Nutrition, Longevity, and Healthy Aging

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Nutrition Considerations in the Aging Population

- As we age we tend to eat less foods
- Loss of appetite
- Changes in taste
- Possible teeth or denture issues
- Eating on a budget and planning meals or not having access to as many resources
- Side effects from medication
Advances in Health Care and Aging

• It is projected that by the year 2050 the global population for older adults, 60 years and older, will double from 841 million to 2 billion, making up roughly 21% of the population.

• The aging population is not only growing, but are also living longer. The number of individuals over the age of 80 will be 3 times the amount, 392 million, compared to the current population.

• Older adults will outnumber young children for the first time in history.
How will this affect us globally?

• This large change in demographics affects economics, politics, public health, the health care systems and labor.

• With age, comes many non-communicable chronic diseases. These include cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, dementia, arthritis, stroke, cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and overall cognitive decline.

• These diseases are all associated with high levels of cost, treatment and care.

• Age-related diseases and chronic non-communicable diseases are largely preventable with diet and lifestyle modifications.
This growing older adult population has become increasingly more diverse in their nutritional requirements.

Malnutrition is a major nutritional concern in the aging population and this encompasses both adults who are underweight and overweight. Loss of muscle mass, strength and weight loss overtime occurs as we age, making us more susceptible to disability and other chronic illnesses.

Loss of lean body muscle, also known as sarcopenia, begins at the age of 50 and accelerates over the age of 60. As we age our physiology is more resistant to building new muscle.

Each year, after the age of 50, we lose 0.5-2% of total muscle mass. However, we are able to store fat adequately until the age of 75.
Role of Nutrition and Healthy Aging Cont…

• Why do we care about sarcopenia and preserving that lean muscle mass? Our bodies are largely made up of lean muscle, our hearts for example, and loss of this mass leads to a number of adverse health outcomes, disability, frailty, falls, insulin resistance, inflammation, an increase in chronic disease states and even mortality.

• Following dietary recommendations can be extremely difficult for this population, however, since there is a change in appetite, and if you’re on a certain medication this can create further appetite loss or change in taste, sometimes dental and chewing problems and limitations in mobility.

• For healthy aging, nutrient-dense foods and adequate protein are the main focus to meet the changing needs in this population and to increase longevity.
Nutrients and Healthy Aging

• Consuming adequate high-quality protein and coupling this with physical activity can reduce the loss of lean muscle mass.

• Protein requirements: For older adults the recommendations are increased to 1.0-1.2 g/kg of protein, 35% of calories per day. These needs are increased in order to build and maintain muscle mass.

• Good protein sources include lean meats, chicken, fish and soy products, lentils, nuts and seeds.

• Distributing protein throughout each meal makes it easier to tolerate and to ensure you are getting enough throughout the day.
• Consuming a balanced diet that is filled with adequate lean proteins, dark colored fruits and vegetables, grains and healthy fats are key in order to have a healthy aging process and to promote longevity.

• Omega-3 fatty acids: Wanting to limit saturated fats, and focusing on omega-3 fatty acids

• Higher intakes of omega-3s provide greater protection against cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cognitive decline.

• Sources of omega-3s are fatty fish, walnuts, and flax seeds.

• Research suggests that following a Mediterranean Diet may be beneficial in promoting longevity.
Other Nutrition Considerations

- Other nutrients of concern for a healthy aging process are vitamins B12, D, E, and calcium.

- Fiber: Has also been shown to have healthy aging properties in its role in maintaining intestinal health and protecting against heart disease and metabolic conditions.

- Thirst mechanisms decline as we age so it is important to drink plenty of fluids. Reduces constipation, promotes healthy skin, flushes toxins, and reduces stress on kidneys.
Sources


