

Healthy Ageing Happy Ageing

✍ Mrs. Sushma Pandey

Ageing is the process of becoming older. In the narrow sense, the term refers to biological age of human beings. As you age, your life will change and you will gradually lose things that previously occupied your time and gave your life purpose. For example, your job may change, you may eventually retire from your career, your children may leave home, or other friends and family may move far away. But this is not a time to stop moving forward. Later life can be a time of exciting new adventures if you

Getting older involves change, both negative and positive, but you can enjoy aging if you understand what's going on with your body and take steps to maintain your health.

Many different things happen to your body as you age. Your skin, bones, and even brain may start to behave differently. Don't let the changes that come with old age catch you by surprise.

Staying healthy and feeling your best is important at any age and that doesn't change just because you have a few more grey hairs.

Research shows that you're likely to live an average of about 10 years longer than your parents-and not only that, but you're likely to live healthier longer too.

Health Issues in Your Old Age

Balance Disorders - Many older people experience problems with balance and dizziness (vertigo), so contact your health care provider if you feel unsteady or dizzy.

Falls and fall-related injuries (including hip fractures) are serious concerns that can have a significant impact on your life and your ability to live independently.

Memory Problems - It's important to know: While some degree of forgetfulness is normal with age, significant memory loss or cognitive decline is not an inevitable part of normal aging. If you experience mental lapses that interfere with daily life, contact your health care provider.

Inadequate Nutrition - As you get older, it's more important than ever to eat right to stay healthy



and maintain energy levels. Changes in your sense of taste and smell can affect your appetite. Slower digestion and metabolism can change how your body processes food. If you're having trouble maintaining a healthy diet, talk to a family member or your health care provider.

Slower digestion also can cause constipation. Make sure to get enough fiber-found in fruits, vegetables and whole grains-in your diet.

Lack of Exercise - Staying active can improve vitality, help maintain strength and flexibility, improve mental function, reduce your risk for health problems and even help to relieve chronic pain. Find an activity you enjoy and begin slowly.

Trouble Sleeping - many older adults don't get enough sleep and excessive daytime sleepiness are common problems.

These good sleep hygiene tips might be helpful:

- ❖ Make sure your bed room is dark and quiet so that it's not too warm.
- ❖ Adjust your bedtimes. Go to bed when you're tired and get up at the same time each day.

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- ❖ Turn off the TV at least one hour before going to bed.
- ❖ Wind down before bed by taking a bath or listening to soft music.

Stress and Aging

Stress can have an enormous impact on your health and your quality of life at any age-and even more so as you get older. Try these tips to help deal with difficult changes:

- ❖ Focus on being thankful. Appreciate and enjoy your life and don't take people or things for granted.
- ❖ Acknowledge your feelings and express them. Talk to a friend, family member or health care professional, write in a journal or join a support group.
- ❖ Embrace your spirituality.
- ❖ Accept that some things are out of your control.
- ❖ Try to keep your sense of humor.

Other Concerns in Old Age

Safety is a serious issue for many seniors-especially those who are living alone and experiencing varying degrees of physical and/or mental decline. In addition to falls and choking hazards, concerns include the following:

Physical elder abuse is the non-accidental use of force against an elderly person that causes injury or pain. It includes hitting, shoving and kicking, as well as misusing drugs, restraints or confinements on a person who is elderly.

Emotional or psychological elder abuse can be verbal or non-verbal. It includes intimidation (e.g., through yelling or threatening), humiliation and

ridicule, as well as ignoring, isolating, family and friends.

Sexual elder abuse involves sexual contact with a senior without his or her consent, as well as the elder to view pornographic material, watch acts or undress.

Neglect and abandonment are the most common type of elder abuse. They involve failing to care-taking obligations either intentionally or unintentionally.

Financial exploitation elder abuse involves unauthorized use of the elder's assets-real or personal property.

