

Winter 1999

Successful Aging: A Work of Art

During this session you will:

- ◆ *Explore the “good” and “not so good” expectations about aging.*
- ◆ *Identify some of the normal processes that occur with aging and their potential influence on eating patterns.*
- ◆ *Explore how WHI will fit into your life as you grow older.*



Follow-Up on Next Steps

- ◆ In what ways has your participation in WHI helped you maintain a healthier lifestyle?

Pros and Cons of Aging

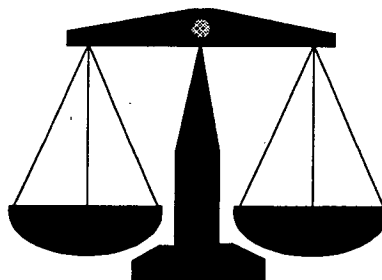
Today over 30 million Americans are 65 or older, placing the percentage of people in this age category at an all time high (about 12%).

When participants enrolled in the WHI Dietary Trial, about 17% were 70+ years of age, 47% were between 60-69, and another 37% were between 50-59 years. By the end of the study, everyone will be about 10 years older, or between 60 to 80 years of age.

Aging, by definition, means growing older and more mature. It is a normal process; we are aging from the moment we are born. However, in today's society, the word *aging* sometimes holds a negative meaning for some people.

- When you hear the term 'aging' or 'senior citizen' what image or characteristics come to mind?

Sometimes incorrect assumptions can add to the negative feelings that people associate with aging. There is a short quiz at the end of this session (pgs. 14-15) *What's Your Aging I.Q.?* It will help you explore some of the common misconceptions about aging.



Normal Age-Related Changes

Many changes take place as a normal part of aging. The reasons behind these changes and the rate at which changes occur are still part of scientific speculation. However, family genes, nutrition, lifestyle and environment are among some of the factors that may influence the aging process.

Some of the common changes that may occur with age are:

Reduced Sense of Taste and Smell. At about age 60, the sense of smell and taste may start to decline. The taste buds that identify sweet and salt decline first, leaving the ones that identify bitter and sour tastes. In addition, the ability to recognize and distinguish among various odors and flavors is reduced.

Age is not the only reason for changes in taste and smell. Two other factors may also interfere – medications, and health problems.

For example, something as simple as a bad case of flu can impair taste for up to 5 years.

As the senses of smell and taste decline, food may lose some of its flavor, appeal, and pleasure. People can compensate for reduced taste or smell by using some of the following ideas to create meals that appeal to all senses.

- Boost flavor by using more herbs, spices and lemon juice.
- Enjoy a variety of different foods with different flavors.
- Include foods of different temperatures.
- Add texture; it adds to the mouth feel and flavor of food.
- Serve colorful and attractive food.
- **What have you done to boost the flavor of your meals?**



Changes in Oral/Dental Health. In the past, loss of teeth and gum disorders were viewed as a normal result of aging. This is no longer true because good dental care is more routine.

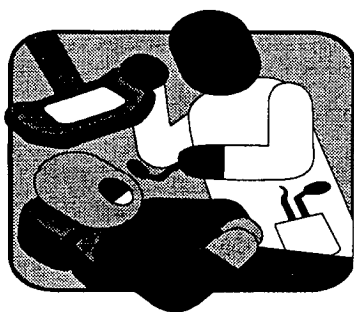
However, as people get older, they may not have as much saliva flow to help soften food and wash it down. Some medications may also reduce saliva flow. Having a dry mouth may cause chewing and swallowing difficulties, especially if the food is dry or hard to chew.

Be sure to drink water or other fluids with your meals and snacks, it will make swallowing easier. In addition, if you have chewing or swallowing

problems, make sure that they don't become a barrier to good nutrition.

Take a trip to your dentist. Many oral health problems can be treated. And dentures that don't fit properly can be adjusted.

Good oral and dental care, whatever your age is important. Proper brushing, daily flossing, and regular cleaning by a dentist or hygienist can reduce your chances of gum disease.



- What do you currently do to maintain your oral or dental health?

Changes in Gastrointestinal System (GI).

