

Live Healthy Georgia- Seniors Taking Charge!

January 2009 Newsletter

Weight Management



By Jessica Burge, BS

Did you know that as we age, the amount of energy that our bodies use decreases? This change occurs when some muscle is replaced by fat and often leads to weight gain. Weight is mainly determined by how much we eat and our physical activity. Excess weight, especially around the waist, is dangerous and has been linked to many diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, and some cancers. The trick to keeping a proper weight is to find a balance between a healthy diet and regular physical activity.

There is no secret behind following a healthy eating plan. The dietary guidelines recommend 7 to 10 fruit and vegetable servings per day, as well as 3 whole-grain choices and 3 cups of low-fat dairy products. Although many people try fad diets, the most success comes from making simple changes and doing them for the long-run.

Tips To Help You Maintain A Well-Balanced Diet.

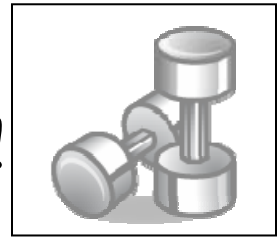
1. Watch your portion sizes, especially when dining out. Restaurants often give you double or triple the normal serving size. Don't be afraid to ask for a box to take home your leftovers.
2. Stay in tune with your appetite. In other words, eat when you are hungry and stop when you are full. Also, try to avoid mindless snacking when you are bored.
3. Take the time to enjoy your meal. Avoid eating in front of the television or while standing; instead, try to eat slowly and really taste your food.
4. Be mindful of the beverages you drink. It's easy to forget about the calories in sodas, juice, and sports drinks, though they can quickly add up!

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Keeping track of your weight by stepping on the scale regularly is an essential part of weight maintenance. Of course, if you don't own a scale you can also use your clothing to judge whether you have lost or gained weight. You should notice if items are suddenly fitting looser or tighter.

Weight loss occurs in some older people. You may find yourself eating less due to a decreased appetite, physical limitations that affect your ability to prepare or obtain food, or difficulties swallowing and chewing. A weight change that occurs without significant changes in diet or exercise may signal a health problem, so be sure to tell your doctor about any unexplained weight loss.

The role of physical activity in weight maintenance is critical. The dietary guidelines recommend at least 30 minutes of moderately intense exercise per day. This includes activities like walking, yard work, and hiking. You may wonder how you will find the time for this much exercise, but if you

divide your walk into segments throughout the day, it will be manageable. For example, try to do three 10-minute walks over the course of the day. Keep in mind that large shopping centers, like the mall, are a great place to walk on days with poor weather.

For more information see:
Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005, Weight Management <http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/document/html/chapter3.htm> or The American Dietetic Association, The Balancing Act: Eat Well and Move It! at http://www.eatright.org/ada/files/1005_YUM_factsheet.pdf or <http://www.livewellagewell.info>

