

Good Health

A FREE MONTHLY HEALTH e-NEWSLETTER

May 2019



WOMEN'S HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH



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Women and Nutrition

By Vanessa Tartaglia, DO

Proper diet and a healthy life go hand in hand. Therefore, everyone—young or old, male or female—should eat a healthy, well-balanced diet. Women, however, have very specific nutritional needs that shift throughout the various stages of their life. Summit Medical Group Arizona Family Medicine doctor and nutrition expert, Vanessa Tartaglia, breaks down the different ages and stages of nutritional needs for women, from the young teen years to the onset of menopause and beyond.

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Hormone Replacement — Not the Only Remedy for Hot Flashes

By Angela Felix, DO

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Could a runny nose affect swollen airways? Absolutely—studies show that allergies can impact asthma, sometimes in a big way.

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Congratulations to [Dr. Vanessa Tartaglia!](#)

We would like to congratulate [Vanessa Tartaglia-Keane, DO](#), for being voted as a 2019 Top Doctor for Family Medicine! Look for her recognition in the April issue of PHOENIX Magazine - 2019 TOP DOCTORS issue - which is out on stands now!



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Women and Nutrition

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Proper diet and a healthy life go hand in hand. Therefore, everyone— young or old, male or female—should eat a healthy, well-balanced diet. Women, however, have very specific nutritional needs that shift throughout the various stages of their life. Summit Medical Group Arizona Family Medicine doctor and nutrition expert, Vanessa Tartaglia, breaks down the different ages and stages of nutritional needs for women, from the young teen years to the onset of menopause and beyond.



Adolescent Girls

During adolescence, nutrition supports physical growth and there is an increased demand for energy and nutrients. This period is a great time to correct poor eating habits. Poor eating during the adolescent years can lead to health consequences such as obesity, osteoporosis, and eating disorders.

Here are some tips and good things to know:

- Low-fat milk products help build strong bones. Low-fat cheese, yogurt, and other dairy products are all good options. Those who have dairy sensitivities can substitute milk with calcium and vitamin D.
- Iron is vital for transporting oxygen in the bloodstream, so during menstruation age, iron is particularly important to pay attention to. Lack of iron can cause fatigue, confusion, or weakness. Good sources of iron-rich foods include almonds, beans, peanuts, broccoli, kale, and chicken.

Young Adult Years

Young women need a balanced diet. This means maintaining healthy eating habits through some difficult times—while balancing college or a career, or while facing hormonal changes and body image issues. Here are some tips to help alleviate some of those early adult life challenges:

- Eat a variety of high-fiber foods like whole grains, beans, fruits and vegetables.
- Eat lean protein like lean cuts of pork, chicken, beef, seafood, and eggs AND plant-based foods like beans, nuts, and seeds.
- Limit alcohol and late-night snacking.
- Limiting salt, caffeine and sugars will help to alleviate symptoms of PMS and reduce risk for diabetes and high blood pressure.

While Pregnant

During pregnancy, women have a higher need for certain vitamins and minerals. Many doctors recommend a prenatal vitamin, but remember, supplements are no replacement for a healthy diet! Here are some helpful tips for pregnant women:

- Vitamin B (B9) or folic acid is one of the most important nutrients a woman can take before and during pregnancy. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that women take 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid at least one month before conceiving. Folic acid helps form healthy cells and can also help prevent certain birth defects. Folic acid can be obtained by eating leafy green vegetables, oranges, strawberries, nuts, and beans.

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- Omega-3 can help fight prenatal depression. Studies also show that it may help prevent preterm birth and support healthy brain and eye development in babies. Omega-3 foods include fish, walnuts, tofu, and oils such as Canola and Soybean.

During Menopause

Menopause is a major transitional period for women. Although the standard, “eat a balanced diet of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and protein” still applies, there are some additional nutritional recommendations for this stage.

