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Happy New Year from Home Care Assistance!

Happy 2010 from Home Care Assistance! We are excited to start the new year and continue our commitment to providing quality senior care throughout all of North America. Stay tuned for exciting new updates from HCA in the coming year, including a second version of our Happy to 102: The Best Kept Secrets to a Long and Happy Life and a Balanced Care Method™ caregiver workbook, complete with healthy recipes, physical activities, and mentally stimulating exercises for seniors.

Also, a warm welcome to our newest office in Toronto!



The Top 10 Balanced Care Method™ New Year's Resolutions!

New Year's resolutions are notoriously difficult to keep. Changing habits and behavior is challenging at any age but becomes much more difficult as we get older. Grand sweeping resolutions with lofty goals or vague end points are rarely successful. Try making a modest resolution with specific, regular, and measurable goals. These are the types of resolutions you can keep and that, after a year, will have changed your habits for the better. Here are ten possible resolutions that are in keeping with the Balanced Care Method™, any one of which can lead to a better 2010:

1. Increase your fruit and vegetable eating by one serving per day.

The Balanced Care Method™ recommends that fresh fruits and vegetables, along with whole grains, compose the bulk of your daily diet. No matter how many of these foods you are currently eating, adding a serving per day will only improve matters. A serving of fruits or vegetables is about ½ cup of cooked vegetables, 1 cup of raw leafy greens, a small piece of fruit (many oranges and apples on the market count as 2 or even 3 servings each), or a ¼ cup of dried fruit. So sprinkle some chopped dates on your oatmeal, grab an apple as a morning snack, have a salad before dinner. These are all simple and delicious ways to add a serving a day.

2. Switch out one cup of coffee every day for a hot mug of antioxidant-rich green tea.

Green tea has many health properties and much less caffeine than coffee. Be sure to brew your green tea with fresh, rapidly boiling water and steep for 2 to 3 minutes for the best result. A squirt of lemon juice or a teaspoon of honey can be added to taste. There are many flavored green teas on the market – try genmaicha, a brown rice and green tea combination with a toasty warming taste perfect for cold winter days.

3. Add one serving of tofu, edamame, soy milk, miso, or tempeh to your weekly diet.

These foods are all made from soy beans and are rich in flavonoids. While they are not standard in the Western diet, they are everyday foods for some of the world's longest-lived and healthiest-lived people. If these foods are new to you, use soy milk in a smoothie or stir some cubed tofu into soup. If you already snack on edamame or use soy milk on your cereal, that's great. Try adding a bit of crumbled tempeh on a salad or some baked tofu (available seasoned and ready to eat at many grocery stores) in a sandwich. Miso, a paste of fermented soy beans, has rich savory flavor. Just a spoonful adds depth to salad dressings, soups, and stews.

4. Eliminate alcohol.

It is a good idea to limit alcohol intake no matter what our age. Eliminate alcohol entirely or reduce your drinking to one small drink per day (if you don't have any adverse medication warnings). Improved energy, sleep, balance, and memory are all possible benefits from reduced alcohol consumption.

5. Add 5 minutes of physical activity to your day each month.

Simple math reveals that if you follow this step, you will be an hour more active each day at the end of the year! Marathon training and heavy lifting are not required. A short walk, a bit of gardening, light housework, and simple stretches are all ways to be physically active and help you maintain your mobility.

6. Learn a new game

The game can be social (most card games, board games, word games) or individual (Sudoku, crosswords, solitaire); the objective is to give your brain something new to learn and have fun in the process. Even the most rigorous mental activities lose their punch and memory-improving power when they become too familiar. Trying new things is a great way to keep minds active (and entertained!) at any age.



The first and most important element of the Balanced Care Method™ diet is eating plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables. Seasonal produce tastes the best, of course. Piles of ultra-ripe tomatoes and bushels of super sweet peaches make eating seasonal in the summer easy, but now that the dark cold days of winter are upon us, many people crave hearty meats and starches. It can be tricky to keep eating all the fresh fruits and vegetables that we know are good for us, especially as our favorites fall out of season and consequently lose some of their flavor just as the price for them skyrockets.

Even as temperate regions provide seasonal produce like hearty greens and root vegetables, seasonal winter cooking means a narrower range of ingredients if you want to avoid produce that's been flown in from a different hemisphere. These eight steps will keep your winter eating as healthful as the rest of the year:

1. Try New Recipes

It may seem obvious, but the best way to keep your winter cooking interesting is to find new ways of preparing it, so what better time to cook up those recipes you've been meaning to try?

