again?

The experts can't agree on when (if ever) the coronavirus will completely vanish, or if they'll be able to create a vaccine and when it will actually be safe to eat in a restaurant. Will this be like the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic, with a mild first wave, followed by a deadly second wave months later? Just today there was snarling among the experts about whether asymptomatic people (those with the virus but no symptoms) can actually pass along the germs.

What if it takes a very long time to return to normal? I think we need to be prepared for that, for having a new way of living, for now ... and working to make that OK.

A highlight of my summer is likely to be the barbecue I'm planning: 10 good friends, all properly spaced around the yard (I've measured where the seats and food table will go), one person manning the grill, all the food courtesy of the grocery store deli so no one has to shop and

cook, a boom box blasting tunes across the yard. It'll be great and has picked up my spirits just planning for it.

I've also made adjustments to my budget, moving a few things in the Entertainment category. The Lunches and Dinners Out money got pushed over to Books, and I'll spend that cash on more e-books for my Kindle, since going to the library is out.

What will your list look like, if you aim toward finding some relaxation and

peace in our ongoing crisis?

If you become weary of following social distancing guidelines and begin to think that all this unrest and angst about the coronavirus is unnecessary, go online to the National Geographic website and view the charts they've provided about how the Spanish flu spread (or didn't spread) through various cities, depending on how they handled lockdowns. It's an eye-opener.

Free Entertainment

To help us stay away from the mainstream news that has nothing but disturbing commentary and visuals,

I've compiled a list of more upbeat places to investigate online. Best of all -- they're free!

Games -- Do online searches for your favorite games to play on your computer, such as Scrabble, crossword puzzles, mahjong and vintage Pac Man, Myst and Donkey Kong. (Use "classic games" or "retro games" as your search terms for the old ones.)

Language classes -- Duolingo (www.duolingo.com) is the best language learning site I've found, and you don't have to pay anything! They keep track of your progress and move you right along once you've mastered a section. At this point there are over 30 languages you can study.

E-books -- Project Gutenberg (www.gutenberg.org) has over 60,000 books on its site, mostly old classics and all of them free to read. If you have an e-reader, you can download books, or you can read them right on your computer. If you have an editing or education background, Gutenberg is always looking for volunteer proofreaders to help add more books to the catalog.

Classic TV shows -- See if you have MeTV (www.metv.com) on your cable TV lineup. It shows all classics. You'll find "The Andy Griffith Show," "The Twilight Zone," "Mannix," "Barnaby Jones," "The Flintstones," "Wagon Train," "The Waltons," "The Carol Burnett Show," "I Love Lucy," "Perry Mason" and much more. Check the website for the shows and schedule for your area.

Vintage music -- While you're on the MeTV website, click Music at the top for free vintage tunes. Or you can search in a browser for "free online music" and find dozens of vintage music archives. Even Gutenberg has free music, everything from Bach to Irving Berlin. However, you need to listen to only one at a time on Gutenberg.

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