

OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

RYAN WHITE CARE PROGRAM

HEALTHY START OF NORTH
CENTRAL FLORIDA

CENTRAL HEALTHY START

RURAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIP OF
NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA

A Message

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Steven Oliva

September is Healthy Aging Month, which this issue is dedicated to. WellFlorida is committed to our mission of building healthier communities for all residents, and our research and services address the needs of all populations throughout our service area and state.

WellFlorida will soon be working on a survey project to help determine the needs of the disabled in times of disaster. We will be working with our community partners that provide services to the disabled in an effort to help the Florida Department of Health determine the needs of and improve disaster preparedness for this special population.

WellFlorida is also working on health needs assessments in Bradford, Union, Lafayette and Suwannee counties. These projects were funded by the Florida Department of Health and will help these communities identify emerging healthcare issues.

In addition, WellFlorida has just completed a physician workforce needs assessment in Lake County. Look for the results on our website.



United Way of Suwannee Valley

Nutrition for healthy aging



It's no secret that good nutrition is a part of good health and that good health improves quality of life. But what most of us don't realize is that as we age, we experience a variety of physiological changes that alter nutrient needs and influence food intake. Everyone benefits from healthy food choices—but as we age, selecting healthy foods could become less intuitive, requiring a more deliberate effort.

Aging, energy and hunger

As we age, we undergo a progressive loss of muscle mass. Muscle mass is closely associated with metabolic rate, the rate at which we use energy. As

muscle mass decreases, a body requires less energy to maintain itself. Muscle building exercises might slow or reverse the rate at which a person loses muscle mass. But typically, as we age, our energy needs decrease, we burn fewer calories, and we need less food.

Aging also affects food digestion and nutrient absorption. Older adults tend to produce less saliva, which initiates breakdown of some foods and is important to oral health. As saliva decreases, a person becomes more susceptible to oral infections which could be painful and ultimately alter food choice. Similarly, the production of gastrointestinal enzymes,

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Calendar

September 2007
Healthy Aging Month

October 2007
Talk About Prescriptions Month

Tri-County Connects: Voicing the Vision of Local Healthcare Providers

Learn about and discuss the emerging healthcare system in the Tri-County area. Share your vision of the future of healthcare in Dixie, Gilchrist and Levy counties by participating in the healthcare provider forum. Key Note Speaker: Franklin Schupp, CEO of Tri-County Hospital
Oct. 11 from 5:30–8:30 pm
Tommy Usher Community Center
506 SW 4th Ave, Chiefland

American Diabetes Association Diabetes EXPO

A highly interactive event that includes professional speakers, access to health providers, a variety of ADA program/event information, exercise and cooking demonstrations and much more.
Oct. 6, Tampa
For more information contact Ken Gibson at 813-885-5007 ext.3110

2007 Alachua County Heart Walk

As the signature fund-raising event for the American Heart Association, the Start! Heart Walk promotes physical activity and heart-healthy living in a fun family environment.
Oct. 13, Gainesville
For more information please contact Trish Thompson at 352- 337-8150 or trish.thompson@heart.org

November 2007 Diabetes Month

American Public Health Association's 135th Annual Meeting and Expo: Politics, Policy & Public Health

APHA's meeting program addresses current and emerging health science, policy and practice issues in an effort to prevent disease and promote health. Learn from the experts in the field, hear about cutting edge research and exceptional practices, discover the latest public health products and services, and share your public health experience with your peers.
Nov. 3-7, Washington, DC
For information visit:
www.apha.org/meetings/registration/

www.wellflorida.org

Nutritional needs as we age, cont.

compounds, and the cellular structure of the digestive tract may change with age—and this could:

- Reduce the percentage of vitamins and minerals we absorb (we have to consume more to get the same benefit)
- Make us intolerant to certain foods
- Alter our sense of hunger



Water is a nutrient too!

Water consumption is another important consideration. Loss of muscle mass and changes in cellular structure tend to reduce total body water. At the same time, age-related changes in kidney function and thirst sensations make it progressively more challenging to maintain water balance. Typically, as the water within our body decreases, our brains receive signals that we interpret as thirst. As we age, these signals weaken. With this dwindling perception of thirst, we are less likely to drink enough water and more likely to dehydrate.

These changes are part of the normal progression of life. But because of these changes, we can't necessarily rely on appetite to inspire our meals. Rather, it is important to drink water (4-6 cups each day) and to consume

foods that supply key nutrients without providing too many calories.

Key nutrients

Nutrients that deserve special attention include: calcium, vitamins D, B6, B12, folic acid, and a variety of antioxidants and phytonutrients. These nutrients are significant because they are associated with osteoporosis, cardiovascular disease, and degenerative eye diseases, conditions that become increasingly common with age.

Inadequate intake of calcium and vitamin D may lead to osteoporosis. Fortified milk is a popular source of these nutrients. However, many people, especially older adults, cannot digest milk. In addition to supplements, yogurt, cheese, fortified soy milk, oatmeal and orange juice are generally better tolerated and could help reduce bone loss.

