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NUTRITION FOR WOMEN

Want to live as long as possible, prevent disease, and slim down? The California Health & Longevity Institute has some ideas especially for women.

PAULETTE LAMBERT IS PASSIONATE ABOUT FOOD. As the director of nutrition at the California Health & Longevity Institute (chli.com) in Westlake Village, this registered dietitian has seen the big picture—and it's not pretty: In this country we lean toward processed, easy-to-prepare foods, while in Europe the pattern is to go to the grocery store every day for something fresh. Our love of convenience is doing much more harm than simply making us heavier than our continental counterparts.

"The food quality is horrible. It has high sodium and chemicals, and now we're all sick," says Lambert. "Real whole food is good food. People associate it with bland food; clearly it's not." For example, Lambert points out that flavorful herbs and spices are concentrated sources of antioxidants—and cooking with them adds more flavor and reduces the need for so much salt.

At the California Health & Longevity Institute, Lambert advocates what they call the longevity diet, which is a lot like the Mediterranean diet, stressing lots of fruits and vegetables, healthful fats, and fish (see box at right). Both diets are also what Lambert describes as "anti-inflammatory"—they help reduce and prevent inflammation in the body, which emerging research is pointing to as a precursor to certain types of cancer, heart disease, arthritis, and even Alzheimer's. While the longevity diet means many of the same things to both sexes, we women do have different problem areas. Here's what's most relevant. (Check back next month for more on men's health.)

Bone health. Protecting bone health means getting plenty of calcium, and also vitamin D, which helps prevent calcium loss in bones. "We [women] are lighter in frame and have smaller bone mass," Lambert says. "We have to protect our bones if we are to make it into longevity." For calcium, Lambert recommends nonfat yogurt and milk, and lower-fat cheeses like part-skim mozzarella and provolone. Other sources of calcium include leafy greens like spinach, kale, and arugula; and beans and lentils, which have fiber, too. And while shoring up bone strength with a smart diet, skip the soda to maximize efforts. "All cola products, diet or regular, block absorption of calcium and contribute to osteoporosis," says Lambert. "We prefer that you drink tea; all tea is good for you. If you're caffeine-sensitive, drink decaf."

Heart health. Heart attacks aren't just a problem for middle-aged men: Heart disease actually kills more women over age 45 in the United States than anything else. "We need to be healthy heart-focused; that's a new thing," says Lambert. "We now know it's a



Paulette Lambert, a registered dietitian at the California Health & Longevity Institute, recommends a heart-healthy diet for women, emphasizing fresh fruits and vegetables, good fats, fish, and antioxidants.

Longevity Diet

THE LONGEVITY DIET RECOMMENDED BY THE CALIFORNIA HEALTH & LONGEVITY INSTITUTE IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING KEY COMPONENTS, FOR BOTH WOMEN AND MEN:

- Seven to 10 servings of fruit and vegetables per day
- High-fiber, whole-grain carbohydrates such as barley, oats, brown rice, and whole-grain bread, eaten in moderation
- Three to five servings of healthy fats
- Lean protein
- Eat fish at least three times per week
- Use nonfat dairy products when possible
- Substitute vegetarian protein for a third to half of total daily protein



number-one killer.” A heart-healthy diet includes high fiber, less saturated fat, no trans fats, and an adequate level of healthful fats, like omega-3s. “We want healthy fats,” says Lambert. “Salmon is a great source of omega-3s, [which are] fatty acids that really reduce inflammation in the body.” Salmon is also a source of vitamin D, which research is linking to heart health as well. Besides salmon, sources of vitamin D include fortified milk and cereal, sardines, supplements, and sunshine.

Weight management. Every woman wants to fit into her skinny jeans, but maintaining a healthy weight isn't just a matter of vanity. “Obesity is a major health risk, and women have more weight problems than men do,” says Lambert. “We don't have the height and bone structure to carry the weight.” Fortunately, it's not about going hungry: Lambert says the key to combating obesity is to eat volumes of fruits and vegetables (a minimum of two cups of vegetables a day, plus a salad) in order to feel full but to keep the calories down to the 1,500–1,600 per day that most women need. Portion control with carbohydrates, a typical downfall for females, is another tenet of staying slim. “One extra carb serving a day is 10 pounds a year,” says Lambert, who recommends five to six carb servings a day for women (one cup of cooked pasta is two carb servings). While consuming whole-grain carbs offers extra fiber and is more filling than its stripped-down (non-whole-grain) counterpart, Lambert says portion control is still important. “Have your salad after your meal, the European way,” she says. “By the time you finish your salad, it's been 20 minutes since your meal, and you'll feel full without going back for seconds.”

IN THE KITCHEN



BREAKFAST OATMEAL

This recipe comes courtesy of the California Health & Longevity Institute. Institute director of nutrition Paulette Lambert says that it's a great way for women to start their day—it's low-fat and offers fiber, protein, and antioxidants.

- 1 cup vanilla soy milk
- ½ cup oatmeal (raw, steel-cut, or old-fashioned)
- ½ cup fresh or frozen berries
- 1 tablespoon chopped almonds
- 1 teaspoon brown sugar or honey

Place milk, oats, and berries in a large microwavable bowl. Microwave for 4–6 minutes on high, uncovered. Pour into cereal bowl, sprinkle with almonds and brown sugar or honey.

Makes 1 serving. Calories per serving: 350

At the Market

Snack smart. Nutritious snacks not only push health-conscious eaters closer to the recommended seven to 10 servings of fruits and vegetables each day, they help satisfy between meals (so the vending machine won't be so alluring mid-afternoon). Here are some suggestions from Paulette Lambert, director of nutrition at the California Health & Longevity Institute, for healthful on-the-go snacks that require little or no preparation:

Fresh fruit (or one-quarter cup dried fruit)

Nonfat yogurt

Part-skim string cheese

Mini light popcorn bags

A slice of whole-grain bread with
1 tablespoon of natural peanut butter
or almond butter

Eight walnut halves and a piece of fruit

Nonfat latte (unsweetened or sweetened
with a non-calorie sweetener like Stevia)

Baby carrots, sliced red bell pepper,
celery sticks, grape or cherry tomatoes,
or cucumber slices with hummus

Broaden your tastes. Remember that old saying about an apple a day? Lambert points out that the same apple every day might not be the best practice, after all, considering that we get different antioxidants from different fruits and vegetables. “We don't eat enough variety, we need to move around a little bit,” she says. Shop local farmers' markets where the varied seasonal produce will inspire you to change up your daily repertoire, and when you're at the supermarket, look for local or frozen fruits and vegetables. While fresh fruits shipped long distances have generally been picked before they're ripe, their frozen counterparts are picked at the peak of ripeness, when their nutritional content is also at its highest. Using some frozen produce (such as berries) allows you to keep a broader variety of fruits and vegetables on hand without spoilage.