Little is known about the GI changes that occur with aging. However, some researchers believe that as a person ages, there is a reduction in the amount of stomach acid and enzymes produced.

For example, some older people have trouble digesting milk, even though this was never a problem when they were younger. This may happen if the small intestine no longer produces as much lactase, which helps people digest milk.

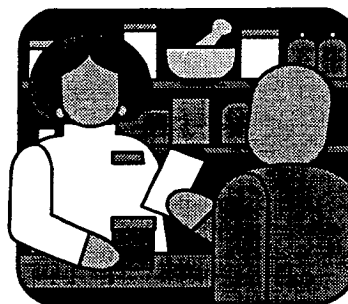
If certain foods cause discomfort, such as heartburn or gas, find alternatives. For example, if you have less tolerance for milk, you might try several things.

- Drink smaller amounts.
- Try buttermilk, yogurt, or a special lactose-reduced milk.
- Use low-fat milk in custards, puddings, and cream soups. Milk in foods is often better tolerated.

To get enough calcium, select other foods that supply calcium, such as dark green leafy vegetables, tofu, and canned fish (salmon or sardines) with bones.

- What changes have you noticed in your tolerance for certain foods (e.g., milk, fatty foods, spicy foods)?

Constipation is another common GI symptom that people connect to aging. However, there is no clear evidence that aging causes constipation. On the other hand, reduced physical activity and increased use of some medications may contribute to the problem.



Being physically active, drinking enough fluids and eating more fruits, vegetables and whole grains are ways to avoid constipation and stay regular. If these remedies do not work, ask your doctor about other steps.

Avoid taking laxatives, as well as fiber pills and powders, unless your doctor recommends them. For a gentle laxative, try a cup of tea or warm water with lemon, first thing in the morning.

- **How many servings of fruits, vegetables and whole grains do you usually eat in a typical day?**

Changes in Thirst Sensitivity. Thirst is the body's signal to drink more. However with age, the sense of thirst decreases.

The average adult loses about 10 cups of water daily through perspiration, urination, breathing, and bowel movements. During hot, humid weather or strenuous physical activity, the fluid losses may be much higher.

Older adults need plenty of fluids: 8 to 12 cups a day. Food provides some water, but drinking at least 6-8 cups of water a day is advised.

Water can come from all kinds of beverages, including juice, milk, soup, sparkling water, herbal teas, hot chocolate, and decaffeinated coffee.



Plain water is great too! However, limit your use of

caffeine and alcohol; they increase fluid loss.

Your body needs water all year long – even in the winter. Heated air indoors tends to dry the skin and increase the need for more fluids. People may become dehydrated more easily in the winter because they do not feel thirsty.

For more ideas about how you might handle age-related changes, look at the handout - *Ideas for Handling Potential Age-Related Changes* (pgs. 16-17).

Changes in Calorie Needs. As people get older, calorie needs drop. This caloric decrease is due, in part, to a decline in the body's metabolic rate. It may also be due to a decrease in physical activity and loss of muscle mass.

Sometimes older people overeat as a way to cope with loneliness and feelings of helplessness. In this situation, people are often both overweight and undernourished. Comfort foods such as cake, cookies, and candy are high in calories but not in nutrients.

The challenge is to eat the same amount of nutrients, but with fewer calories! This means choosing more nutrient-rich foods, like whole grains, fortified cereals and brightly colored fruits and vegetables.



Changes in Family/Friends. Lifestyle changes accompany each stage of life. The dispersion of family, the loss of a spouse or companion, the death of friends, or even a neighborhood in transition, may create major changes in a person's support system.

Researchers know four important things about the connection between social relations and health in adults.

- Isolation (lack of social ties) is a powerful risk factor for poor health.
- Social support (in all forms) has positive effects on health.
- Social support may reduce some of the health-related effects of aging.
- No single type of support is uniformly effective for all people and all situations.



Therefore, companionship and support from other WHI group members may provide health benefits that can help an individual age more successfully.

