

JLC Issue Corner: *This is the fourth in a series of articles touching on some of the social challenges in Calgary. We'd like to give you some food for thought by showing how our JLC Healthy and Active Living initiatives fit into the bigger picture.*

The Rippling Effect of Natural Aging

The Role of Aging in Seniors

Why do some individuals wither at sixty-five while others paint the town red, play tennis and even participate in Ironman triathlons? Even though the main reason is genetics, the growing awareness of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle, good nutrition, a focus on “wellness” and injury prevention contribute longevity.

Nutrition Effects Mature Adults

Many adults spend their lives counting calories, watching their cholesterol levels, and managing their weight. However, adults reaching their golden years begin to feel that it is alright to be less strict about nutrition. While many doctors recommend continuing the vigil as far as calcium, cholesterol, and salt are concerned, others are aware that too many senior citizens are undernourished for a variety of reasons. They may not be able to chew well due to missing, loose, or decayed teeth or because their dentures do not fit. They may not have the money to buy the right foods or may be afraid to go shopping because of crime. Many are prone to depression and their appetite may be diminished due to medication they are taking or by an underlying illness. For all these reasons, as well as the fact that their organs reduce in size and can no longer heal themselves, older persons may actually lose weight naturally. But is “thin” always healthier?

Living the Golden Years

The strength needed to meet the daily demands of living remains unchanged throughout life. However, a person's maximum strength decreases steadily with aging. For example, the ability to stand from a sitting position is compromised at age 50, and by age 80, this task becomes impossible for some people. With age, body fat content increases, while at the same time muscles, bone density, and water retention decreases. Furthermore, lung function changes considerably in sedentary people during aging. The most important change for this vital organ is the loss of elasticity of the lung tissue and chest wall, which increases the work involved in breathing. Today, more than ever, seniors are “grabbing the bull by the horns” and are becoming super active to help slow down the natural aging process and appreciate the gift of having good health.

Interesting News Posting

On November 4th, 2009, The National Institute on Aging announced an award of \$29.5 million in grants over the next two years to determine whether a specific physical activity program can stave off disability in seniors. The funding initiates the Lifestyle Interventions and Independence for Elders – LIFE – trial, the largest ever undertaken to prevent mobility disability among older people at risk of losing their ability to walk and to live independently. Go to <http://www.nia.nih.gov> for more information.

A Recipe for Healthy Living

The National Institute on Aging has developed a recipe for healthy living for seniors: 1) stop smoking; 2) get regular exercise; 3) have routine “wellness” exams; 4) stay involved with family and friends and do not retire any earlier than necessary; 5) maintain an active social life and an ongoing search for new friends; 6) get lots of sleep, rest and relaxation; 7) eat and drink in “moderation” depending; 8) avoid overexposure to sun, heat, and cold; 9) practice good safety at work, home and play; 10) plan for financial security; 11) maintain a positive outlook on life; and finally 12) do what makes you happy at work or play.

How can the Junior League of Calgary (JLC) help our Seniors:

A Done In A Day is set for January 15 at the Downtown Friendship Centre. For more information see page 8.

Written and illustrated by: Emily Roback, B.Sc., D.C.

Resources:

Rosenfeld, Isadore. Doctor, What Should I Eat?: Nutrition Prescriptions for Ailments in Which Diet Can Really Make a Difference. New York: Warner Books, Inc. 2000.

Wilmore, J and D. Costill. Physiology of Sport and Exercise: Aging and the Older Athlete. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics. 2000.

<http://www.nia.nih.gov/>

