

The ups and downs of aging

By Nita Dukés

Ahh, you've finally made it! Retirement age. Time to relax, enjoy, and forget all those stressful hours at work. Things will be infinitely better and nothing can stop you now. Right? Hopefully, that will be true. But have you been aware that while your age has been going up, certain aspects inside your body have been changing? You can see the outer changes; the inner ones are a little more subtle.

Let's go through a couple of things that have been decreasing as you age, and introduce you to some words that may be new and strange, ones that you haven't heard before.

The first word is glutathione (glue-ta-thigh-on) or GSH. It is a protein in our bodies that does three things — it is a master antioxidant that does a superior job on its own, but it also recycles the other antioxidants (like vitamins and selenium), secondly, it detoxifies metals, like cadmium (think cigarette smoke) mercury and such, as well as radiation and chemicals, such as drugs like Tylenol, so we can then discharge them from our bodies, and thirdly, it helps us make more white blood cells to overcome viruses and bacteria.

How many older people do you know that succumb to pneumonia? They can't produce enough white blood cells to overcome the causative agent. As we age, we lose about 40–60 percent of our capacity to produce enough GSH and need it from outside sources. If you supplement, you can do it through the herb milk thistle, through alpha or R lipoic acid, N-acetylcystine, or NAC, or by a whey protein isolate that is bioactive. If you choose the dietary approach, some foods which help promote production of a precursor (building block) to GSH are yogurt, eggs (think free range here),



Milk thistle may be an herbal supplement you want to take.

garlic, onions, broccoli, wheat germ, oats, chicken, and turkey. You will also need to have some selenium (a mineral, some sources are certain fish and certain mushrooms, calves liver) and certain B vitamins to make the GSH.

Next is a hormone called DHEA; you probably don't want to know what it stands for. It is highest when we are at our 'peak' around child bearing age, then goes down about 80 percent as we age. It is essentially our fountain of youth. The decrease of DHEA can affect entities such as depression, memory, physical performance, cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, and longevity, to name a few. DHEA is a little difficult for the body to produce by nutrition, so it is better to supplement it. If you would take DHEA, the safer way to do it is with a product called 7-keto DHEA, as it can be supplemented without medical supervision. You can find it at health food stores and other places such as Whole Foods.

Probably the first thing you would notice would be a higher energy level and an increased mind focusing and thought process. Two other effects are the maintenance of muscle mass and increased libido, since DHEA does serve as a precursor to the sex hormones. Remember, if you would choose to use plain DHEA, you will need to get blood levels drawn and medical supervision.

Nita Dukés, RN, BSN, FLTLE, is an independent integrative health coach who specializes in a holistic approach to healing. For more information, call 919-663-3000 or email wellnessmoment@gmail.com

Nature blesses all seasons

By Ginny Gregory

In my darkest moments, nature has always been my salvation. I mark my life by the arrival of the first leaf, the first flowering shrub (sweet breath of spring), peonies that carry me back to my childhood, the hummers arrival, blue bird eggs hatching and fledging, our Chloe's summer hair cut and the thickness of summer on the way. Planting our early spring vegetable garden means more to me each year. Every day lettuce, beets and spring onions are just the beginning of luscious meals growing in our backyard.

The summer is marked by baby turtles appearing under the French poppies, hydrangeas blooming in mass from oak leaf to the late bloom of the lime light, racing dogs after sticks, and the squeaks from bats diving into the summer night.

The long daylight opens up nature's world to us far into the night. Deep heat slows us down to sit with ice tea with a sprig of mint. From the screen porch, under the fan the summer night opens its heart to me. The songbirds thrill me throughout all seasons.

Fall comes in slow waves creeping in on tiptoes to announce the coming sleep. Nature will wrap arms around me and show me a riot of color... lush in brilliance that only it can offer. Leaves turn, winds begin to drift in and then the last push of fall lands the leaves on the ground to become part of the earth once again. Animals scurry to stash food, get cover for the winter season and to rest.

The hush of winter is my chance to refuel, study the bones of my garden and the forest, notice the boulders and relish the calm. My puppies Chloe and Jackson are always with me in nature. Together nature and my puppies remind me of all I am grateful for... they remind me to appreciate the moment. Chloe leaps after skinks and Jackson chases the deer with only a wire fence separating them from each other... it is the chase. Nature hugs me, I hug nature and all is right in the world.

Let's all work together to keep this precious world intact.

Poco a poca... little by little... we all make a difference.

Ginny Gregory is a regular contributor to Chatham County Line. She is the owner and creative energy behind Beyond The Pail...Creating Gardens and Beyond www.beyondthepail.net.



Jackson, top, and Chloe, Ginny's constant companions

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