

Tips for Healthy Aging



Live an Active Life

The key is to stay active, so do something you will enjoy. If you are not the type of person who will stick to a regular gym routine, go on a walk or ride your bike every day instead. Try to incorporate aerobic, balance, and muscle strengthening activities into your routine. Think about what works best for you, consult your doctor, and get moving!

Regular exercise is one of the greatest keys to physical and mental wellbeing. It may prevent or even provide relief from many common chronic conditions, including heart disease, diabetes, depression, and arthritis, to name a few.



Eat Healthy Food

Eat nutrient-dense foods like fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain foods. Avoid sweet, salty, and highly processed foods. Keep in mind that each person has different dietary needs – follow your doctor's suggestions regarding dietary restrictions. The majority of adults in the US consume more than double the recommended daily allowance of sodium, which can lead to hypertension and cardiovascular disease; most of this high sodium intake comes from pre-packaged foods and restaurants.



Maintain Your Brain

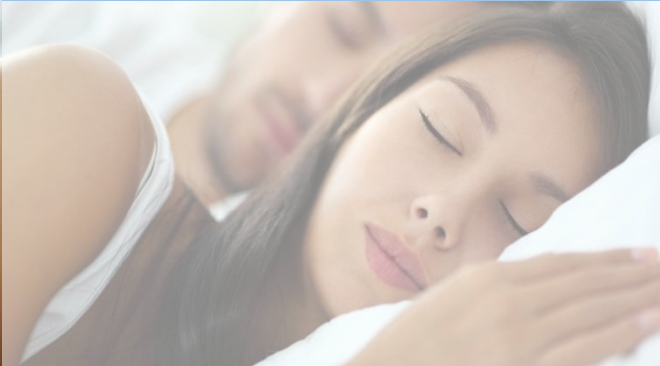
Never stop learning and challenging your mind! Take dance lessons, learn a new language, attend lectures at a local university, learn to play a musical instrument, or read a book. One in eight older adults (aged 65+) in the United States has Alzheimer's disease, and some cognitive decline is a normal part of aging. Studies have shown that a lifestyle that includes cognitive stimulation through active learning slows cognitive decline.





Cultivate Relationships

Maintain communication with your family and friends, especially after a significant loss or life change. Schedule regular time to meet with friends and family – over coffee, during a weekly shared meal, or around a common interest. Reach out to friends who might be isolated or feel lonely.



Get Enough Sleep

Develop a regular schedule with a bedtime routine. Keep your bedroom dark and noise-free— avoid watching television or surfing the internet while in bed. Stay away from caffeine late in the day. Lack of sleep can cause depression, irritability, increased fall risk, and memory problems.



Reduce Stress

We cannot entirely avoid stressful situations but we can learn better techniques to cope with stress. Take care of yourself when you are stressed by getting enough sleep, exercising, and eating nutritious foods. Talk to a loved one or counselor about your stress, and try some relaxation techniques, such as circular breathing, yoga, or meditation. Remember to always keep things in perspective – try to accept and adapt to the things you cannot control. Stress may cause depression, memory loss, fatigue, and decreased ability to fight off and recover from infection. In fact, it is estimated that more than 90% of illness is either caused or complicated by stress.

Take Charge of Your Health

Think about the ways that your health can improve by changing your lifestyle, and make those changes. You are your own best advocate. Contact your primary care practitioner for an annual physical or whenever you have a concern about your health, and go to those appointments prepared. Bring a list of your current prescription and non-prescription medications, including herbal supplements; keep a list of your health concerns; and, most importantly, ask questions! Most of our health is not controlled by the health care system but by our own actions, our environment, our genes, and social factors. In addition, physicians are not perfect; medical errors do happen. The more patients participate in their own health care, the more satisfied they tend to be with the care they receive.

