

January 18, 2011

## **Doc Talk: Into The Golden Years and Still Going Great!**

*by Sandra Woolstenhulme, RN, Nurse Educator at Teton Valley Health Care*

Does anyone really believe that once we hit a certain age, that's the end of health and happiness? I hope not, because seniors certainly have a lot of experience and wisdom to draw from and it would be wasteful not to utilize all that expertise.

What will help keep us fit and fun in our "golden years"? Two things are at the top of the fit and fun list: exercise and eating right. Both of these get a little more difficult as we age but they can be a huge benefit to us in many ways. Some of the health problems that can be helped or avoided by using these two strategies are:

- arthritis
- osteoporosis
- heart disease
- high blood pressure
- diabetes
- depression

Exercise doesn't have to be an hour of working out at the gym. You may not even like the gym! It can be as simple as a 10-minute walk before your meals. The trick is to find what you like to do that incorporates exercise. It might be fishing in the summer with a walk to your favorite spot or it might be getting together for an evening of dancing. Including balance and stretching exercises with your exercise program will help you feel better.

Here are some ideas to incorporate the fit and fun theme:

- Get enough sleep.
- Stay connected with family and friends.
- Join a walking group, or other social group.
- Surround yourself with people whose company you enjoy.
- Volunteer or get active with groups in your community.
- Try a part-time job at a place you would enjoy working for a few hours a week.
- Watch a funny movie and laugh.
- Take up a hobby such as playing cards, gardening, cooking, or dancing.

Eating right can be harder for older people. Challenges like cooking for only one, dentures not fitting right, or decreased taste can be disheartening. Try these tips to help out:

- Grocery shop with a friend. It is pleasant and can save money if you share items.
- Cook ahead and freeze portions to have healthy and easy meals on hand for days when you do not feel like cooking.
- Try new recipes or different herbs and spices to spark your interest in food.
- Set the table with a nice cloth and even a flower in a vase to make mealtime special.
- Eat regularly with someone whose company you enjoy.
- If you are unable to cook for yourself, find out about “Meals on Wheels” or other local meal service organizations.

Adapting as we age is something that all of us need to do. So learn something new, add a good habit or complete that project you always wanted to do. There’s a lot of life in senior citizens and a lot of productivity too. Yep, you’ve reached the golden years, and you’re still going great!

\*\*\*\*\*