

August 2016

MECCA

Mtn Biking when Old

Age is a state of mind, but the reality is your body will break down with time no matter how well you take care of it. There are ways to remain a strong rider as you age, however, and enjoy the golden age of mountain biking in your golden years

Nutrition

Probably the single most important variable that you have control over to combat the effects of aging is nutrition. At a cellular level, your body relies on cations like potassium and sodium to keep all of your muscles working efficiently. It uses scarce metals like cadmium and zinc in very specific transport mechanisms to build DNA, enzymes, and synthesize proteins and other molecules to keep protoplasm healthy. It uses sugars for energy, and lipids to keep permeable membranes fluid. It is an exceptionally complex and pliable machine.

When you eat poorly, or indulge in too much of one thing (fats, sugar, alcohol, nicotine, meth), it causes cellular damage, and this accelerates aging at a microscopic and macroscopic level... you get older, faster. Avoiding harmful foods or chemicals, and ingesting a healthy balance of all nutrients, maximizes your chances of slowing the aging process. Everyone is different, and your genetics may play a large role in your overall health (a variable that you cannot control), but certain foods keep you feeling young.

Nutrition is big topic in itself, but here are some tips to help you stay strong as you age:

Eat Healthy—We all know this, but yet it is hard. Avoid excess carbs. Avoid junk food. Find a well balanced, healthy diet that works for you.

Fight Free Radicals—Free radicals harm cells, but certain foods (goji berries, blackberries, spinach, dark chocolate, and many others) scavenge them and retard the damage they do to cells. Eat as many of these foods as you can.

Count Calories—Obesity is a huge problem in this country, even among cyclists. Being overweight can speed up aging, put undue strain on your heart and joints, and cause more injury if you fall. Most Americans average 2,000-2,600 calories a day, which is simply too much unless you are exercising vigorously for hours a week. Everyone has different caloric requirements, but some people can function on as little as 1,200 calories a day and still be active. Watching what you eat keeps you thin, and in turn will help you stay stronger.

Limit Energy Drinks and Supplements

—Not all of these are bad, but in many there are excessive amounts of stimulants, vitamins, protein, and chemicals that can harm your heart, kidneys, and liver. Use them sparingly.

Cross Train: weights in the winter, swimming, yoga, and other winter sports to keep all muscle groups toned and less prone to injury.

Be willing to suffer—“riding through the pain.”

Cardiopulmonary Fitness

Aside from your mind, your heart and lungs are your most important assets to staying healthy. Cycling is an excellent way for most people to stay fit, but many also overdo it. When you ride, particularly high cadence for long periods (think long climbs), your heart muscle actually enlarges—just like going to the gym—so that it can pump more blood per squeeze, or stroke. This is known as reversible cardiomegaly, and by increasing your stroke volume, your heart rate decreases. Humans hearts, like all mammals, are thought to have a finite number of heart beats—humans have around 2.2 billion—and life expectancy is a product of how many resting beats you use up (it is thought that faster rates during exercise do not subtract from that total). Having a strong, healthy heart that pumps strong and slow at rest will theoretically allow you to live longer.

All cardiovascular exercise isn't created equal, though. It is not a good idea to push your body, and your ticker, 110% all the time. That is why there is a huge movement in cycling for “recovery rides.” Recovery gives your body a chance to recuperate, rebuild, and recharge. To stay strong, it is generally a good idea to exercise/ride five days a week, spending three of those rides averaging 60% max heart rate, or MHR, and the other two days at 80% MHR. You can roughly calculate your MHR as 220 minus your age. Therefore, if you are 40 years old, your MHR is 180, your 60% and 80% of MHR are 108 and 144, respectively. Of course, if you are pedaling hard up a hill, your heart rate may be 179... but that is ok.

Maintaining a robust musculoskeletal system

is also critical to riding when you are older. As you get older, you lose muscle mass, and older riders know that injuries can set you back weeks, not days. Keeping this part of your body fit starts with simply riding your bike often, but there are more things you can do to keep your body running smooth.

Healthy levels of calcium and vitamin D will prevent bone loss, and electrolytes will keep the muscles happy.



Fish oil may help joints as well.

Cross training is also important. If all you do is ride, certain muscles in your arms, legs, and core become weaker. Stay strong holistically by running, swimming, and lifting weights if you can, to maintain—but not build—mass. This strengthens joints and the tissue that holds them together, and minimizes impact damage from one specific sport. This will also help you burn calories and stay lean. It will promote a healthier balance of red and white fibers, too—the muscle components responsible for epic rides and quick sprints.

Lastly, ride smart: ride within your ability and make decisions to avoid injury. It also means listening to your body and correcting behaviors that may be wrong. If your right knee always bothers you—only on long climbs—maybe it is time to make some simple adjustments to the saddle or seatpost height. Maybe you need new shoes or maybe you need to wear a knee brace. The point is: don't ignore nagging pain, but use it as a guide to remedy problems with you, your bike, or your gear to avoid repetitive microtrauma that will evolve into bigger health problems months or years down the road.

Mental Health

Keeping your mind sharp is just as important as the rest of your body. As most riders know, a good hard spin on a bike is a great way to get rid of stress. There are proven benefits to challenging your mind, such as decreasing your risk for Alzheimer's dementia. Riding is usually fun, but sometimes long climbs or training can be boring to some people. Use that time to think through your day or week, and reflect on both positive and negative things that may be poking at you. If you are pedaling hard, you probably won't be able to think deeply about them, but just getting them to the surface and off your chest can make you feel better. It is a proven fact that people with less stress live longer, healthier lives, so take advantage of every aspect of your rides to maximize your physical and mental health.

**MECCA
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*Always looking for
stuff to put in this
newsletter - send
me something!*

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KEEP RIDING!!!

CALENDAR-

July 15 Moon Light Bike Ride - went really well - lots of fun for all who came

July 19 Cleveland Days Bike- Another fun time - got NO 20 mile riders this year! But people enjoyed the shorter rides.

Sept. 23-24-25 Fall Festival- Wedge Overlook - Good Water Rim trail and more! Keep checking biketheswell.org The forms for registration aren't there yet, but will be soon.

Aging is an
extraordinary process
where you become the
person you always
should have been.
- David Bowie

*If you need violence to
enforce your ideas, your
ideas are worthless.*

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