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August 2014

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Taking a Bite Out of Aging

Healthy aging begins
with nutritional support
from the inside out

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Taking a Bite Out of Aging



Healthy aging begins with nutritional support from the inside out.

By Daniel Breeman

Is diet alone enough to slow or even reverse the aging process? What role does exercise play in our never-ending quest to regain youth and vitality? Can nutritional supplements help? What about the emotional aspect of healthy aging?

For years we've heard about diets high in antioxidants, rich in omega-3s and minerals, and low in saturated fats as the key to living a longer and healthier life as we all strive to enter our golden years with the aim of aging naturally and gracefully.

In fact, a recent study by Dr. Dean Ornish published in *The Lancet Oncology* found that lifestyle changes, including adopting a low-fat, plant-based diet, moderate exercise, stress reduction and weekly

support sessions were associated with a significant increase in relative telomere length—the part of the chromosome that affects cell aging. Participants in the five-year study were asked to make the following lifestyle changes: 1) eat a low-fat, plant-based diet consisting of vegetables, fruits, unrefined grains, legumes and beans; 2) do moderate exercise six times a week consisting of walking for 30 minutes; 3) take part in stress reduction included meditation, tai chi and/or yoga; and 4) attend a support group weekly meeting.

“Our bodies often have a remarkable capacity to begin healing themselves, and much more quickly than we once realized, if we simply make the lifestyle changes that

are really the primary determinants of our health and well-being,” said Dr. Ornish.

The study followed 35 participants for five years and found that the more people that changed their lifestyles, the longer their telomere length got at any age.

“The telomeres help assure that in the process of cellular replication, our DNA will remain stranded, not frayed and not replicate abnormally,” explained Deborah Waddell, Dipl Ac LAc. “Irregular replications can lead to cellular damage and aging.”

While there is no “magic bullet” to prolong the health and vital lifespan, Dr. Ronald Klatz, president of the The American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine (A4M), believes that the anti-

aging lifestyle can add 25.3 more years of productive lifespan. Dr. Klitz references researchers from the Harvard School of Public Health who found that the longest-living Americans are Asian-American women residing in Bergen County, NJ. According to the researchers, these women live longer than any other ethnic group in the U.S.—an average lifespan of 91.8 years.¹

“As a group, the Bergen County women have ready access to preventative health services, consume a healthy diet, received higher education, are professionally employed, and enjoy a network of family and friends,” said Dr. Klitz. “These are proven life-extending factors that when combined, exert a synergistic effect on longevity. These factors are also the cornerstones of the anti-aging medical model. Dietary supplementation is also a strong contributor to both quality and quantity of life.”

Of course, developing healthy habits at and early age can also prove beneficial as we enter our golden years, especially where weight management is concerned.

“Young people rarely think of their own health, believing they’re indestructible,” said Mitch Skop, senior director, new product development for Pharmchem Laboratories. “But we know that healthy eating that begins early in life helps maintain good health later on. That includes early weight management, which if neglected, can set up later-stage health issues like obesity, diabetes, heart disease and so on, not to mention problems with knees and hips.

“When it comes to supplementation, to best ensure success of reaching one’s health goals including bodyweight, body fat and physique, those supplements that are backed by their own research—not generic ingredients using borrowed science—are the only options.”

Diet and Exercise

While it is no secret that eating a healthy and well-balanced diet can add years to a person’s life and help stave-off age-related disorders, getting your older patients to change their ways and adapt a healthy diet and lifestyle is often easier said than done. It is, however, vital that patients are educated in what foods and dietary supplements are best for them as they begin to age and seek answers.

“Our bodies require a wide array of nutrients to function optimally,” said **Jacob Feitelbaum, MD**, a recognized authority on chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia. “These include the optimal level of B vitamins for energy and cognitive func-

tion, antioxidants to prevent tissue damage, and other nutrients for tissue repair and regeneration. Unfortunately, half the vitamins and minerals in our diet have been destroyed by food processing, leaving most Americans nutritionally deficient.

“Our bodies also have a ‘use it or lose it’ approach to efficiency. To maintain a function, you need to exercise it. This applies not only to our muscles, but also to our minds.”

Consuming a diet high in antioxidants, omega-3s, magnesium and other key nutrients is critical in maintaining good health as we grow older. Magnesium, for example, has been known as a natural stress reliever and research has shown that individuals reaching 100 years of age have higher total body magnesium and lower calcium levels than most elderly people, according to the Nutritional Magnesium Association. There is some evidence that dietary supplementation can also aid the process while at the same time helping to lower health care costs in the U.S. For example, Memorial University (Newfoundland, Canada) conducted a study in which they asked healthy senior-age men and women to consume a supplement containing 18 vitamins, minerals, and trace elements. Among the results of the study was that those who took the supplement showed “significant improvement in short-term memory, problem-solving ability, abstract thinking, and attention.” The team also calculated that for every \$1 spent on a multivitamin supplement, \$28 would be saved in health care costs.²

“As we age we need more antioxidants than our own cells can produce,” said Waddell. “So we must flood our bodies with antioxidants from the food we eat. The best way to flood our bodies with antioxidants is through a diet that is predominantly plant-based.”

