

Script – Broadcast – Living your best life at 50

INTRO

For many people, turning 50 is a landmark birthday. It not only means reaching a half a century, but it's often a time to reflect. It's an opportunity to think back on your life up to that point, while also looking to your future. From a health standpoint, reaching your 50s could bring on seismic changes, especially if you haven't always taken care of yourself. It means increased risks for chronic conditions like heart disease, diabetes, high cholesterol and some cancers.

It also means developing other changes like slower metabolism and bone density loss. That's why experts say now is the time to make your health a high priority – getting annual physicals and screenings, paying attention to your mental health, re-evaluating what you eat and carving out more time for exercise.

For Travis Swink, DO, a family medicine provider with OSF HealthCare, having these important conversations with patients centers on physical activity. According to Dr. Swink, we start losing muscle strength in our 30s and the trend continues from there. That's why physical activity is so important by the time we reach our 50s.

Dr. Swink says starting in our 40s, people tend to gain about five pounds a year. This can be chalked up to poor eating habits and lack of activity. By the time 50 rolls around, many Americans are 20 to 30 pounds heavier than we should be.

The physical activity doesn't have to be anything rigorous, like training for a marathon. Unless that's your motivation. Dr. Swink says the simpler, the better. But you should do something seven days a week. When it comes to strength training, Dr. Swink recommends using free weights instead of machines. And repetition is more important than the amount of weight.

(((SOS)))

Travis Swink, DO, physician OSF HealthCare

"What I tell people is, when we get into our 50s, it's not about running, it's not about cross training, pickleball even, it is about walking. And if we can do 15 minutes twice a day, that's your best activity." (:14)

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As far as diet goes, Dr. Swink says the best way to track what we eat is by writing it down or using a calorie-counting app.

Instead of bread and pastas, Dr. Swink recommends choosing proteins like meat, fish, eggs, nuts and non-starchy vegetables (leafy greens, broccoli, cauliflower, peppers, mushrooms) for low-carb options.

TAG

Dr. Swink says, for those over 50, that intermittent fasting should not be included in your lifestyle. By fasting you're putting yourself in slight starvation, which slows your metabolism.

Dr. Swink adds that the key is everything in moderation. And making changes like curbing alcohol use and making a pact to give up tobacco use could lead to your best decade yet.