

# SPECIAL NEEDS FOR MEN IN THEIR 40S AND 50S

Nutrition plays different, yet important roles during the various stages of adulthood. During middle age and beyond, a healthy diet can help minimize the progression of chronic disease, keep the mind sharp and the body strong.

## Reach and Maintain a Healthy Weight

Due to a drop in metabolism, a natural part of aging, you may find it harder to keep extra pounds off in your forties and fifties. Men often lose muscle and gain fat, mainly in the belly area, during middle age.

- **Reduce Your Portions.** Eat smaller meals and snacks throughout the day to rev up your metabolism. Do not skip meals; it can lead to overeating and a sluggish metabolism.
- **Eat Sensibly.** Eat fewer processed foods, less fat and more whole foods. Focus on whole grains, fruits, vegetables and healthy fats like olive oil, walnuts, almonds, avocado and fish. If you drink alcohol, limit yourself one drink a day.
- **Exercise Regularly.** Engage in cardiovascular and strength training exercises most days of the week. Toning and maintaining muscle mass can prevent sluggish metabolism.

## Sarcopenia and Protein

After reaching a peak in young adulthood, the body's muscle stores begin to decline at about 45 to 55 years of age. Current recommendations for protein for older adults is 50 grams per day, however, some experts believe older men need much more. Examples of protein-rich foods include: 3-ounce piece of baked salmon, about the size of a deck of cards (21 grams of protein), a 6-ounce container of vanilla yogurt (about 8 grams), an ounce of part-skim mozzarella cheese (7 grams of protein), ¼ cup soy nuts (17 grams).

- **Food Focus:** High-quality protein can be found in fish, poultry, lean meats, eggs, low-fat and nonfat dairy like yogurt, and soy foods like tofu, soy milk, soy burgers, soy nuts and edamame.

## Heart Disease

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women. Healthy lifestyle choices, including diet, play a major role in keeping the heart healthy.

- **Food Focus:** Reduce total fat and saturated fat by limiting fried foods, fatty meats and whole fat cheese; increase fiber, especially cholesterol lowering soluble fiber by including oats, beans, barley, fruits and vegetables. Eat fatty fish for omega-3s like salmon, mackerel, and sardines twice a week. Limit alcohol to one drink per day.

## Preventing Alzheimer's and Dementia

Studies suggest that daily consumption of fruits and vegetables, as well as weekly consumption of fish and other sources of omega-3s were linked to less incidence of dementia and fewer cases of Alzheimer's disease. Increased physical activity, controlling blood pressure, and cognitive training have all been shown to be helpful in preventing decline in cognitive function.

- **Food Focus:** Salmon, mackerel, sardines, walnuts and canola oil.

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## Cancer Concerns

Prostate cancer is the second most common cause of cancer death in men, preceded only by lung cancer. It is most common in older men and in men with a family history. Taking daily supplements of vitamin E or the mineral selenium were once believed to help prevent prostate cancer, but current research has shown that these supplements have no effect. The most promising diet for preventing prostate cancer is one that is low in fat, high in vegetables and fruits, and avoids excessive meat, calories, and dairy. The American Institute for Cancer Research has singled out the plant compound lycopene, found in cooked tomatoes, watermelon, and pink grapefruit, to be *probable* in reducing the risk of prostate cancer. Diets high in lycopene-containing foods – not supplements – could prevent 11% of prostate cancers.

- **Food Focus:** Processed tomato products, like tomato sauce, salsa, tomato soup and tomato juice, are the best sources because heat processing makes the lycopene more available to the body. Fill 2/3 of your plate with vegetables, beans, whole grains, and fruits. Include cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, and kale, as they contain cancer-fighting compounds whose protective effect appears to be strongest for cancers of the mouth, larynx, pharynx, esophagus, and stomach.

## Deflate the Spare Tire

Many men gain weight around their midsection as they hit middle age. Research has shown that belly fat, particularly a waistline of 40 inches or larger, can be dangerous to health.

Middle age can be a stressful time for many men with pressures coming from work, family, and finances. Try to manage stress, a known risk for cardiovascular disease. In addition, choose a nutrient-rich, low-fat diet to help prevent the onset of chronic diseases like high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and high cholesterol levels, or to help manage existing conditions.