

Jeni's Health & Fitness Tips

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Hi Everyone!

It is well known that good nutrition enhances well-being and reduces the risk of diseases such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and cancer. Nutritional needs change as we age. This is more relevant in our society as people in their 50s are living longer than the same group 20 years ago. Many people over 50 get less than the recommended intake of vitamins, minerals and fibre.

As we age our metabolic rate decreases, resulting in a 1-2% reduction in total kilojoule need for each decade. For example those aged between 50 and 70 require about 12% less (for men) and 7% less (for women) than when they were aged 19-30 years. At 70 years plus this decreases to 18% less for men and 13% less for women.

Protein needs increase with age. Those over 70 have a 25% higher requirement for protein intake than those in the 19-30 year age group. As we age our bodies experience a decline in efficiency of processing nutrients from food. Other changes such as decreased immune function, decreased gastric acid production and an increase in oxidative stress can increase our requirements for vitamins B6, B12, E, C, folic acid, zinc, calcium and iron.

It is therefore necessary to consume enough food to obtain these nutrients, whilst, at the same time, decreasing the overall kilojoule intake. A good way to achieve this is to cut down on fatty foods such as butter, margarine, cakes, oils, processed and fried foods and to increase intake of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low fat dairy products, legumes, nuts and seeds.

We also need to become more physically active to burn those excess kilojoules. Walking is an excellent exercise to achieve this – take every opportunity you can to walk – park as far away as practical from everywhere you go.

One way of keeping metabolic rate elevated is to increase muscle mass by resistance training. Resistance training is especially beneficial for us as we age because muscle mass decreases. The more muscle mass you have, the faster you will burn kilojoules (even while sleeping!). You will also be stronger making every day activities easier!

So don't slow down and age gracefully. Get active, eat sensibly and live life to the full!

Yours in health,

Jeni

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