

Don't feel out of energy in the sunset years

MUSCLE POWER
Vitamin B6 helps metabolise amino acids, which are building blocks of protein. It also helps make serotonin, the hormone that keeps us in a good mood.

MENTAL HEALTH
Our nerve function, mood and energy is controlled by vitamin B12. Its deficiency causes fatigue, makes us feel lethargic and mentally dull.

BONE STRENGTH
Calcium deficiency that leads to bone loss and risk of fractures and osteoporosis is especially common with women as they grow older.

DIET TIPS AS YOU AGE

- Don't overuse salt and sweet food products to enhance taste.
- Your body may tolerate smaller, frequent meals better than three big meals.
- Concentrate on softer food that is easier chewed and swallowed.
- Serve food with gravies made from vegetables to make food more palatable and easier to eat.
- Consult a doctor before self-prescribing nutritional supplements

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Age is always to blame for everything that your body cannot do on the other side of 50, isn't it? You feel tired easily, you can't walk as fast, let alone break into a run and it's frustrating to face this frequent and permanent lack of energy.

But age is probably not the culprit here. Not feeling energetic enough as you get older can very often be attributed to nutrition deficiencies.

As you age, your body gets less efficient at absorbing many B group of vitamins from food sources, especially B6 and B12. While vitamin B6 helps metabolise amino acids, which are building blocks of protein, B12 is responsible for nerve function, mood and energy. A deficiency of both of these can cause fatigue and leave you feeling lethargic and mentally dull.

MATTER OF TASTE

This is not all. "In people over 65 years of age, the sensation of taste, that is the amount of taste buds as well as sensitivity to sour and sweet tastes decreases," says Ingrid Steyl, dietician with Elite Athlete Performance. This spells bad news for those already facing health problems. "The loss of taste can lead to an increased use of salty and sugary foods, which in turn affects health, especially in cases of high blood pressure and impaired glucose-related conditions like diabetes," she adds.

Another age-related change that affects nutrition intake is the loss of teeth. "Teeth loss makes it difficult to chew nutrient-rich fruits and vegetables," says Dr Purwa Duggal, head of nutrition therapy, Wockhardt Hospitals.

SUPPLEMENT YOUR DIET

Special attention also needs to be given to other nutrients that are harder to absorb as we age, such as calcium, phosphorus and vitamin D.

"Failure to absorb nutrients is usually because of decreased gastric acid secretion. The resulting deficiency, especially of calcium, leads to bone loss and increases risk of osteoporosis and fractures," adds Duggal.

"Should the diet be sufficient in these nutrients, supplements are usually not necessary. And if calcium supplementa-

tion is required, it should contain vitamin K2, as it helps the calcium assimilate in the bones and prevents the rise of free calcium in the blood," says Steyl. The best sources of calcium are milk products, green leafy vegetables and fish such as sardines and salmon.

DRINK UP

Your body may also lose water quickly than before as you age and you feel tired easily when you are dehydrated. "A reduced thirst sensation and fluid intake along with our kidneys' decreased ability to conserve water contributes to dehydration. An intake of 8 to 10 glasses a day is recommended," says Duggal.

GOOD FOR YOU

A general, well-balanced diet for older people should include two servings of milk, cottage cheese or yoghurt, two servings of protein rich foods such as chicken, fish, egg whites, four servings of fruits and vegetables with at least one serving of a citrus fruit such as an orange, according to Duggal.

If you keep track of your body's new nutrition needs and stay active, tiredness won't be a problem for you.