

Staying in Shape Over 40 - What You Need to Know

Turning 40 can be a powerful and transient event even though many women believe that everything starts to change or even fall apart at 40. This doesn't have to be so! Women can stay strong and competitive, healthy and fit well over the age of 40. There may be some changes you need to make, but it is an important time for you to make these changes so that you can continue to stay in shape.

Some basic dietary changes can help you to supplement your workouts and keep you strong. Calcium, for example, has always been important in a woman's diet, but it is critical to start supplementing calcium now if you haven't already. Bone density begins to decline and if this gets really bad, it can lead to osteoporosis later in life. Ginseng is an herb that can help to give you energy when you start to feel fatigue, and some people swear it is what helps keep them young. Consuming a lot of fruits and vegetables is crucial to keeping yourself young. Not only is it very healthy for your body, it is quite beneficial for your skin as well. Natural foods, especially fruits and vegetables, are full of antioxidants, and these help keep free radicals from destroying that youthful appearance of your skin. Also good are salmon and other foods such as almonds, flax and fatty fish which provide a strong source of Omega 3 fatty acids. Again, this is good for your heart health but also for your radiant skin.

Staying in shape also means getting - or staying - physical, of course. You may discover aches and pains that you haven't noticed prior to turning 40. It's not because 40 is some magical age, but rather a useful timeline to gauge when women tend to start feeling less energetic, more rigid, or have tighter muscles than they used to. A fun and relaxing antidote to this is yoga. Yoga has been said to be the true fountain of youth! A good, long yoga session a few times a week or a simple practice of ten to twenty minutes daily can relax, tone and lengthen your muscles as well as your spirit. It also helps to de-stress your mind, which has been shown to have an effect on cortisol levels in the body. By reducing cortisol, you can help reduce the belly fat that may be more stubborn to remove these days. Any time of stress-relieving mechanism you use will help keep you young, but yoga is an especially good one.

If yoga isn't really your speed, pick something that is. Maybe you enjoy spinning, or a step class or kickboxing. Whatever it is, don't stop now just because you've reached that dreaded age. Keeping active now is just as important as it was when you were twenty, if not more so. If your aches and pains feel like they are preventing you from doing what you like to do best, it probably means you need to stretch more. Stretching can be a wonderful tool to keep you young and keep your muscles supple and strong. It can help prevent muscle tears and help you reach new levels of fitness by warming up the muscles and ligaments, but it can also just feel great after a nice, long bout of exercise. If you run or bike, be sure to stretch the calves and quadriceps muscles as well as the hamstrings. If you like to partake in a class at your gym and there is a lot of jumping involved, make sure to stretch the ankles as well. Simply adding ten or fifteen minutes of stretching to your daily routine can make you feel years younger if you are faithful about it.

Staying in shape doesn't just mean looking good or staying in good shape on the outside. Once you reach the age of forty, keeping up with regular doctor appointments becomes more important than it was in days past. Make sure to get a mammogram and screen for early detection of breast cancer. Make an appointment with your general practitioner for a complete physical. Consult with a dermatologist, and keep regular full-body skin checkups once or twice a year, which can help screen out skin cancer and suspicious moles that may crop up. If you used to see the eye doctor once every couple of years, cut that in half and see him once annually. Unfortunately, the eyes are quick to deteriorate as you age, and you will want to keep up with these check-ups for safety reasons, to be able to keep reading, and to check for signs of glaucoma and other age-related diseases.

Nobody said getting older was fun, but it does not have to be painful. The age-old adage that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure applies to the aging process very well, and if you take these measures you too can age gracefully.

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