- **How has your lifestyle (or health) changed during the past 5 years?**
- **In what way(s) have these changes influenced your food choices and meal preparation?**

Meals are cultural and social events as well as a way to provide nutrition for the body's health. Eating alone may feel boring or depressing. And, some people may not feel like preparing or even eating food when they are eating alone. If you are in this position or know someone who is,

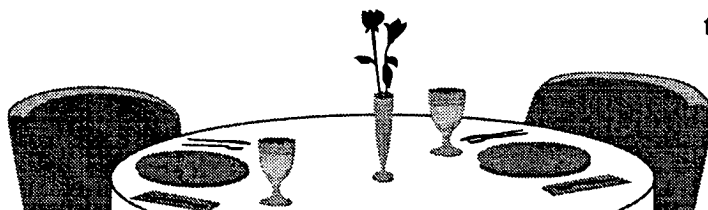
there are things you can do to help.

Instead of eating alone all the time, eat with friends occasionally.

- Have a standing date with a friend or a relative for lunch or dinner at your home.
- Get together with friends for a weekly or monthly low-fat potluck supper.
- If you are still into 'cooking' but need someone to cook for, organize a 'healthy low-fat' supper club of like-minded friends.

When you dine solo, make the meal a special event.

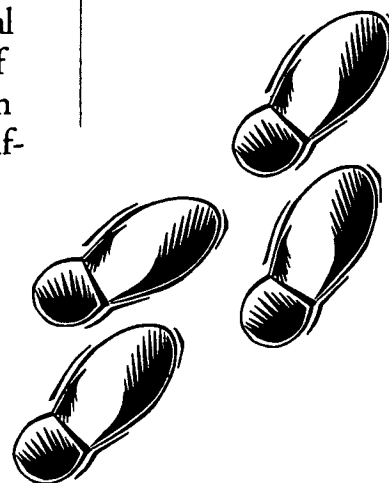
- Create some interest or atmosphere by playing your favorite record or tape.
- Make food preparation easy. For ideas, refer to the resource (*Easy Cooking for One or Two* (pgs. 18-20)).
- Enjoy eating in a different location, such as a patio, deck, dining room, or on a tray by the fireplace.



Next Steps

Researchers still do not know how much of successful aging depends on genes and how much is due to lifestyle factors. However, there is growing evidence to indicate that lifestyle choices influence health and vitality as people grow older.

WHI provides a number of opportunities that may help people age more successfully: healthy eating patterns, mental stimulation, a sense of purpose, confidence in one's own abilities (self-efficacy), and social support.



