

Habits and Behaviors to Improve Your Chances for Healthy Aging

Healthy aging means different things to different people, but is generally defined as developing or maintaining a level of wellness that enables a productive and meaningful life in later years.

There are no guarantees of good health, of course, but you can increase your chances of remaining healthy and aging successfully by practicing healthy behaviors and habits. These include getting plenty of exercise; eating healthy, nutritious foods; staying connected to others; paying attention to your mental health, understanding diseases, conditions, and injuries; being able to access the care you need; and managing medications and treatments.

Each of these components of healthy aging is important, as together they can decrease your risks for illnesses and injuries that are common among older people. Let’s have a look at each of the behaviors mentioned.

Exercise and Activity

Staying active is one of the most important steps you can take to maintain health and a level of fitness. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity and at least two days of muscle-strengthening activity per week for those who are 65 or older, generally fit, and have no limiting healthy conditions.

Aerobic activity is defined as “anything that gets your heart beating faster”, while muscle-strengthening activities are simply “those that make your muscles work harder than usual”. You don’t need to take up running or start lifting free weights to increase your activity level. Yard work, yoga, dancing, walking the golf course, and riding a bike all increase your heart rate, while lifting bags of garden soil and doing some push-ups can improve muscle strength.

Because any amount of activity is better than none, adults who are not able to meet the CDC recommendations due to chronic conditions or other circumstances can still benefit by being as physically active as their conditions allow.

Coming This Month:

Tobacco Cessation & Great American Smokeout Resources

.....November 12th

Nutrition & Healthy Aging

.....November 19th

Wellness Webinar

Heart Health 3 Week Virtual Series

[Register Here](#)

.....November 17th - December 1st

For assistance on your health and wellness journey, contact [ConnectCare3](#) at info@connectcare3.com or by calling 877-223-2350.

ConnectCare3 is available to those on the health insurance plan. Talk to your benefit representative to see if your company is enrolled.



Healthy Eating

Practicing good nutrition becomes increasingly important with aging, as it provides energy you need to stay active, helps control weight, and can decrease your chances for some diseases, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, high blood pressure, and certain cancers. Practicing good nutrition means getting all the nutrients your body needs, including carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins, minerals, and water.

This can become more difficult as you get older, as you may require fewer calories or find it more difficult to prepare healthy meals. Some medicines can decrease appetite or make food taste less appetizing, or you might have trouble affording healthy foods. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) recommends taking these steps to help you achieve good nutrition:

- Eat foods that contain lots of nutrients but not a lot of calories. These foods include fruits and vegetables, whole grains, fat-free or low-fat dairy foods, seafood, lean meats, chicken, eggs, beans, nuts, and seeds.
- Stay away from empty calories such as baked goods, soda, salty snacks, candy, and alcohol.
- Drink plenty of liquids, focusing on water and other no-or-low-calorie options.
- Choose foods that are low in fat and cholesterol, especially avoiding saturated fats and trans fats. Saturated fats are those in animal products, while trans fats are processed in some baked goods, stick margarine, nondairy coffee creamer, microwave popcorn, and some fried foods.
- Stay physically active to help maintain a healthy appetite.

If you find you're having trouble eating healthy meals and getting the nutrients you need, there are steps you can take to improve the situation. If you are alone and don't enjoy eating by yourself, invite a friend over or locate a senior center near you that provides meals. If a medical condition is making it difficult to chew, taste, or swallow, consult your primary care provider for guidance.

Supplement your meals with healthy snacks if you need to consume more calories or work on reducing calories by eliminating snacks if you are overweight or obese. A ConnectCare3 registered dietitian can design a personalized meal plan to help you meet your goals.

If you cannot afford to buy the healthy foods you need, contact your local Area Agency on Aging to be connected with resources in your community. A list of agencies in Pennsylvania can be found on [this website](#).





Staying Connected

Maintaining a social network and staying involved in your community are important, although often overlooked, components of healthy aging. Studies have found that older adults who experience good social connections are generally more satisfied and healthier than those who don't. Some studies even indicate that community involvement and volunteerism are factors in living longer.

Staying connected with friends and family and engaging in activities that you find meaningful and important reduces the risk of isolation and loneliness and increases feelings of belonging and connectedness. Even if you're unable to get out to be with others, you can make phone calls or participate in online activities, including meetings, exercise classes, and church services.

If you're able, invite a friend or two over for tea or lunch. Offer to drive someone to an appointment or to bring in your neighbor's mail while she's away. Doing anything that puts you in contact with others in a safe manner will generate positive physical and mental responses.

Your Mental Health

Maintaining good mental health is a major factor in healthy aging and just as important as maintaining physical health.

Sources:

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