- As you age, your muscle mass decreases and metabolism slows down. Therefore, not as many calories are needed. If women are not aware of this, weight gain can become a problem. Avoid over-sized portions.
- Vitamin D helps absorb calcium, so eating cereal and milk, salmon and egg yolks AND a little time in the sun is good for you!
- Fiber is still important and can be found in whole-grain breads, cereals, pasta, rice, fresh fruits, and vegetables. But after age 50, you don't need quite as much.
- Cut back on high-fat foods, sugar, salt, and alcohol.

Over the Age of 65

Post menopause, a woman's risk for osteoporosis increases and calcium becomes your best friend!

- Focus on a bone-building diet—foods rich in calcium and vitamin D like salmon, eggs, milk and leafy vegetables. At this stage supplements may be necessary.
- This is time to enjoy foods rich in potassium like bananas and prunes aid in cell function, reduces blood pressure and lowers the chances for developing kidney stones.
- Non-food related — EXERCISE AND STAY ACTIVE!

Aging is inevitable, so keeping up with nutritional needs that affect the aging process is critical. To support growth and development, pregnancy, and the maintenance of tissues, bones, body function, and mental sharpness throughout life, be sure to choose nutrient-rich foods that add value to your body.

Oftentimes, women are the caretakers of the family. They make sure everyone gets their needs met, and sometimes this means putting themselves last. Although it's important to care for others, you must listen to your own symptoms and seek regular care to ensure your best health. Make sure you schedule your annual physical, and if you can't explain a nagging symptom, be sure to talk with your SMGAZ doctor.

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Hormone Replacement — Not the Only Remedy for Hot Flashes

By [Angela Felix, DO](#), board-certified Internal Medicine physician with Summit Medical Group Arizona

Hot flashes are a common symptom for women going through perimenopause and menopause. Sometimes, these can be controlled by modifying behaviors like keeping a fan close by, adjusting the room temperature, or dressing in layers. If the symptoms aren't severe these behavioral changes can be enough. For others, the symptoms are more severe and require medication.

In the past, one of the only treatment options was hormonal therapy. While hormonal therapy with estrogen is often very effective, it can come with side effects and risks and many women can't take it due to a past history of breast cancer, stroke or heart disease.

In recent years, it has been discovered that medications called Selective Serotonin Receptor Inhibitors (SSRIs) or Selective Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors (SNRIs) can be very effective in treating and reducing the frequency and intensity of hot flashes. These classes of medications are typically used to treat depression and generalized anxiety disorder but have recently been shown to be a great alternative to estrogen in treating hot flashes without symptoms of depression or anxiety. Commonly used medications in these classes include venlafaxine (Effexor), paroxetine (Paxil), citalopram (Celexa), and escitalopram (Lexapro).

Before starting the medication, it is important to note how often you are having hot flashes per day and how many times per night you are waking up with hot flashes. By having objective data on the frequency of your symptoms, your provider can help determine the effectiveness of the medication. With any medication, the lowest dose is typically started to ensure no side effects. It typically will take a week or so to notice any effect from the medication. At your follow-up visit, your doctor will determine the effectiveness, the presence of any side effects and whether to adjust, maintain or stop this treatment plan. Symptoms of hot flashes typically lessen or completely resolve after a couple of years, so a trial of tapering off the medication can be done after one to two years of use.



Dr. Angela Felix is board-certified in Internal Medicine and completed her residency at Banner-University Medical Center Phoenix. She focuses on the diagnosis and treatment of conditions that affect the adult population, including women's health.



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If you have high blood pressure, you may think it's the result of the normal aging process. The truth is, unhealthy eating patterns and certain medical conditions can cause high blood pressure, and many factors can increase your risk, yet many myths continue to circulate about the disease.

Part of the confusion stems from the fact that high blood pressure—or hypertension—is unlike many short-term illnesses. For example, it usually causes no symptoms, yet it can lead to serious complications. It is also treatable and sometimes preventable—but it cannot be cured.

