It is easy to forgo good nutrition habits in our fast-paced lifestyle. We prioritize other responsibilities above making time to maintain and improve our own health. Yet eating for your health is one of the most important things you can do to help yourself age optimally.
Nutrition's Role in Healthy Aging

While research on what to eat seems to be continually changing, a healthy diet can help you look and feel your best. Eating a wide range of fruits and vegetables can help reduce your risk for many diseases, including heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke and some cancers. Eating foods with antioxidants and anti-inflammatory properties can slow down cell and tissue damage.

Research suggests a diet rich in Vitamin C and low in unhealthy fats and processed or refined carbohydrates may promote younger looking skin. Certain foods can irritate your bladder, so avoid caffeine, acidic foods, alcohol and carbonated beverages. To prevent constipation, make sure your diet includes high-fiber foods. To sleep better, avoid fatty foods and eating late in the day. Good nutrition plays an important role in preventing and slowing the progression of age-related macular degeneration.

The loss of taste and smell naturally occurs with aging. This can lead to poor nutrition if you use excess salt or sugar to enhance the taste of your food. While it may taste better, the trade off in impacting your health can be significant.

Eat Whole Foods

Trying to understand the changing nutritional guidelines can be overwhelming. The onslaught of commercials promoting supplements and attempting to read food labels can be confusing. What should you do?

Eat whole foods. These foods are as close to their natural form as possible. They contain the micronutrients your body needs for good health. Whole foods, such as whole grains, fruits, vegetables and legumes, provide dietary fiber which can help prevent health issues such as Type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

Getting the vitamins and minerals your body needs is best if it comes through the foods you eat. If you are looking to incorporate a specific vitamin or nutrient into your diet, why not first look for a good food choice.

Food Benefits Your Cognitive Health

Eating foods that offer heart-healthy benefits may also protect your brain. Choosing good food can reduce memory problems or reduce your risk of mild cognitive impairment. It can even help you preserve brain function. It really is food for thought!

The Mediterranean diet is rich in fruits, vegetables, olive oil, legumes, whole grains and fish. The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet is designed to treat high blood pressure (hypertension). The DASH diet reduces the sodium in your diet and encourages eating a variety of foods rich in nutrients that help lower blood pressure and offer numerous other health benefits.

Research shows a hybrid diet that combines aspects of both of these diets known as the Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay (MIND) diet could further reduce your risk of Alzheimer's disease. Even making small changes to adopt the MIND diet approach, such as eating two servings of vegetables per day, two berry servings per week and one fish meal per week, may lower your risk of developing Alzheimer's disease.

What you drink counts, too. Not enough water or too much alcohol can lead to confusion and memory loss. Be sure to drink plenty of water and other fluids.

Final Thoughts

Eating a variety of healthy foods, practicing portion control and including physical activity in your daily routine can go a long way toward promoting healthy aging. A healthy diet is a smart investment that can pay amazing dividends on your health over time. Better yet, it's never too late to make healthier lifestyle choices. Start today. Remember, you are what you eat.
Your body composition naturally shifts to more fat mass as you age. To maintain a healthy weight, pay close attention to your portion sizes and the foods you eat. Look for lower calorie nutrient dense foods such as vegetables and fruits that are both filling and good for you. Always include a protein-rich food at each meal, as they take longer for your body to digest and will make you feel full. Protein is vital to maintaining and building your muscle mass. Research also shows spreading your protein intake throughout the day offers the potential for better outcomes in maintaining your muscle mass. When you sleep, you are essentially fasting for many hours. By consuming protein before bed, you will lessen the time your body is in a fasting state. Consider water with your evening meal and milk at bedtime or move your daytime yogurt snack to bedtime so you don’t exceed your normal calorie count.

GOAL: Every time you eat, include a fruit or vegetable, or one of each.
Charter House

211 2nd Street NW
Rochester, MN 55901

507-266-8572

www.charterhouse-mayo.org

email: charterhouse@mayo.edu

Find us on facebook

-----------------------------

Dan Abraham Healthy Living Center

565 1st St SW
Rochester, MN 55901

507-266-4688

dahlc.mayoclinic.org

email: dahlc@mayo.edu

Find us on facebook