Health Care Recommendations in 60s and Older

The risk for a number of medical conditions increases with age. One of the most important ways to stay healthy in your 60s and beyond is to seek the advice of a geriatric physician, also called a geriatrician. General health care recommendations in your 60s and older include the following:

- ❖ Blood pressure screening- every 2 years or as recommended



- ❖ Bone mineral density test- as recommended or screen for osteoporosis (bone loss)
- ❖ Cholesterol screening- every 5 years or as recommended
- ❖ Colorectal cancer screening- as recommended
- ❖ Dental exam- every 6 months or as recommended
- ❖ Diabetes screening- every 3 years or as recommended
- ❖ Eye exam- every 1 - 2 years or as recommended



by an ophthalmologist

- ❖ Hearing test- yearly or as recommended
- ❖ Immunizations- yearly flu vaccine, herpes zoster vaccine, pneumonia vaccine (as recommended, if not previously vaccinated), tetanus (every 10 years)
- ❖ Mammogram (women) - as recommended by your health care provider
- ❖ Pelvic exam (women) - yearly or as recommended
- ❖ Pap test (women) - as recommended by your health care provider (Most women over the age of 65 usually do not need this test.)
- ❖ Prostate cancer screening (men)- as recommended by your health care provider
- ❖ Thyroid test (TSH) - as recommended by your health care provider.
- ❖ Put "ICE" (in case of emergency in your cell phone contact list in front of the name(s) of family member(s)/friend(s) to call if something happens to you.

So how do you give yourself the best possible chance for a long, healthy life?

Coping with change

As you age, there will be periods of both joy and stress. It's important to build your resilience and find healthy ways to cope with challenges.

- ❖ Acknowledge and express your feelings.
- ❖ Accept the things you can't change.
- ❖ Look for the silver lining.
- ❖ Take daily action to deal with life's challenges
- ❖ Finding meaning and joy
- ❖ Pick up a long-neglected hobby or try a new hobby

- ❖ Play with your grandkids, nieces, nephew's favourite pet
- ❖ Get involved in your community (volunteer, attend a local event)
- ❖ Take a class or join a club or sports team
- ❖ Travel somewhere new or go on a weekend to a place you've never visited
- ❖ Spend time in nature
- ❖ Enjoy the arts (visit a museum)
- ❖ Write your memoirs or a play about your experiences
- ❖ The possibilities are endless. The important is to find activities that are both meaningful and enjoyable for you.

Staying healthy through humor, laugh and play

Laughter is strong medicine for both the body and the mind. It helps you stay balanced, energetic, joy and healthy at any age. A sense of humor helps you through tough times, look outside yourself, laugh at absurdities of life, and transcend difficulties

Stay connected

Connect regularly with friends and family. Spend time with people you enjoy and who make you feel upbeat. It may be a neighbour who you like to exercise with, a lunch date with an old friend, or shopping with your children.

Make an effort to make new friends. Make a point to befriend people who are younger than you. Younger friends can reenergize you and help you see life from a fresh perspective. Spend time with at least one person every day. Whatever your living or working situation, you shouldn't be alone day after day. Volunteer. Giving back to the community is a wonderful way to strengthen social bonds and meet others. Find support groups in times of change. If you or a loved one is coping with a serious illness or loss, it can be very helpful to participate in a support group with others undergoing the same challenges.

Getting active and boosting vitality

Check with your doctor before starting any exercise program. Find out if any health conditions or medications you take affect the type of exercise you should choose.

Find an activity you like and that motivates you to continue. You may want to exercise in a group or prefer a more individual exercise like swimming.

Start slow. Slowly increase the time and intensity to avoid injury.

Walking is a wonderful way to start exercising walking is one of the best ways to stay fit. Best of all, it doesn't require any equipment or experience and you can do it anywhere.

Exercise with a friend or family member. You can help to keep each other motivated and you'll not.

Eating well as you age

- ❖ Load up on high-fibre fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- ❖ Put effort into making your food look and taste good.
- ❖ Watch out for dehydration.
- ❖ Make meals a social event.

Sleeping well as you age

Naturally boost your melatonin levels at night. Artificial lights at night can suppress your body's production of melatonin, the hormone that makes you sleepy. Use low-wattage bulbs where safe to do so, and turn off the TV and computer at least one hour before

bed.

Make sure your bedroom is quiet, dark, and your bed is comfortable. Noise, light, and interfere with sleep.

Develop bedtime rituals. A soothing taking a bath or playing music will help down.

Go to bed earlier. Adjust your bedtime when you feel tired.

Increase your activity levels during Regular aerobic exercise during the day, at hours before bedtime, can promote good sleep.

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