Similarly, vitamins B6, B12 and folic acid (also a B vitamin) might help keep cardiovascular diseases in check. One, two or all of these vitamins can be consumed as enriched breads and cereals, green leafy vegetables, legumes, nuts, fish, meat, dairy products, and of course as a vitamin supplement.

Antioxidants and phytonutrients are equally noteworthy. Antioxidants work by interfering with the destruction of other chemicals in our body and might help prevent development of age-related macular degeneration and cataracts. Vitamin C, Vitamin E, selenium and beta carotene have antioxidant activity and are particularly healthful for older adults. Phytonutrients have some antioxidant activity and a generally beneficial effect on health. Brightly colored fruits and vegetables such as berries, tomatoes, dark leafy greens, squash and bell peppers are rich in phytonutrients and antioxidants. Other good sources of these chemicals include grains, nuts, seeds, tea, onions, garlic, soy and wine.

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HIV/AIDS in Older Adults

As we age, our immune systems begin to lose their ability to fight off infections as effectively as they did when we were younger. Eating nutritious foods, exercising and getting regular checkups are important ways to keep us healthy. So are knowing about HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) and practicing safe sex.

Many seniors are sexually active and the rate of increase of AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) cases among older adults is now higher than the rate among young adults. HIV/AIDS cases among seniors are expected to continue to rise as the baby boomers age and advanced treatments allow HIV-positive people to live longer. In Florida, more than 16% of deaths from AIDS are people over the age of 55.

HIV is a virus that weakens the immune system and causes AIDS. It is spread from an infected person to an uninfected person through unprotected sex and use of contaminated needles and blood products.

There are a number of reasons why HIV/AIDS is on the rise among the

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As we age, nutrient needs go up while energy needs go down. Nevertheless, we can optimize nutritional health by:

- Taking a daily vitamin/mineral supplement
- Drinking plenty of water
- Creating and consuming modestly sized meals and snacks from a variety of whole grains and cereals, fresh fruits and vegetables, nuts, seeds and legumes, lean meats or poultry, fish, cheeses and yogurt
- Preparing these foods with flavorful herbs and a variety of spices
- Filling out these meals and snacks—as energy needs, tastes, and health status permit—with a serving of red wine and the occasional dessert
- Enjoying meals and mealtime!

Contributed by Elizabeth Gollub, PhD, MPH, RD

Tips for Healthy Aging

Physical Fitness

- Choose an exercise that you like and stick with it.
- Engage in 30 minutes of aerobic exercise and weight-bearing exercise every day.

Social Well-being

- Contribute time to your community through local volunteer groups, religious organizations or civic groups.
- Stay in close contact with friends and family. Write, e-mail or call someone daily.

Mental Wellness

- Keep your mind exercised by reading, learning a new skill and researching something that interests you.
- Develop a hobby—it's never too late to learn how to play the piano.

Financial Fitness

- Save at least 10 percent of your income and invest in savings plans that compound interest.
- Establish financial goals, stick to a planned budget and sign up for a retirement plan.

—From the official web site of the Healthy Aging® Campaign at www.healthyaging.net.



WellFlorida raises funds for MDA

WellFlorida staff were “jailed” for the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) Telethon Executive Lock-Up to help “Jerry's Kids.” WellFlorida raised \$1,700. The funds benefit MDA which serves people in our community with neuromuscular disease by providing clinics, support groups, assistance with the purchase and repair of wheelchairs, braces and communication devices, and summer camp for kids. MDA also funds research grants to help find treatments and cures for some 43 neuromuscular diseases that affect people of all ages. MDA's programs are funded almost entirely by individual private contributors.

Pictured from left to right: Katelyn Allen, Ramona Peaton, Julie Ackerman and Monica SESCO.

Preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS in seniors, *cont.*



older crowd. One belief is that because a woman cannot get pregnant after menopause, condoms aren't necessary. However, changes in a woman's vagina as she ages (such as dryness and thinning) may cause small cuts and tears during sex, which puts her at risk for HIV exposure. In fact, women over the age of 60 are one of the fastest growing groups at risk for HIV/AIDS.

Seniors are often embarrassed or ashamed to ask their doctors about HIV/AIDS; many don't even think to ask about it at all. Nearly half of doctors do not screen their older patients for HIV/AIDS risk factors, and since HIV/AIDS symptoms are very similar to those of aging—fatigue, weight loss, dementia, swollen lymph nodes, and skin conditions—patients are commonly misdiagnosed.

Erectile dysfunction medications (like the little blue pill) continue to gain popularity

and are marketed heavily toward older adults, resulting in increased sexual activity among this group. Unfortunately, HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness is not traditionally aimed at older adults, supporting the belief that seniors aren't at risk for HIV/AIDS. When was the last time you saw an elderly couple in a condom commercial?!

The good news about HIV/AIDS—it is preventable! Here are some tips to share with older adults:

- Know your HIV status—get tested!
- Use a latex or polyurethane condom every time you have sex!
- Don't share needles with anyone—whether you are injecting heroin or insulin—you are still putting yourself at risk for HIV/AIDS!
- If you test positive for HIV, call 1-800-972-6399 in North Central Florida for linkage to federally funded healthcare.

By Erin Hinnant, MPH of WellFlorida Council