“We already know that people living with nutritional deficiencies suffer from age-related disorders and prematurely age more so than people without deficiencies,” added Michael A. Smith, MD, senior health scientist with Life Extension, author of *The Supplement Pyramid* and host of Healthy Talk on RadioMD.com. “But nutrition can do so much more for healthy aging than just stave off age-related disorders. And exercise, specifically resistance exercises, improves insulin sensitivity in addition to providing cardiopulmonary and longevity benefits. This is one of the most important things for aging people to do.”

Dr. Smith also supports a new field of study called Nutrigenomics, the study of gene-nutrient interaction, or how nutrients can influence gene expression. “Correcting

nutritional deficiencies is one way to improve aging, but to use targeted nutrients to influence gene expression is taking nutrition to a new level in healthy aging,” he said.

“Protection and prevention” is also of the utmost importance in health aging, according to Waddell, and the burden is on healthcare practitioners to spread the word to their patients.

“As licensed health care providers we need to educate our patients on antioxidants and how they can prevent damage to our vessel walls,” Waddell said. “It’s here that plaque will build up, or chronic inflammation and infection will set in, leading to DNA mutation and various diseases. We can find dietary antioxidant sources in most fresh, organic fruits and vegetables. Berries and green tea are also helpful. Health care professionals need to steer their patients to various exercise classes, websites and consider setting up a support group for them.”

Age Management

While some of the most commonly-used terms applied to healthy aging include phases such as “anti-aging” and “age reversal”, the process of aging gracefully and

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Taking a Bite Out of Aging



naturally may be also be described in a more controlled way.

"I prefer to speak of the aging process in terms of age management," said Dr. Smith. "Longevity researchers have identified six or seven cellular mechanisms of aging. These mechanisms are going to happen...they are a part of life, or loss of life, from the cell up. So to spend time and money in managing these aging mechanisms is just a more productive way to look at it."

Dr. Smith offers as an example the endocrine theory of aging—how the loss of steroid hormones affects cell function. As we age, he said, steroid hormone production decreases, making it difficult for the brain to communicate with cells and tissues. The result, according to Dr. Smith, is metabolic dysfunction, which can include deficiencies in cell energy production, energy storage problems and overall loss of cells/tissue functions. So by replenishing steroid hormones like DHEA, we can "manage" the endocrine mechanism of aging, he explained.

Healthy Aging

The health of the Baby Boomer adult is a concern because 60 percent of Boomers will be living with more than one chronic condition over the next 20 or so years, according to Waddell, who went on to say that these conditions include, but are not limited to cardiovascular disease, diabetes, arthritis, cancer and dementia. She also believes that natural remedies, including the role of prevention, will play a major role in helping ease the senior healthcare burden.

"Our current Western model of medicine is sick care, not health care," said Waddell. "As a Chinese Medicine practitioner, we are trained in a medicine that is all about prevention. That being said, unless a practitioner is also educated in plant-based nutrition and lifestyle medicine it may be difficult to help older patients see that they are not destined to live out their senior years on a plethora of drugs and suffering from a myriad of chronic diseases.

"Healthy aging to me is being free of chronic disease, having a sharp mind, and being able to enjoy life to the fullest with

family and friends. I like to set an example for my patients. I also believe that it's important to educate our older patients on what causes aging and disease."

So then if healthy aging is indeed the ultimate goal, what then can practitioners do to help their patients overcome the obstacles that stand in the way?

"Healthy aging reflects our goal for people, which is to have them die very young...just very late in life!" said Dr. Teitelbaum. "The American image of aging and decline is simply one more fear mongering myth which serves to scare people into buying more unneeded medical care and long-term care insurance. For example, research shows that half of those diagnosed with Alzheimer's turn out not to have it at autopsy and yet they lived and died with something that was quite reversible. People

do great when they combine the best of natural and standard medicine."

The combination of traditional medicine with that of natural or alternative medicine may hold the key to achieving the goal of healthy aging. Here's where practitioners must play a major role in guiding their patients along this path as the two fields merge together.

"There's the objective, clinical way of looking at it and then there's the subjective, metaphysical way," said Dr. Smith. "The objective way to healthy aging is counteracting the theories of cellular aging such as reducing oxidative stress, restoring cell energy production, replenishing steroid hormones, improving cell membrane and cell-to-cell communication, preventing dangerous glycation reactions and reducing chronic inflammation. All of

Antioxidants, Omega-3s Lead Anti-Aging Product Lineup

Here are some of the latest product offerings available to healthcare practitioners that are reported as adding nutritional support to the healthy aging process, which should also include a balanced diet and moderate exercise.

- Life Extension (Fort Lauderdale, FL) has introduced Super Omega with Krill and Astaxanthin offering enhanced benefits from both the cardiovascular and nervous system. To help emulate a Mediterranean diet, Super Omega provides a standardized olive fruit polyphenol extract to protect normal LDL from oxidation. Research shows that a combination of olive oil and fish oil supplements may help with inflammation better than a placebo or fish oil alone.