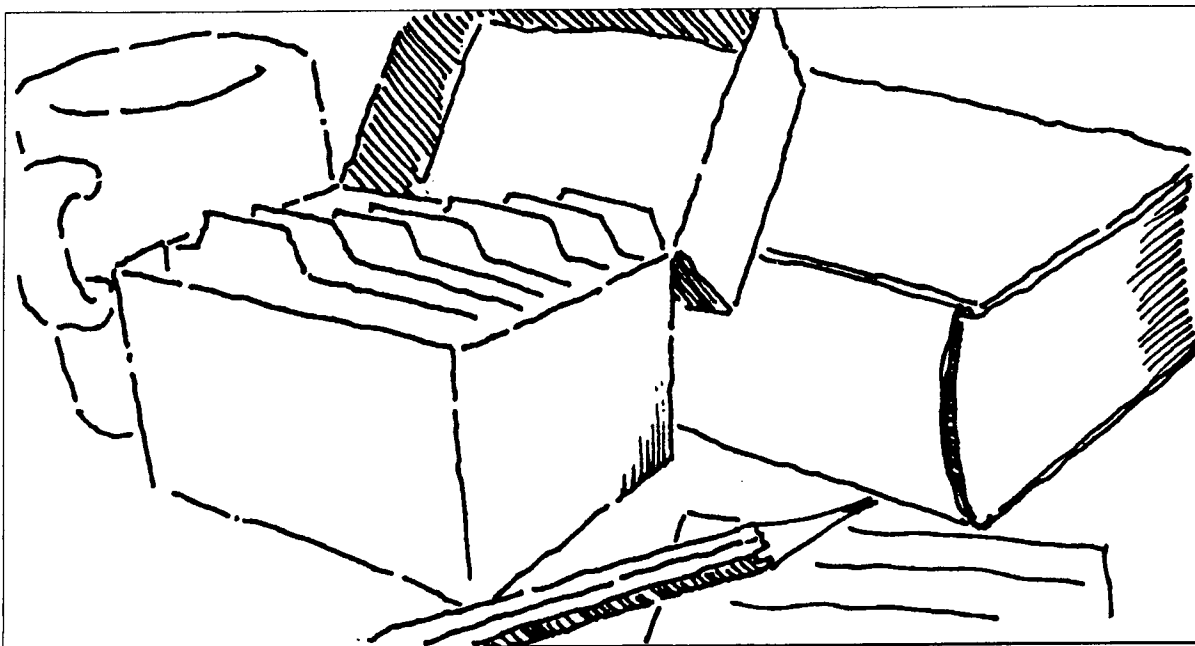
Questions for Thought

- ♦ What are some of the ways that you see WHI helping you continue to age successfully?
- ♦ How do you see WHI fitting into your life, as you grow older?

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Recipes

- ◆ *Sunburst Soup*
- ◆ *Oriental Barley Salad*
- ◆ *Turkey Ham and Cheese Omelet*
- ◆ *Applesauce-Oatmeal Muffins*



Sunburst Soup

8 cups peeled, butternut squash, cut into chunks
4 cups fat-free chicken or vegetable broth
2 tablespoons brown sugar
1 tablespoon minced ginger (about 1-inch piece)
1 teaspoon curry powder
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
1/8 teaspoon cloves

Combine all ingredients in a large pot or Dutch oven. Bring to a boil on high heat; reduce the heat to simmer and cover. Cook about 40 minutes or until the squash is tender.

Puree the squash mixture in a blender or food processor in small batches until smooth. (Or you can use a hand blender directly in the pot to puree the soup). For a thinner consistency, add more broth or add apple juice, if desired. Serve immediately.

Makes 6 cups

Fat: 0 grams per serving

Fruit/Vegetable Servings: 2.5 per cup

Recipe from *Stealth Health* by Evelyn Tribole

Oriental Barley Salad

1-1/2 cups fat-free chicken broth
1 cup pearl barley
1/2 cup red pepper, finely diced
1/4 cup cilantro, snipped

Dressing:

2 tablespoons seasoned rice vinegar
2 tablespoons pineapple juice
1 tablespoon dark sesame oil
1 clove garlic, minced
1/8 teaspoon crushed red pepper

In a medium saucepan, combine the chicken broth and barley. Bring to a boil and reduce the heat. Cover and simmer for 12-15 minutes until the liquid is absorbed. In a mixing bowl combine the cooked barley, red pepper and cilantro.

To make the dressing: In a small bowl whisk together the vinegar, pineapple juice, sesame oil, garlic and crushed red pepper. Pour the dressing over the barley mixture. Toss to coat. Cover and chill for at least 1 hour.

Makes 6 servings (1/2 cup each)

Fat: 2.5 grams per serving

Fruit/Vegetable Servings: 1/4 per serving

Grain Servings: 1 per serving

Recipe from *Stealth Health* by Evelyn Tribble

Turkey Ham and Cheese Omelet

**1/2 cup fat-free egg substitute plus 4 egg whites or
enough to equal 1 cup
vegetable cooking spray
2 teaspoons oil
2 tablespoons onion, chopped
1 tablespoon green or red pepper, chopped
2 ounces turkey ham, cubed (a little less than 1/2 cup)
1/4 cup fat-free sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
freshly ground pepper to taste**

In a small mixing bowl, combine egg substitute and egg white; beat slightly with a fork. Spray a non-stick 10-inch skillet with vegetable spray; heat over medium-high heat; add 1 teaspoon oil. When hot, add onion and green pepper. Cook about 3-4 minutes or until tender. Add remaining teaspoon of oil, then turkey ham; stir until hot. Reduce heat to low; pour egg mixture over ham, tilting the skillet to spread. As the egg cooks, gently lift the edge with a spatula and tilt the skillet to permit the uncooked eggs to run to the bottom of the pan. When done, sprinkle cheese over egg, sprinkle pepper, fold in half and slide onto a serving plate.

