

‘NUTRITIONAL TIPS’

EVIDENCE SUPPORTS GOOD NUTRITION FOR ACTIVE HEALTHY AGING

Older Americans Food Habits Short Change Their Health

Substantial numbers of older adults, particularly the very old, minority, and low-income persons, consume less than one-third of the recommended intakes for key nutrients. Food intake has been shown to decline by about 1100 calories per day in older men and 700 calories per day in older women. Similar declines in intakes of B-complex vitamins, calcium, zinc, and Vitamin E are widespread. Nutrient shortages in older adults increase the risk of protein-calorie malnutrition and adversely affect chronic disease outcomes. In an aging body, as is true with any machine, chronic fuel shortages (inadequate intake of calories and nutrients) limit function and impair longevity and quality of life.

The diets and nutritional status of community-residing adults aged 70+ years who had reduced levels of functioning were improved through in-depth personalized nutrition counseling. After counseling, intakes of fruits, vegetables, and dairy increased, as did blood concentrations of carotene. *J Am Dietetic Association*, Oct 2002.

Good Nutrition Prolongs Independence and Quality of Life

Common chronic conditions that contribute most to functional disability in older adults are often nutrition-related: obesity, cardiovascular diseases, hypertension, stroke, cancer, diabetes, kidney diseases, and osteoporosis.

Over half of older adults have calcium and vitamin D deficiencies. Osteoporosis occurs in about 10 million older Americans. The National Osteoporosis Foundation estimates 1.5 million osteoporotic fractures occur annually. Studies show that daily supplementation with calcium and vitamin D significantly reduce the incidence of fractures.

Recent studies show that consuming adequate amounts of various fruits and vegetables, including blueberries and spinach, can reduce age-related losses in motor function and cognition. Treatment of older adults with mild to moderate Alzheimer’s disease with vitamin E supplementation slows cognitive decline and delays institutionalization. (‘ODS Abstract’) Supplementation with vitamin E may also reduce risk for coronary heart disease.

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24/7