

# Eat Well, Age Well

By Desiree Nielsen RD, the Choices Dietitian

As much as we might wish it, time stops for no one. Our population is aging; it is estimated that in 2025, almost a quarter of Canadians will be over the age of 65. While aging is inevitable, many of the symptoms we associate with it—deeply lined skin, fatigue, lack of strength—do not always signal old age. Taking care of yourself through healthy diet and exercise will help you feel vibrant and energetic as the birthday candles flicker. Whether you are looking at your first grey hair or are already planning early retirement, it is never too early or too late to take control of your lifestyle.

## Inflammation – What is it?

Inflammation is a vital function of our immune system that speeds nutrients and immune cells to a sight of infection or trauma. When you cut yourself, the redness and heat you see as your body works to heal itself, is inflammation. Just as chronic stress affects your health, if inflammation is constantly present, your body can suffer. Inflammation is the immune system equivalent of a bull in a china shop, so decreasing inflammation in our bodies is important in aging well. While the exact mechanism is not always clear, chronic inflammation is associated with many lifestyle- and age-related diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, Alzheimer's and cancer.

## Anti-Inflammatory Eating

There are three primary goals in an anti-inflammatory eating plan: balance blood sugar, consume only anti-inflammatory fats and increase anti-inflammatory phytochemicals.

Eating whole grains (whole wheat pasta, quinoa, barley, brown rice) and lower glycemic index breads (sprouted grain

bread) will help reduce spikes in blood sugar, leaving you to feel more energetic.

Fats are another dietary key to chronic inflammation. Saturated, trans and omega 6 fats from sunflower and soy oil promote inflammation in the body. Oleic fatty acids from extra virgin olive oil and omega 3 fats from fish, nuts and seeds like hemp all work to fight inflammation. Reducing your intake of pro-inflammatory fats in addition to eating more anti-inflammatory fats will provide maximum effect.

Colourful fruits and vegetables are the foundation of anti-inflammatory eating because they contain anti-inflammatory phytochemicals in addition to being low in calories, high in fibre and rich in vitamins and minerals. Work up to 7 to 10 half cup servings a day.

## Age Well

The good news about anti-inflammatory eating is that anyone can do it—and all it takes is a few key swaps to your eating plan. In addition to a healthy diet, exercise and relaxation are important to keep you healthy and happy for years to come. Eating well is about caring for yourself and those you love. Abandon the anti-aging mentality—now is the time to focus on healthy aging and redefine what it means to be 60, 70 or even 80!



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**Desiree Nielsen, RD, the Choices Dietitian, will be holding a seminar on Healthy Aging at Choices Markets this month. Have a nutrition question for Desiree? Email her at [nutrition@choicesmarkets.com](mailto:nutrition@choicesmarkets.com) or visit [choicesmarkets.com/nutrition](http://choicesmarkets.com/nutrition).**



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