Makes 2 servings

Fat: 6 grams per serving

Recipe from *Healthy Cooking for Two*
by Brenda Shriver and Angela Shriver

Applesauce-Oatmeal Muffins

1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/8 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup quick-cooking oats, uncooked
3 tablespoons brown sugar
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 cup skim milk
2 tablespoons applesauce, unsweetened
1-1/2 teaspoons vegetable oil
1 egg white
vegetable cooking spray

Combine the flour, baking powder, salt, oats, brown sugar and cinnamon together in a medium bowl; make a well in the center of the mixture. Combine the milk, applesauce, oil, and egg white together; add to the dry ingredients. Stir just until the dry ingredients are moistened. Do not over mix!

Spoon batter into 4 muffin cups that have been sprayed with vegetable cooking spray. Fill the cups about three-fourths full. Bake at 400° F for 18-20 minutes or until golden brown. Remove from pan immediately.

Makes 4 muffins

Fat: 2 grams per muffin

Grain Servings: 3/4 per muffin

Recipe adapted from *Light Cooking for Two* by Oxmoor House

What's Your Aging IQ?

(Adapted from the National Institute on Aging)

	True	False
1. Baby boomers are the fastest growing segment of the population.		
2. Heart disease is a much bigger problem for older men than for older women.		
3. The older you get, the less you sleep.		
4. People should watch their weight as they age.		
5. Most older people are depressed.		
6. There's no point in screening older people for cancer because they can't be treated.		
7. Older people take more medications than younger people.		
8. Older people might as well accept urinary accidents as a fact of life.		
9. Everyone gets cataracts.		
10. "You can't teach an old dog new tricks."		
11. Extremes of heat and cold can be especially dangerous for older people.		

ANSWERS

1. **False.** The population of 85 and older is the fastest growing age group in the U.S. There are more than 3 million Americans over the age of 85. That number is expected to increase 4 times by the year 2040.
2. **False.** The risk of heart disease increases dramatically for women after menopause. By age 65, both men and women have a 1 in 3 chance of showing symptoms. However, risks can be significantly reduced by following a healthy diet and exercising.
3. **False.** In later life, it is the quality of sleep that declines, not total sleep time. Researchers have found that sleep tends to become more fragmented as people age. A number of reports suggest that older people are less likely than younger people to stay awake throughout the day and that older people tend to take more naps than younger people.
4. **True.** Most people gain weight as they age. Because of changes in the body and decreasing physical activity, older people usually need fewer calories. Still, a balanced diet is important. Older people require essential nutrients just like younger adults. You should be concerned about your weight if there has been an involuntary gain or loss of 10 pounds in the past 6 months.
5. **False.** Most older people are not depressed. When depression does occur, it is treatable throughout the life cycle. A variety of approaches can be used, such as family support, psychotherapy, or antidepressant medications. A physician can determine whether the depression is caused by medication an older person might be taking, by physical illness, stress, or other factors.
6. **False.** Many older people can beat cancer, especially when it is found early. Over half of all cancers occur in people 65 and older, which means that screening for cancer in this age group is especially important.
7. **True.** Older people often have a combination of conditions that require drugs. They consume 25 percent of all medications and can have many more problems with adverse reactions. Check with your doctor or pharmacist to make sure all drugs and dosages are appropriate.
8. **False.** Urinary incontinence is a symptom, not a disease. Usually, it is caused by specific changes in body function that can result from infection, diseases, or the use of certain medications. A variety of treatment options are available for people who seek medical help.
9. **False.** Not everyone gets cataracts, although a great many older people do. Some 18 percent of people between 65 and 74 have cataracts, while more than 40 percent of people between 75 and 85 have the problem. Cataracts can be treated successfully with surgery.
10. **False.** People at any age can learn new information and skills. Research indicates that older people can obtain new skills and improve old ones, including how to use a computer.
11. **True.** The body's thermostat tends to function less efficiently with age, making the older person's body less able to adapt to extremes in heat or cold.

Ideas for Handling Potential Age-Related Changes

The reasons why the human body ages are still being studied by scientists. However, we do know that for some people changes may come sooner than for others. Some of the changes may also be due to other factors, such as medications or illnesses. If you have any questions or concerns about specific changes, be sure to check with your family physician.

