

## STAYING ALIVE IS KILLING ME!!

Written by: Mary Helen Ponce

My arms ache and my legs feel as if each weighed a ton; they refuse to move faster. But, I gotta keep truckin and not collapse in the middle of the street as happened to Jim Fixx, my hero. A recent study in *Modern Maturity* reveals that, for those of us over-the-hill, the key to good health is a good night's sleep, one hour of exercise a day, a diet of fruits and vegetables. Plus vitamin supplements. Plus, plus. *Mas, mas.*

Hoping to live as long as mi papa (he died at 93), I now power-walk, life weights, do aerobics, and am considering a kickboxing class - the trendiest sport for those who can still move. Unable to stand on my head like Gandhi, each morning I drag myself outdoors and pretend to do Yoga. I bend, stretch and deep-breathe as I count to 10. If it's cold I count to 5, then dash inside to a warm kitchen.

Each Monday I plan a weekly menu based on oatmeal, fruits, vegetables, chicken, or tuna. At Sunland Produce I buy lettuce: Iceberg, Romaine, red-leaf, plus alfalfa sprouts, bell peppers, cucumbers, green onions, radishes & spinach, thankful for the bio-technology that makes it possible to choose from different fruit, especially apples: *Braeburn, Gala, Fuji* and the Golden Delicious that when nuked, make a great dessert. I load up on apricots, bananas, plums, and splurge on *melones*: cantaloupe, cassava and honeydew, then sneak *pan mexicano* into the cart. Exhausted and hungry, and aware that it takes time to wash and sort the produce, I swing into Wendy's for a chili-burger, which I rationalize will be offset by that evening's spinach salad.

On Tuesday and Thursday I hit World Gym, where I first weigh-in, then, thoroughly disgusted, head for the treadmill, and pretend to jog as I scan the latest *Cosmo*. Next is the leg press till I feel thin - usually five minutes - then I head for the shoulder press, having heard an spry old lady say it helped keep her chin firm. Next: stomach crunches which leave me limp and thirsty. I lounge on a workout bench, and pretend I'm doing yoga. Once pumped up - and thoroughly exhausted - I forgive myself my trespasses - cut out 3 reps, then cruise to McDonalds to gorge on fries.

On Wednesday and Friday I powerwalk 2 miles. Once at home, unable to move, read all day long. At night, egged on by the once portly Richard Simmons, I aerobic dance to 50s tunes, then hit the stationary bike, which I first spray it with WD-40, or my *nalgas* will stick. When done, and if able to move, I rub my sore muscles with Ben-Gay, then collapse.

Staying thin helps alleviate stress and builds self-esteem, it's said. Women's magazine advise those of us who lean towards bulk to either cover up, or undergo surgery. I once wrapped my bulging thighs in plastic, said to

melt cellulite, but when the wrap came off, the fat still hung there.

Vitamin supplements are crucial to good health, and more important, longevity. My friend Mary ingests all vitamins and minerals recommended by health experts: Calcium (to counteract osteoporosis), Vitamin C (to ward off cataracts and colds), Iron (to build up blood), and St. John's Wort, said to combat *los nervios*, which she took prior to a philosophy exam. When she scored a D, St. John hit the trash.

Annie, Mary's sister who fears getting colon cancer undergoes colonics. Each month, at a women's clinic she is "flushed-out." Annie drinks 8 glasses of purified water bought (by the case at Costco). She spends half the time in the bathroom.

You are what you eat, proclaims a health guru on an award-winning TV program. Indeed! But cooking healthy is boring! Salt retains water so should be avoided. Fats clog the arteries. No to chips, Fritos, and buttered popcorn (is there another kind?). Which is why, when fed up with rabbit food I order a Dominos veggie pizza, then jet to McDonalds for a chocolate sundae to sustain me until the following day, when once more I'll hit the sprouts.

Staying alive is boring. Planning and cooking healthy meals is muy boring. Riding a stationary bike rubs me the wrong way. Still, I would like to live to 93, but at this rate, will I make it?