2. More Than Potatoes

Root vegetables are a staple of winter cooking. Cozy, filling, and smashing with just a pat of butter and sprinkle of salt on top, potatoes are the best known and most widely eaten root vegetable. Go beyond potatoes with turnips, sweet potatoes, rutabagas, beets, daikon radishes, and celery root – all of which can be roasted until browned and tender, boiled and mashed along with potatoes, or sliced and fried like hash browns for a different take on potato-centric cooking.

3. Greens, Magical Greens

Cooking greens – kale, collard greens, Swiss chard (or any of the chards), mustard greens, beet greens, turnips greens, and spinach – are full of nutrients and fiber and grow well in temperate and warmer climates (as well as hot houses in colder climes) all through the winter. Greens are delicious simply sautéed. Topping them with some chopped nuts, a few gratings of cheese, a drizzle of flavorful oil (olive, avocado, walnut, sesame), or a squirt of lemon juice. Or, cut them into thin ribbons and stir them into soups or stews of all sorts.

4. Bright and Cheery Citrus

Most citrus fruits – oranges, lemons, and grapefruits in particular – are at their best in winter. They are sweeter, juicier, and less expensive than they are during the rest of the year. Look for citrus fruits that are small for their size for the juiciest specimens.

5. Frosted, Sweet Cruciferous Vegetables

Broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and kale are all in the cruciferous family – a group of strong-tasting and anti-oxidant-rich vegetables that get sweeter after a kiss of frost, making them taste the best in colder weather. Their strong taste overwhelms many palates when served raw and they can get a bit stinky and unappetizing when overcooked. Steam, sauté, roast, or puree these lovelies to experience their full, sweet flavor and many healthful properties.

6. Think Beyond Produce

The range of fruits and vegetables may be more limited in the winter, but the things you cook them with can come in stunning varieties. Along the coasts, in particular, plenty of seafood – especially shellfish - is at its best. So as you enjoy another round of roast potatoes and sautéed kale, maybe try a few steamed mussels, a bit of cracked crab, or a bowl of oyster stew with them.

7. Break Out the Condiments

Whether you treat yourself to a jar of jalapeno-raspberry sauce at the gourmet food store or finally try pickled okra, take this time of the year to experiment with new flavors and dress up familiar dishes with new tastes. Jams, preserves, pickles, hot sauces, and more can add kick and fresh flavors to old favorites.

8. Keep a Kitchen Herb Garden

Fresh herbs brighten up any dish. By planting an indoor herb garden, you'll be able to add quick notes of color and flavor to your winter cooking at a moment's notice. Parsley, sage, thyme, dill, and chives are all easy to grow in small pots on a windowsill for a snip of fresh flavor in any recipe or a whiff of appetizing scent any time.



Caregiver of the Month: Brenda Collier



Brenda Collier has been working with Home Care Assistance of Houston since March 18, 2008. She has established herself as a strong, committed and hardworking caregiver while working on live-in and hourly assignments. Home Care Assistance proudly declares Brenda Collier to be the caregiver of the month for December, since she took on one of the most challenging assignments we had last month.

Brenda was assigned to work on an atypical case, taking care of a young man with severe depression and anxiety. This case began as one hour a day but quickly turned into a live-in due to the client's paranoia and emotional challenges. Brenda saw this as both a personal challenge and a learning experience. She quickly took charge of the situation and made astonishing improvements in this young man's day to day life. Within a few days of our services, both Home Care Assistance managers and the client's family members noticed differences in his demeanor.

While Brenda and her client were out on their daily excursions, they stopped by the Home Care Assistance office several times. The Home Care Assistance team was so happy to see that Brenda had made such remarkable improvements for her client after only a few weeks.

This client's father eventually made a personal visit to the HCA office because he wanted to thank the entire Home Care Assistance staff. He couldn't have been a happier father for his son. It was apparent that he was extremely content and stress free about his son's condition. He mentioned that Brenda had a greater, more positive effect on his son than his psychiatrist!

We are happy to award Brenda Collier our "Caregiver of the Month." Congratulations Brenda, and keep up the good work!

Home Care Assistance hires the best caregivers out there. Bonded and insured and with at least 3 years experience in the senior care industry, we provide the highest quality care for all of our clients. To learn more about a handful of our wonderful and compassionate caregiver employees, please visit our website: www.homecareassistance.com.



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