- Patient One MediNutritionals (Farmingdale, NY) offers RejuvenateOne, a whole-body anti-aging supplement featuring a diverse network of potent antioxidants, hormone-optimizing compounds and inflammation modulators that promote fluid, flexible cell membranes. Other related products include Pycnogenol OPC Complex 300 mg super-antioxidant formula and NeuroOne for optimizing brain health.

- Uckele Health & Nutrition (Blissfield, MI) has launched Revive & Rehydrate, a targeted

nutritional formula to support the structure and function of the skin from the inside out. The formulation of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, amino acids, herbal extracts and sodium hyaluronate support the skin's cells, protein, hydration abilities and connective tissue function.

- America's Finest, Inc. (AFI, East Windsor, NJ) offers two complementary lines of dietary supplements to support the various aspects of healthy aging: the re-launched AFI bioactive ingredient dietary supplements and the new Sanutra Wellness health condition supplements. The new products in the Sanutra Wellness line include Healthy Aging/Bio-Protectant and Memory Health supplements.

- Morinda (Provo, UT) has a line of anti-aging beverages, supplements and skin care products, including its latest offering—TruAge Skin AGE Therapy Gel which protects, soothes and repairs the skin.

- Natural Vitality's (Austin, TX) Natural Calm magnesium supplement is a solution to both restoring a healthy magnesium level and balancing your calcium intake. The drink features a proprietary formula that provides a highly absorbable, water-soluble magnesium in ionic form, so it is ready to go to work right away. Natural Calm is vegan, gluten free and certified non-GMO (genetically modified organism).



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these are necessary if we want to age healthy, but they may not necessarily make you feel like you're aging healthy. To do that, we need to address our mood and emotions. Healthy aging for me is a synergy or balance between body, soul and spirit. And it doesn't necessarily mean a longer life, but a higher quality of life."

"The goal of anti-aging medicine is not to merely prolong the total years of an individual's life, but to ensure that those years are enjoyed in a productive and vital fashion," added A4M's Dr. Klatz.

The Stress Factor

Stress, and all that comes with it, can be yet another key barrier to healthy aging. For example, University College London (U.K.) researchers observed that psychological

stress takes a toll on telomeres—the end caps of chromosomes, shortening of which is considered a marker of cellular aging.³ Separately, a team from the University of California, Berkeley found that chronic stress may cause physiological changes to the brain that may make people prone to anxiety and mood disorders later in life.⁴

"Stress can also cause excess free radical formation; hence, stress relief is a major part of Dr. Dean Ornish's Heart Stress disease prevention program as well as increasing our telomere length," said Waddell. "I believe doing meditation, yoga or tai chi is essential to healthy aging."

"Chronic stress, characterized by chronic elevations in cortisol, does negatively impact how we age," added Dr. Smith. "Cortisol is really an acute acting hormone. It prepares you to deal with stressors but today we deal mostly with chronic, smoldering stressors. This means that cortisol is constantly being dumped into our circulation and this can have many physiological consequences to our immune system, cardiovascular systems and inflammatory reactions.

Lifestyle changes and nutrients targeting cortisol elevations can help to reverse these negative changes and can help us manage aging."


Emotional Support

While eating the right foods, getting plenty of exercise and the right amount of sleep, and taking the appropriate supplements are all important factors that can contribute to healthy aging, gaining emotional support from family and friends is also paramount, as is the proper motivation to stay the course.

"It's critical," said Dr. Smith. "Emotional well-being is what most people say they want as they enter the later years in life. When you're young, our physical look is what drives us. When we are in better physical shape, we often, although not always, feel better about ourselves and this positively affects our emotional state. However, as we get older, it seems to reverse for many of us. It's emotional well-being that we desire and when in balance, it motivates us to stay physically healthy."

Waddell pointed to studies on people who lived past the age of 100 that shows that one of the most important aspects of their long life was community and that most of them lived with extended family. Another important aspect was that the elderly were greatly revered, mostly in countries outside of the U.S. "Motivation is also paramount for all ages, especially for healthy aging," she said. "I am in the

process of setting up support group meetings for my patients and clients who want to transition to a plant-based diet. It's easier and more fun to keep motivated in eating healthy when you do it as a group."

Finally, engaging in positive behavior can also provide comfort as patients get older and search for answers. "If you are living a life of hate, don't expect your body to keep you around for a long life," said Dr. Teitelbaum. "Also, don't expect it to give you energy. Learning to do and to keep your attention on things that feel good is remarkably healing." 

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- Half the vitamins and minerals in our diet have been destroyed by food processing, leaving Americans nutritionally deficient.
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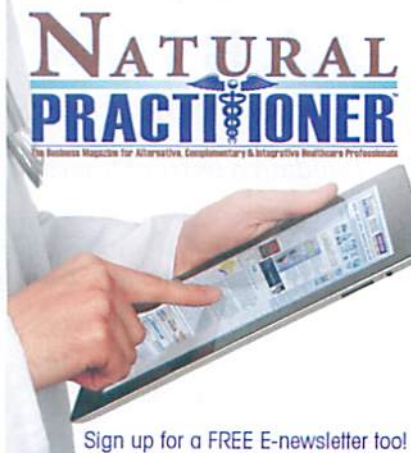
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