Potential Change	Ideas
Reduced sense of taste or smell	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enjoy variety. Serve yourself colorful, attractive food.• Add a little crunch to meals. Texture adds to the mouth feel and flavor of food. And a variety of textures helps make up for a loss of taste and smell.• Include foods of different temperatures to perk up your meals. Extreme hot or cold temperatures, however, tend to lessen flavors.• Use herbs and spices to perk up the taste.• Take time to enjoy the full flavors of food by chewing the food thoroughly. Chewing releases compounds in the foods that tell the brain exactly what you are eating.• Reduce use of strong or bitter flavors, such as coffee, which can temporarily deaden sensitivity to other flavors.
Gas; burning sensation, or heart-burn	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eat smaller, more frequent meals.• If you have not been eating higher-fiber foods, such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains, take time to increase your servings.• Drink enough water to help reduce the effects of intestinal gas.
Bloating or belching	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid or limit alcohol, carbonated beverages and high-fat foods.• Eat slowly and chew foods well.• Avoid lying down after meals or elevate your head and back at a 30-degree angle.
Chewing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check with your dentist. Many oral problems can be treated. And dentures that don't fit should be adjusted.• Choose softer foods that are easier to chew.• Cut food into small pieces and chew slowly.
Swallowing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask your family doctor to check medications.• Drink plenty of water.• Drink water or other fluids with meals and snacks to make swallowing easier.• Use lozenges or hard candies to keep throat moist.

Resource (cont.)

Potential Change	Ideas
Constipation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink at least 6-8 cups of water or other fluids each day. • Eat vegetables and fruits. • Use whole grain breads and cereals. • Try dried fruits such as prunes or figs, or drink prune juice. • Limit fatty foods. • Limit use of laxatives, as well as fiber pills and powders, unless your doctor recommends them. • A cup of tea or warm water with lemon, taken first thing in the morning can act as a gentle, natural laxative. • Get into a regular routine of exercise, such as walking.
Loss of appetite (This may occur for many different reasons: illness, pain, fatigue, stress, medications, depression, or a combination of these).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to identify the cause. If certain foods cause discomfort, such as heartburn or gas, find other alternatives. • Talk to your doctor about prescription medications that might be causing the problem. • Eat smaller, frequent meals or snacks. • Give yourself enough time to eat. • Serve foods hot. Heat brings out the aroma of food and usually makes it more tempting. • Make your overall meal look appealing. Include a variety of colors, textures, and temperatures in your meals. • Eat meals with friends. The pleasure of being with others may be an appetite booster. • Make meal times pleasant. A relaxed and attractive setting with flowers or soft music may perk up your appetite. • Eat in a different place, such as the living room or outside on the porch. • If confined to bed, ask someone to help keep your room appealing. Turn on some music.
Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give a shopping list to friends, family or spouse and ask them to help. • Be careful of loose rugs by the sink or other places in your kitchen. • Organize your kitchen for efficiency – everything with easy reach. • Look for kitchen devices that make food preparation easier for people who have trouble opening jars and cans. • Give yourself time, things may take a little longer. • Check with your doctor about advice on appropriate forms of physical activity. Then explore community resources available to help maintain fitness levels.

Easy Cooking for One or Two

☐ Stir up a quick vegetable dish or main dish meal.

- ◆ Heat a non-stick pan and use 1-2 teaspoons broth or oil for each 1 to 1-1/2 cups of raw vegetables. Add your favorite seasonings (ginger, garlic, etc.) and stir-fry for 15 seconds. Add vegetables and soy sauce. Stir-fry 3-5 minutes until vegetables become tender-crisp.
- ◆ Combine 3-4 of your favorite fresh vegetables. Good choices include broccoli, cauliflower, celery, green beans, onions, peppers, mushrooms, carrots, pea pods, asparagus, zucchini and yellow squash.
- ◆ For a main dish, add bits of leftover chicken, turkey, shellfish or meat during the last 3-5 minutes of cooking.

☐ Microwave a meal in minutes.

