



TO YOUR HEALTH

WELCOA'S ONLINE GENERAL WELLNESS BULLETIN

HEALTHY AGING

Take Stock & Take Charge

September is Healthy Aging Month, so it's a great time to take stock of your health and ensure you're doing the right things to age healthfully and with as much vibrancy and confidence as possible. Here are some tips to get you on the right track.

See your doctor and other healthcare professionals at least once a year. Staying on top of your health is much more than getting care when you don't feel good. See your doctor for regular checkups. These visits can help find problems early or even before they start. Your doctor will tell you what preventive screenings and tests you need depending on your age and other risk factors. And don't forget about your dentist and eye doctor.

Aim to eat more whole foods. There are countless diets and eating plans out there. Some of them are science-based and may indeed work for you, but there's a simple approach to ensure your diet is healthy: eat a variety of whole foods. Try to eat veggies and fruits at every meal and also incorporate whole grains, beans, and nuts into your regular diet. Many studies have found that a whole foods diet can help you live longer and protects against heart disease, cancer, Parkinson's, and Alzheimer's disease.

Move as much as you can. Aim for 30 minutes of exercise, like walking, every day. If that's too much, break it up into shorter segments. Regular exercise, especially if you do it briskly enough to feel a little breathless, delivers big health benefits. It helps keep brain cells healthy by delivering more blood and oxygen.



Talk with your doctor if you have any concerns about your health.

In fact, research suggests aerobic exercise may delay or improve symptoms of Alzheimer's disease.

Stay socially connected. As we get older, maintaining social connections becomes more important than ever. Seniors who report feeling left out and isolated have more trouble with everyday tasks like bathing and climbing stairs. Researchers found that lonely people have higher levels of stress hormones that cause inflammation, or swelling, linked to arthritis and diabetes. Make an effort to stay connected with friends. You can also volunteer. Not only will this give you a sense of purpose, but it will also provide social interaction. Bottom line: find a way to regularly connect with people.

Make sleep a priority. It's common for older adults to suffer from insomnia. However, insomnia can be treated. So, see your doctor if you're having trouble falling and staying asleep. Poor sleep is not something older adults should "just have to live with."

Find professional help if you can't kick bad habits. Everyone knows that cigarettes and tobacco are extremely harmful to our health. The challenge of course is quitting such addictive substances. But remember that it's never too late to quit. Your body begins to heal within 20 minutes of your last cigarette. Your chance of a heart attack goes down right away. In a year, your odds of heart disease drop by half. Ask your doctor for help quitting.

Too much alcohol can harm your liver and cause some kinds of cancer. Men shouldn't have more than two drinks a day; women should have no more than one. If you drink more than that, talk to your doctor about cutting back.

You can't stop the aging process, but you can control your lifestyle choices and habits that have a profound impact on *how* you age. Taking the steps above will help you on your path to healthy aging.

