

## EAT TO AGE WELL TIPS

*Excerpt from article by Ngaire Hobbins, dietitian and author of "Eat To Cheat Ageing"*

### **Eat to support your muscles – they hold the keys to your health!**

Muscles do so much more than move you around and keep you from falling – they are vital to an effective immune system that combats illness – think from a sniffle through to a life threatening post-surgical infection. Muscles also keep every body organ functioning; help repair wounds and help maintain critical brain fuel supplies.

Eating for your muscles is about putting a good protein food at the centre of every meal. Eating plates piled high with salad, vegetables or fruit and only hinting at meat, fish, eggs, cheese or pulses – and then only at some of your meals – is ok if you are 30, 40 or 50, but from your late 60's on can too easily mean your muscle reserve suffers and with that, all the essential body functions.

And because losing weight later in life means you lose some muscle, and because illness or surgery can dramatically impact muscle reserves, you may need to add protein foods in between meals too if you have lost weight, have been ill or are heading for surgery. You don't need to eat large amounts, but it should be there at each meal and sometimes in between, along with good muscle exercise to maximise the benefits.



Animal proteins – from meat, fish, eggs or dairy – have an advantage because they're more concentrated and are much better at boosting muscle. Vegetarians can choose nuts, seeds, legumes and grains but must be vigilant to be sure to get enough protein.

### **Don't diet to lose weight**

Sure, excess weight will make getting around harder, but unfortunately weight loss that doesn't also include very good exercise when you are older will cause you to lose essential muscle and that's far more likely to impact your health than a few extra kilos. Boosting your exercise levels and eating to keep your weight stable is your best option.

It's not uncommon for older people to lose weight without intending to, and while that may seem a bonus – especially if you struggled to keep your weight in check in your younger days – instead it's a warning sign. Even a few kilos lost unintentionally can impact your immune system and your ability to repair wounds. Staying active is always essential, but no longer is dieting to lose weight a good thing.

### **Eat colours for your brain**

Your brain does more work at any point in time than any other part of your body and all that work produces small amounts of waste substances that need to be cleaned up. Antioxidants do that clean up and help keep brain (and all other body cells) healthy. They are found in all sorts of foods and there are a vast number of them, but rather than get confused by names, or succumb to advertising for the properties of one or two, the secret to antioxidants is to eat as many different coloured foods as you can. Different antioxidants are found in different coloured foods – from white to purple, yellow to green, blue to red – you only need a sprinkle of herbs, a few berries, a couple of nuts or a mix of lettuces rather than just one variety and your intake is boosted!



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