Take Action When Diagnosed

Because hypertension does not make you feel sick, you may be shocked to learn that you have it. Nevertheless, it's important to take action right away.

Over time, high blood pressure causes serious damage to vital organs inside the body—all without telltale signs. It causes problems with the heart, brain, kidneys, and eyes—which can lead to heart attack, stroke, kidney disease, and more.

Get the Facts

Knowledge is the key to conquering hypertension. Here are the truths behind these widely believed myths about this disease.

- An aggressive personality does not cause high blood pressure. Despite the name hypertension, there is no link between the disease and anxiety or personality. However, long-term stress can increase your risk for high blood pressure. And if you cope with daily stress by smoking, drinking alcohol, or eating junk food, you will also increase your risk of developing the condition.
- High blood pressure is not a normal part of aging. The likelihood of developing high blood pressure does increase with age. But high blood pressure is not something older adults must accept or live with. No matter your age, it can be controlled in most people.
- Women get high blood pressure as often as men. Of the estimated 103 million adults who have high blood pressure, nearly half are women. After menopause, a woman's risk of developing hypertension is higher than for a man her age. In some women, pregnancy or taking birth control pills can make blood pressure rise.
- High blood pressure can strike anyone, at any age, but adopting a healthy lifestyle can help prevent it. Making healthy choices every day—such as exercising daily, eating a balanced diet, managing stress, limiting alcohol, and avoiding tobacco—is a winning strategy. Doing so reduces your risk of developing hypertension and lowers your chance of developing many other serious diseases.



Activities to Lower Your Blood Pressure

- **Walk** - Simply taking a brisk walk can prevent or reduce high blood pressure by lowering inflammation.
- **Strength Training** - Strength-training exercises like using weight machines can build muscle, strengthen bones, improve balance, and increase flexibility.
- **Hand Exercises** - Studies show that hand exercises, performed by squeezing a hand grip device, can improve blood pressure levels.

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The Same Disease?

Studies have shown that as much as 40 percent of people with allergic rhinitis, or nasal allergies, also have asthma. Allergic rhinitis causes symptoms like congestion, sneezing, and runny nose.

Many experts believe this is more than a coincidence. In fact, some research suggests asthma and nasal allergies might be different versions of the same disease. They are similar in that they both involve inflammation, increased mucus production, and other factors.



Those with chronic nasal allergies are also more susceptible to sinus infections. The postnasal drip that causes these infections, along with the possibility of the infection moving into the lower airways, can in turn trigger inflammation and asthma flare-ups. In addition, people with stuffy noses tend to breathe through their mouths. This inhaled air doesn't get warmed or filtered through the nose, so it is more likely to trigger coughing—a symptom of asthma.

Treating Both Problems

Whether or not asthma and nasal allergies are the same disease, it's been shown that controlling nasal allergies can ease asthma symptoms a great deal. One study found that the risk of visiting the hospital for an asthma attack was about 50 percent lower for people who used steroid nasal sprays to control their allergies. Nasal sprays containing steroids can reduce inflammation in the nasal passages, ease congestion, and even reduce bronchial hyperactivity, a symptom of asthma.

Experts say the best approach is to treat both allergies and asthma at the same time. Asthma and allergies aren't treated the same way—the medicines for these conditions are different in what they do. Some options to treat allergies are available over-the-counter and in generic form.

Before you stop or start any medicine for your allergy or asthma, it's important to talk with your doctor. You also can prevent asthma attacks by avoiding triggers that upset your allergies, such as smoke, dust, mold, and furry animals.

Each year, there are 10 million missed school days and nearly 12 million missed work days due to allergies. Getting your allergies and asthma under control can improve attendance, performance and overall well-being.

Our [SMGAZ providers](#) can help you manage allergy symptoms. If seasonal allergies are hitting you or your family hard, there are things you can do to find relief.