

# Be Healthy at Any Age

Several generations ago, it was common to reach the retirement years and start slowing things down. But average lifespans are longer now. With today's advances in medical care and prevention, we may be able to look forward to many more years of activity.

So even though your chronological age may be advancing, there's nothing stopping you from doing anything you want to do in life—as long as you take good care of yourself. Healthy practices we may learn early on—eating sensibly, exercising, getting enough rest, learning every day and getting regular medical care—apply later in life as well.



*Aging is not lost youth but a new stage of opportunity and strength.*

*-Betty Friedan*

As we reach the latter stages of our working lives, it's important to make a commitment to being healthy, active and engaged. It's true that our bodies might not work exactly as they once did. But the accumulated experience of our years helps us live smarter, wiser, and more efficiently.

In this month's edition of *Your Source*, we examine:

- A range of healthy habits that can help our later years be more vital and productive.
- The benefits of supportive relationships with family and friends.
- Ideas for activities to pursue that can keep older adults healthy and plugged in.

**Log on and learn!** Access *Healthy Aging* on the EAP website under the Library/In the Spotlight section. There you'll find information about how to make your later years a healthier and more rewarding time.

## Stay Plugged in with Family and Friends

Changing life circumstances can sometimes separate us from those with whom we once spent our time. But it's important to stay plugged in with family, and to share time with old and new friends. Here are some tips on staying connected.

- Close relationships are a key part of aging well. If you become isolated and lonely, you're more at risk for depression.
- Keep in touch regularly, either in person (a lunch date, for example) or online (via phone, Facebook, Skype or email). Working out problems or sharing a laugh with a friend can help.
- Get moving with a walking buddy or by joining an exercise class.
- Try to make time for at least one person per day. Visiting a neighbor, friend or relative each day can help you both stay plugged in.
- Make new friends in the community. Whether it's through a shared hobby, art form, exercise, dining or travel, meeting new people will help keep you fresh.
- Check out local support groups. If you're battling a health condition or you've suffered a loss, a specialized support group can help you cope.

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# Healthy Habits for Life

Sometimes it doesn't hurt to review some of the common-sense life habits that can help you have a healthier future.

## Pursue Prevention

To stay well, be sure to get the scheduled testing your doctor recommends for someone your age. This can include screening tests for cholesterol, blood pressure and blood sugar levels (i.e., diabetes). Key cancer screenings can include colorectal, cervical, breast, prostate and skin. Keep current with your immunizations.



## Keep Your Diet Healthy

Eat a variety of foods, including plenty of fruits and vegetables (strive for five servings daily). Go for lean meats, chicken, fish, and legumes (e.g., beans, peas and lentils). Eat whole grain rice, breads and cereals. Limit fats, oils and sugar. Also, don't rely on supplements for your key nutrients; eat whole foods instead.

## Get Active

The many benefits of exercise are well known. Building stronger muscles helps protect your joints and spine, improves your balance, and gives you a younger body image. Exercise also improves your mood and mental resilience. So walk, dance, ride a bike, rake leaves, lift weights, or do any other physical activity you enjoy. Start small and work up to 20-30 minutes of exercise most days of the week. Warm up and cool down with stretching, and be sure to drink plenty of water. If you're starting a new exercise program, check with your doctor first.

## Limit Harmful Habits

If you smoke, make a serious effort to stop. Many counseling programs and medications are available to help you quit. If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation—no more than two drinks per day.

## Work at Staying Positive

Perhaps the best preventive medicine is to nurture your own positive attitude about life—despite its occasional hardships and losses. Look for the humor in the human condition; learn to laugh at yourself and others as you go.

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## Now That's An Idea!

### Activities for the Older Adult

*Get it done under the sun.* If you've got more time now, get outside in the fresh air to walk, jog, hike, ride or canoe.

*Volunteer for good.* Pick a favorite cause, and give some time. It's a great way to help others and meet new friends.

*Keep that brain in the fast lane.* Challenge yourself with online games, puzzles, chess, blogging or in-depth study.

*Plug in and learn.* Check out your city's website for senior resources and activities. Take online courses or visit other online website to access senior activities and resources available.

*Try a new path.* Learn a new skill, language or art practice. Attend a tai chi, yoga or cooking class. Start a new career. Take a different route to your regular destinations.

*Teach others the way.* Draw on your experience to mentor young people.

