Healthy Aging: Nutrition, Life-Style and Related Factors

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DEAR EDITOR,

Based on our recent brief comments [1], we wish to elaborate the theme of healthy aging based on the current scientific understanding of this subject. Some aspects of this problem are dealt with below.

Weight: For prolonged healthy life, the most important factor is Calorie Restriction (CR). By eating diet with low calorie density, e.g. salads without dressing but with hint of Olive oil and/or lemon. Add to those legumes such as beans, chickpeas, lentils; vegetables without starches, some fish or chicken. No desserts, sugar, soda pops, French fries, cakes, biscuits, pasta, rice or potatoes. Add some whole wheat bread. Keep you BMI below 22 or lower, so that there is no visible abdominal fat.

Herbs and Anti-Oxidants: Add Turmeric in your food—it contains curcumin—a powerful anti-oxidant. It can be bought at any Indian/Pakistani grocery store or the internet. Combine that with some black pepper to increase its bio-availability. Take multi-vitamins, B-100 complex, extra Vitamin C, D, and E. Also take Omega-3 capsules, Selenium and Lycopene tablets.

Cook with Olive oil which is a powerful anti-inflammatory agent, when first cold-pressed virgin olive oil is used. Eat a lot of raw or lightly cooked Broccoli to avail of its sulphoraphane which is a powerful anti-cancer agent.

Other Nutrition Items: Eliminate fruit juices since they contain fructose, just like soda pops, and fructose elevates triglyceride that is quite harmful. Eliminate butter, jams and honey. Only take low fat cheeses or butter-milk. Add a lot of nuts such as pistachio, walnuts and almonds to your snack repertoire. Eat a lot of coloured vegetables, and non-sweet fruit. Then add some black berries, blue berries, raspberries, water melon, apples or Asian pears as healthy sweet items in your diet.

Recent research has emphasized the importance of a healthy biome—the healthy bacteria in your gastro-intestinal system. To achieve that one should eat/drink KIMCHIE (a Korean fermented cabbage), sauer-kroft or fermented yogurt products such as KEFIR of buttermilk product called AYRAN available in Iranian/Greek/Turkish stores.

Three to five cups of coffee, normal or decaffeinated, or tea, especially the green tea are very healthy beverages. A couple of glasses of red wine or white wine also have a good effect on your health.

Life-Style: Smoking is fatal and must be eliminated. Similarly avoid spending too much time in polluted air environments. Some physical activity is a MUST—at least 150 minutes per week—it could be walking, swimming, bicycling, housework or playing sports or working out in a Gym.

For mental and emotional health, social support of friends, spouse, children, grand-children or pet animals is essential. Some demanding intellectual activity—reading, discussions, writing(e.g., your diary) learning languages, computer games ,playing chess or bridge etc. keep you mentally sharp and delay dementia.

A goal, hobby or purpose that is being pursued passionately is a key to healthy aging. It can usually involve voluntary work with an association, children, hospitals, political or civic groups, or, individual activities such as painting landscapes etc.

Medical Tests: To establish the status of your health you must persuade your physician to give you a complete blood test every year covering, cholesterol , triglycerides, sugar, HbAc1,urine,liver and pancreas functions, hemoglobin and blood components etc. Periodic tests for PSA (men)n, mammography (women), cervical examination (women), colonoscopy (men and women), CT scan and/or ultra-sound scan of chest and abdominal region (men and women) are desirable. Dental check-ups, especially of the gums, as well as a visit to an ophthalmologist on an annual basis are also essential. A periodic visit to a cardiologist or internist for a thorough check-up is also desirable.

In a capsule, the preceding are the guidelines for a healthy aging. However, these steps have to be incorporated into your lives before the old age diseases strike you. In other words, one must start young to take these steps in order to secure a healthy old age.

REFERENCES