- ◆ Add your favorite herbs and a little lemon juice or white wine. Place the fish in a microwave-proof dish and cover tightly with plastic wrap. Microwave on medium for 30 seconds, then turn dish and microwave another 30 seconds to 1 minute. Drain off the juices and let the fish stand for 2-3 minutes before serving.
- ◆ Add broccoli flowerets, mushrooms, and a bit of grated low-fat cheese to a microwave baked potato.

☐ Fix a meal-in-one dinner in foil.

- ◆ Place lean beef or chicken breast in the center of a piece of heavy-duty aluminum foil. Sprinkle soup mix over the top of the meat or poultry. Cut up vegetables and place them on top of the meat or poultry. Close the foil over the meat and vegetables and set on a cookie sheet. Bake at 450° for 1 hour or until done. (Example: for two people: 1/2 pound lean beef round steak, 1/2 packet onion soup mix, 2 medium carrots, 1 stalk celery and 2 medium new potatoes.)

☐ Cook a chicken breast for a fast, low-fat meal.

- ◆ Skinless chicken breasts are a perfect quick food. Here are some quick-to-fix choices for one person using 1/2 of a chicken breast.
 - Honey-Mustard Chicken: Marinate in 1 tsp. honey and 1 tsp. Dijon mustard. A dash of curry powder or soy sauce may be added (optional). Bake at 350°F for 30 minutes or until done. Note: Boneless breasts take only 15 minutes to cook.
 - Easy Broiled Chicken: Marinate in a mixture of 2 TB fat-free Italian salad dressing, 2 TB tomato juice, and a dash of chili powder or pepper sauce. Broil, basting the chicken frequently, until it is done.
 - Italian Chicken: Pound chicken breast to 1/2-inch thick and roll in 2 TB of Italian-seasoned bread crumbs. Saute in 1 tsp. vegetable oil until done.
 - Chicken Fajitas: Marinate in soy sauce, lime juice, and minced garlic. Grill or broil until done. Slice the chicken and roll up in a tortilla with your favorite Mexican fillings such as cooked onions, chopped tomatoes and a touch of low-fat or fat-free sour cream.

☐ Prepare fast and easy meals with fish.

- ◆ When buying fish, make sure it's fresh (no strong fishy odor). Here are a couple of quick-to-fix choices for one person using a 1/2-inch thick fish fillet (4-ounces raw). The secret for great fish dishes is: don't overcook.
 - Crispy Oven-Fried Fish: Dip fish in milk, yogurt or water and then flour that has been seasoned with salt and pepper. Place in a baking dish. Sprinkle with small amount of paprika.
 - Broiled Fish with Herbs: Place fish in a baking dish and top with 1 tsp. melted margarine, 1 tsp. chopped fresh parsley, 1 tsp. chives, and 1/4 tsp. tarragon. Add paprika, garlic powder, thyme, salt and pepper to taste (optional spices). Broil for 5 minutes.
 - Barbecued Fish in Foil: Place fish on sheet of aluminum foil (sprayed with non-stick spray). Smear 1 TB barbecue sauce over fish and bake at 350° for 15 minutes.
 - Grilled Salmon Fillet: Marinate salmon in lemon juice and soy sauce for 1 hour. Broil or grill for 5 to 10 minutes.

☐ Spice up convenience foods.

- ◆ Add fresh onions, mushrooms, and peppers to bottled or canned spaghetti sauce. Serve over cooked pasta.
- ◆ Mix sliced yellow squash or green peas with Rice-A-Roni® (made without adding fat).
- ◆ Mix chili beans, tomato soup, chopped carrots, peppers, onions, and your favorite seasonings with Spanish-flavored Rice-A-Roni® (made without adding fat) for a hearty Mexican goulash.
- ◆ Add fresh onions, peppers, beans, and tomato sauce to quick-cooking rice.
- ◆ Add diced onion, celery, carrots, a touch of garlic powder, and a hint of lemon juice to spice up canned tomato soup.
- ◆ Add fresh onions, peppers, tomatoes and a small amount of cooked chicken or turkey to bottled Mexican salsa. Serve over hot rice or pasta.