



Healthy Aging
Living Well

Just the beginning

It's a fact! People are living longer and thanks to advances in medical science and technology, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) now estimates that there will be 74 million people in the United States over the age of 65 by 2030 – that's almost 21% of the entire population.

With so many people enjoying a longer life, it's more important than ever to support and encourage healthy aging as much as possible.

Retirement years can open up an exciting new phase for people and it's vital to do everything possible to make life as enjoyable and fulfilling as you can.



Why should you care about healthy aging?

Aging isn't just a changing number. Our bodies and minds also change over the years. Bodies may not be as spry as before and healing may not happen as quickly as it did in the past. With so much joy left to experience as an aging adult, a healthy lifestyle can go a long way in assuring you can relish those joys for a long time.

Healthy aging means learning to take care of our bodies and minds through all the things a long life has to offer. Changes are inevitable, but learning to live well will help you really enjoy the good while also managing the rough patches.

What you put in is just as important as what you keep out

Diet is the first and one of the most important step towards a healthy lifestyle.

When you think of healthy diets and healthy living, you probably jump to all the things you're told to avoid like sugar, saturated fats, smoking, drinking, etc.

While these are indeed extremely important factors in healthy living, what you put into your body is just as important as what you keep out of it.



Healthy eating habits supply your body with the nourishment and nutrients it needs. Not only does it give you energy for the day, it helps maintain your health and fight disease.

Many of the most common conditions that accompany aging are preventable. In fact, the World Health Organization (WHO) says that 80% of the cases of the most common chronic conditions are preventable.

Healthy diets, coupled with regular exercise (more on that later) and avoiding tobacco and alcohol, help reduce the chances of Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke.

You can start by keeping your meals colorful and diverse, with plenty of vegetables and fruit.

Sleep on it

Sleep is an important human function, period. No matter your age, we all need sleep. It resets and recharges us physically and mentally. Make sure you're getting as much sleep as you need. It will rejuvenate you and prepare your body and your brain for the day's activities.

The Sleep Foundation recommends adults ages 65 and up get at least 7–8 hours of sleep a night. Don't forget that the *quality* of your sleep matters too.

It's okay and perfectly normal for your sleep schedule to shift (perhaps falling asleep and waking up earlier), but if you're experiencing intermittent sleep or insomnia, you should see your doctor or a sleep specialist.



Bodies in motion

You've no doubt heard it before, but it's true that bodies in motion tend to stay in motion. That means that staying active, whatever that looks like for you, is a crucial part of healthy aging. Regular exercise boosts your immune response, it can help prevent injury by improving balance, and it helps fortify mental health by reducing anxiety and depression.

This doesn't mean you need to be out doing triathlons, but the CDC does recommend at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise five times a week, or as close to that as your abilities permit. This will help you maintain muscular strength and mobility, allowing you to continue doing your day-to-day activities. But that's not all, there are loads of other benefits that come with staying active:

- Prevents memory loss
- Increased endorphins
- Improved quality of sleep
- Reduction in chronic pain
- Improves metabolism

Don't forget, the brain is a muscle

For many folks, retiring from their job is an important landmark in their lives, a day they look forward to (let's be honest, probably from the day they start working).

However, retirement can also dramatically reduce the daily challenges that exercise your brain.

And like your body, your brain needs regular exercise. Problem-solving exercises (like puzzles or brain teasers), being creative (writing, painting, sculpting, singing, dancing, etc.), and games can all help keep your brain in great shape while maintaining memory and cognitive abilities.



Community is key

One great way to support healthy aging is to stay socially active.

Whether you are spending time with your family or friends, community is important. Conversations can help keep your brain active, and staying socially engaged can help keep you connected and improve mental health.

We are social beings, and simply having friends and family to share concerns and jokes with can be a great relief and source of joy.

It helps release stress and leads to improved moods, a stronger sense of purpose, and a longer life.



Bottom line

When it comes down to it, there are a lot of factors that lend themselves to healthy aging and living well in your later years. Practicing good hygiene, regular checkups with your doctor (preventative care is easier than recovery care), and managing stress are all important. The keys to healthy aging are interconnected, and each of them impacts the other.

Staying active can improve mood and health. Improved mood and health can make it easier to stay active. A healthy diet leads to staying active and improving mental health.

Improved health and mental health make it easier to stay socially active. More social activities offer more purpose and meaning, and so it goes.

All these help stave off chronic health conditions that can make aging difficult.

Conditions like:

- Heart disease
- Type 2 diabetes
- Cancer
- Alzheimer's and dementia
- Depression
- And so much more

In turn this improves overall quality of life, helping you feel less isolated and keeping you independent longer.

There's a lot you can do to prevent and protect yourself. Stay active, proactive, and engaged with your health. Try to look at it from a holistic point of view and don't be afraid to ask for help or ask questions. Doing so can help you continue to live and age well so you can savor your amazing later years.



The Merrill Family of Senior Living Communities

The Merrill family of brands owns and operates senior living communities with a focus on residents, families and team members. Merrill Gardens started with one community in Seattle, Washington in 1993 and now has locations across the country offering independent living, assisted living and memory care. Through innovative programs and a determined commitment to residents and team members, Merrill is one of the most respected senior living providers in the country.

Our Mission is to provide an inspiring environment for our residents, families and team members where every life is defined by the possibilities.



Resources

<https://www.seniorlifestyle.com/resources/blog/7-ways-senior-communities-promote-health-wellness/>

<https://aging.com/guide-to-living-a-healthy-life-style-at-an-old-age/>

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/cognitive-health-and-older-adults>

<https://www.healthline.com/health/flu/seniors-guide-to-staying-healthy#8.-Schedule-annual-physicals>

<https://www.everydayhealth.com/senior-health/understanding/index.aspx>

