

## SENIORS CAN KEEP HEALTHY LUSTER WITH 'BIG THREE':

# Exercise, Nutrition, Hydration

BY JAMES M. RIPPE, M.D.

A recent report on aging estimates that the United States already has more people over age 65 than it has teenagers—and the numbers of those living well beyond the "golden years" are growing. Of those reaching age 65, 80 percent are living to age 80.

The extension of average lifespan has brought new challenges for the aging—one of which is paying renewed attention to leading a healthy lifestyle. For the elderly,

that can make or break the chances of growing old "gracefully."

I advise my senior patients, and young and middle-aged as well, to pay attention to the simple things, especially the "big three"—exercise, nutrition and hydration.

## Exercise Important

Exercise is important at any age. With my elderly patients, I generally recommend a regular walking program. Studies have consistently shown that walking on a regular ba-



sis can help lower the risk of heart disease and other chronic illnesses.

Good eating habits are another key to overall health. No more than 30 percent of calories should come from fat, for instance, and only 55 percent should come from carbohydrates. Protein should make up the rest.

Seniors, like many young people, often overlook the easiest part of leading a healthy lifestyle: staying hydrated, or meeting the body's constant need for water.

As people age, they face special challenges when it comes to hydration. Their thirst mechanism be-

comes less accurate and their body's ability to react quickly to heat or cold rapidly diminishes. This means seniors are more susceptible to illnesses such as heat stroke, cramps and exhaustion, which are caused by dehydration, often triggered by extreme temperature conditions.

Some of the warning signs of heat-related illnesses and severe dehydration are involuntary muscle spasms, headache, dizziness, weakness and loss of consciousness.

The best way for seniors to avoid these often life-threatening conditions is to drink ample amounts of water and limit time spent in extreme climates. I recommend making a conscious decision to take in at least 2½ to 3 quarts of water a day from all sources (liquids, solid foods). Of this amount, at least 1-2 quarts should be water itself. To make sure my patients get this "minimum daily requirement" and to make sure they always have access to water, I suggest they carry bottled water—Evian natural spring water is a good choice—with them, especially when temperatures pose a threat.

As a precautionary measure, seniors should check with their doctor before they start any exercise, nutrition or hydration program.

## Osteoarthritis Doesn't Have To Hurt Lifestyle

Osteoarthritis affects more Americans (about 15.8 million) than any other type of arthritis.

Recent progress in arthritis research and treatments indicates that the disease shouldn't stop you from living a productive and enjoyable life, reports the Arthritis Foundation.

For instance, a recent study has shown that middle-aged and older women significantly can lower their risk for osteoarthritis by losing weight.

Osteoarthritis can develop from several factors, including overuse or injury to some joints, being overweight or from repeated use. Other studies have indicated a genetic cause for some forms of osteoarthritis," said Arthur Grayzel, M.D., senior vice president of medical affairs for the Arthritis Foundation.

Osteoarthritis causes the breakdown of joint tissue, leading to joint pain and stiffness. As the smooth cartilage that protects the surface of a joint begins to wear away, the ends of bones rub together. Early symptoms of osteoarthritis usually are stiffness and pain in certain joints, such as the fingers, knees, feet, hip and spine.



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### Mickie Levandowski

Three years ago Mickie suffered a stroke which paralyzed his left side. With a special exercise program, he has recovered the use of his left arm and leg. Mickie says, "It's been the toughest fight of my life, but I'm winning it." He will be 70 years old this year.



### Walter and Merle Goldsberry

Walter, 67 and Merle, 63, have been with Coastal Fitness for the past 5 months. Both have diabetes and their doctors recommended exercise. Before, Merle was having foot problems. She says "Working out helps my circulation. By keeping fit, I can feel the difference."

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## Nutrition And Good Health

We all know vitamins are good for us, but as research probes deeper into their benefits and our bodies, the news keeps getting better.

Good nutrition in your 40s and 50s can help slow the aging process. Along with exercise, good nutrition and a diet that supplies a full com-

plement of vitamins can help prevent disease and keep us active.

Vitamins are such a big part of our lives that it's hard to believe they are relatively recent discoveries. The word vitamin was actually coined in 1912. Each year new benefits of vitamins are discovered. In the past year alone, for example, research has found that vitamins can lower cholesterol, reduce heart attack risks and strengthen the body's immune system. The following information further explains these recent discoveries.

### Niacin (Vitamin B3)

■ Discovered in 1920s as a cure for pellagra.

■ Recently found to be effective in the war against cholesterol.

■ High doses can lower blood levels of "bad" LDL cholesterol (the kind that causes buildup of plaque in arteries).

■ Can raise levels of the "good" HDL cholesterol that keeps arteries clear.

■ People with high cholesterol should use niacin only under medical supervision.

■ In small amounts, niacin can help the body convert carbohydrates, fats and proteins into energy and aid in hormone synthesis.

■ Good sources of niacin: chicken, turkey, halibut, tuna, peanuts and salmon.

### Beta Carotene

■ A form of Vitamin A.

■ Preliminary research has shown beta carotene could potentially prevent heart attacks and strokes. More

data is to come in future years.

■ Vitamin A is necessary for healthy skin, hair and bone growth, but can be toxic if taken in large quantities.

■ Good sources of beta carotene: carrots, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, peaches and cantaloupes.

### Vitamin C

■ May reduce cellular buildup of sorbitol that is partly responsible for cataracts and neurological damage in diabetics.

■ May also prevent other complications of diabetes including clogged arteries.

■ Good sources of Vitamin C: citrus fruits, cantaloupe and peppers.

### Vitamin E

■ Vitamin E supplements can help improve immune system responses in men and women over the age of 60.

■ As a normal part of the diet, vitamin E promotes the formation of healthy red blood cells and protects white blood cells that help fight disease.

■ Good sources for Vitamin E: whole-wheat flour, almonds, walnuts and corn oil.

You can easily obtain a day's worth of most of the important nutrients listed by eating the following: one orange, one ounce of bran flakes cereal, one apple, two slices of cracked wheat bread, one tomato, one cup of rice, one potato, one cup of cooked egg noodles and one cup of spinach.

If your eating habits are unavoidably erratic, a daily vitamin supplement may be helpful to your diet.

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